New Caledonia or Kanaky?
The political history of a French colony

John Connell
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John Connell
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Abstract

Since its discovery by Cook more than two hundred years ago, New Caledonia's history has been influenced by colonialism, potential economic affluence, civil unrest and violence. Early mission rivalries between the English and French were resolved by French annexation in 1853. The following ninety years saw the emergence of New Caledonia as a settler colony. A profitable mining industry developed and the economy became dominated by local and French multinational business interests, with the extensive repatriation of earnings and profits. The Melanesian population declined under a regime that saw Kanaks as no more than a racially inferior labour force. Legislation restricted Melanesians geographically and withdrew or withheld civil liberties and Asians were introduced as a more 'reliable' workforce. By the 1920s the decline in the Melanesian population ended and, following the Second World War, the harsh social and economic restrictions on Melanesians were abolished. Nevertheless, New Caledonia increasingly became a dichotomized society. The territory today is sharply divided politically, culturally and economically between the Kanaks (Melanesians), the European (mostly French), the Polynesian and Asian populations. Affluent Europeans dominate Noumea while poor Melanesians dominate rural areas. Population growth emphasized the necessity for more land for Melanesians but demands for land reform were met only belatedly. The inevitable involvement of Melanesians in politics, initially in support of Europeans, led to an extraordinary succession of both left and right wing parties that were formed to contest Territorial and French elections. During the nickel boom of the early 1970s there was extensive migration of Europeans to New Caledonia, ensuring that Melanesians remained a minority. The first Melanesian political parties followed, primarily to secure land reform, but, in the face of conservative opposition, these became more radical and eventually sought independence. Conservative political parties took more extreme positions in response and there was no progress towards independence. Militancy amongst the Melanesians has resulted. New Caledonia remains a colony and a fragmented society in an ocean of considerable strategic importance to France. Despite the strength of nationalist claims independence remains unlikely.
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Preface

New Caledonia, eh! The Little Paris of the South Seas. All I know of it is that it looks like a cigar on the map, and is full of Kanakas, French colonials who make millions out of nickel deposits and duty-free perfume. There's no income tax (Fallon 1952:7).

The largest island in the South Pacific, after New Guinea, is also perhaps the least known island in the region, not only in Australia (from where the above response comes) but also in France, where the overseas territories are rarely a part of French interest or understanding. Recent political events in New Caledonia, virtually for the first time, have thrust New Caledonia onto the world stage. It is the intention of this book to elucidate the events of the past few years in the context of the social, economic and political history of New Caledonia. Once a settler colony New Caledonia now has an independence movement, widely supported by the minority Melanesian population, whose declaration of independence as the Republic of Kanaky in 1984 has so far proved abortive. The unusual economic and population history of New Caledonia and the unique relationship between land and people dominate any account of contemporary society; this book, while no exception to the rule, also attempts to draw parallels with the experience of other Melanesian states and French colonial territories.

There are very few recent English publications on New Caledonia, and although two of the more comprehensive accounts of political change are quite recent, the last few years have witnessed extremely rapid, and far from complete, changes in the politics of this South Pacific territory. It would be a bold English speaking author who would claim to be an exception to Jean Guiart's generalization that 'one of the troubles about publications on New Caledonia by English speaking authors is that they have up to now been rushed jobs, lacking the precise knowledge of how local institutions, pretending to be the same as in France, can play very different roles in the colonial context and what are the local rules of the game' (Guiart 1984a:331). In terms of understanding the French-based political structure of New Caledonia, a range of changing Melanesian cultures and their response to French institutions, and the complexities of an economy that is subsistence-oriented in remote areas but dominated by the bureaucracy, nickel mining and tourism, I am no exception. There are undoubted errors of both fact and judgement here, a
result of limited understanding of an evolving situation and occasional linguistic complexities.

The translation throughout is my own. Without exception I have followed the conventional French form of place names even where (as in the case of Hienghene for Yengen) they effectively transfer an ancient place name from its Melanesian form to a French form. Accents have been dropped in many places to reduce this problem. I have generally referred to the historic indigenous population as Melanesians except when talking about independence activists (*indépendantistes*) who are Kanaks. Kanak was originally a Hawaiian word meaning 'man', or at least 'native of Hawaii', and it became widely used by outsiders to refer to all indigenous Pacific islanders, invariably with disparaging connotations. Elsewhere in Melanesia it is still a derogatory term; in Papua New Guinea for example *kanaka* in Tok Pisin is still suggestive of a Melanesian without grace or culture, while a *bus kanaka* is even more pejorative. In New Caledonia *canaque* was without such extreme racist disparagement though it was being rejected by Melanesians by the 1950s. More recently Kanak has been rescued and adopted as a term expressing pride in Melanesian culture, especially by those Melanesians favouring independence. In the process of this change the French form *canaque* has become Kanak, a transformation emphasizing its Melanesian nature and withdrawing from a language that has little use for 'k'. The word *kanak* has become more overtly political to the extent that one conservative Caledonian has hinted 'Melanesians have become Kanaks with a K like Karl...' (Zeldine 1982:2). Guiart's assertion that the transliteration was made both to annoy Europeans and because the 'k' was German and thus more aggressive (Guiart 1983b:99) appears quite fanciful. The whole transition is indicative of the manner in which politics underlies much of contemporary life in New Caledonia.

Though I first visited New Caledonia in 1978 the basis for this work was laid while I worked at the South Pacific Commission (SPC) in Noumea, New Caledonia from April 1981 to January 1984. This was supplemented by a brief visit in February 1985. This work, however, represents my own perceptions, and certainly not those of the SPC. I am indebted to many people, in and outside New Caledonia, who have assisted me, redirected me or steered me away from too many idiosyncrasies. Some, in different political parties, would prefer to be excluded. Others cannot be. I am grateful to Lorraine Guillemand for all manner of assistance, and deeply indebted to Stephen Henningham and Robert Aldrich for their careful reading and invaluable comments on the whole text; my stubbornness, in the face of their wisdom, explains the remaining inadequacies. I am also grateful to Alice Cooper and Shirley Edwards who produced something that they could read and to John Roberts for producing the maps and diagrams. Finally I must thank Robyn Hughes whose skilful editing has greatly improved accuracy and literacy and May Stinear who produced the book so expertly.
Those, like Helen Fraser, who provided stimulating conversation, are too many to mention, as are the various manufacturers of Beaujolais who enabled complex events to be viewed with a measure of detachment.

This account is certainly not wholly academic, in part because there are too few studies of many aspects of New Caledonia for dispassionate analysis to prevail over speculation and bias but, more important, because there is no real background study to the current political situation in New Caledonia. The book then is designed to fill part of that gap, complement earlier studies, and add to the literature on one of the least known Pacific islands. In a situation where an island remains divided, where speculation is rife and 'facts' debatable, this account will please few. It will perhaps be one contribution to better understanding.

John Connell
University of Sydney
September 1987
Abbreviations and glossary

AFC
Association Fraternité (Caledonian Fraternity Association)

AICLF
Association des Indigènes Calédoniens et Loyaltiens (Association of Indigenous Caledonians and Loyalty Islanders)

AJC
Avenir Jeunesse Calédonienne (Caledonian Youth for the Future)

bagnard
convict settler

brousse
the bush

broussard
rural European settler

BUMIDOM
Bureau des Migrations des Départments d'Outre-Mer (Office for Migration from the Overseas Departments)

CACI
Comité d'Action Contre l'Indépendance (Committee of Action against Independence)

caldoches
the present white rural settler population

cantonnement
confinement

CAP
Comité d'Action Patriotique (Committee of Patriotic Action)

CARE
Comité d'Aide Au Redémarrage des Enterprises (Support Committee for Business Regeneration)

CDI
Comité de liaison pour la Défense des Institutions (Liaison Committee for the Defence of Institutions)

CFP
Cours de Franc Pacifique (French Pacific franc)

communard
French supporter of the 1871 Paris Commune

coutume
custom

CRS
Compagnies républicaines de sécurité (metropolitan riot police)

DOM-TOM
 Département d'outre-mer; Territoire d'outre-mer (Overseas Department and Territory)

EC
the European Community xvii
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<td>EDS</td>
<td>Entente Démocratique et Sociale (Democratic and Social Entente)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Ensemble pour l'Avenir (Together for the Future)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETE</td>
<td>Ensemble toutes Ethnies (Unity of All Ethnic Groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETP</td>
<td>Entente Territoriale pour le Progrès (Territorial Group for Progress)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FADIL</td>
<td>Fonds d'Aide pour le Développement des Iles et de l'Intérieur (Fund for Development Assistance in the Islands and the Interior)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FC</td>
<td>Front Calédonien (Caledonian Front)</td>
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<td>FI</td>
<td>Front Indépendantiste (Independence Front)</td>
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<td>FLNKS</td>
<td>Front de Libération Nationale Kanake et Socialiste (Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front)</td>
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<td>FN</td>
<td>Front National (National Front)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FNSC</td>
<td>Fédération pour une Nouvelle Société Calédonienne (Federation for a New Caledonian Society)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foulards Rouges</td>
<td>Red Scarves</td>
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<td>FSC</td>
<td>Fédération Socialiste Calédonienne (Caledonian Socialist Federation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FULK</td>
<td>Front Uni de Libération Kanake (United Kanak Liberation Front)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>gross domestic product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GFKEL</td>
<td>Groupes des Femmes Kanakes Exploitées en Lutte (Group of Kanak and Exploited Women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>gross national product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCO</td>
<td>International Nickel Company of Canada</td>
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<td>INSEE</td>
<td>Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques (French National Statistics and Economics Institute)</td>
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<tr>
<td>indépendantiste</td>
<td>independence supporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indigénat</td>
<td>Code of pre-war controls on movement of Melanesians</td>
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<td>LKS</td>
<td>Libération Kanake Socialiste (Kanak Socialist Liberation Party)</td>
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<td>LMS</td>
<td>London Missionary Society</td>
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<td>LPC</td>
<td>Liste pour la Calédonie (List for Caledonia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>métris</td>
<td>mixed race</td>
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<td>MLC</td>
<td>Mouvement Libéral Calédonien (Caledonian Liberal Movement)</td>
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<td>MOP</td>
<td>Mouvement pour l'Ordre et la Paix (Movement for Order of Peace)</td>
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<td>MPC</td>
<td>Mouvement Populaire Calédonien du 18 Novembre (Caledonian Popular Movement)</td>
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<td>NC</td>
<td>Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes (Caledonian News)</td>
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<td>OAS</td>
<td>Organisation Armée Secrète (Secret Army Organization)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODIL</td>
<td>Office de Développement de l'Intérieur et des Iles (Office for the Development of the Interior and the Islands)</td>
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<td>OPAO</td>
<td>Parti Fédéral Kanak d'Opao (Federal Kanak Party of OPAO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORSTOM</td>
<td>Office de la recherche scientifique et technique d'outre-mer (Overseas Scientific and Technical Research Bureau)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PALIKA</td>
<td>Parti de Libération Kanake (Kanak Liberation Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>petit blanc</td>
<td>poor white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>petit colon</td>
<td>poor white colonist, often time-expired convict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFK</td>
<td>Parti Fédéral Kanak d'Opao (Federal Kanak Party of Opao)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PFL</td>
<td>Paix, Fraternité, Liberté (Peace, Fraternity and Liberty)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pied-noir</td>
<td>Former French settler from Algeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIM</td>
<td>Pacific Islands Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNC</td>
<td>Parti National Calédonien (Caledonian National Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>Parti Socialiste Calédonien (Caledonian Socialist Party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCMP</td>
<td>Rassemblement Calédonien pour une Majorité Présidentielle (Caledonian Assembly for a Presidential Majority)</td>
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<td>Réveil Canaque</td>
<td>Kanak Awakening</td>
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<td>ROC</td>
<td>Renouveau de l'Opposition en Calédonie (Renewal of the Caledonian Opposition)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>RPC</td>
<td>Rassemblement pour la Calédonie (Assembly for New Caledonia)</td>
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<td>RPCR</td>
<td>Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (Assembly for New Caledonia within the French Republic)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RPR(F)</td>
<td>Rassemblement pour la République (Assembly for the French Republic - French party)</td>
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<td>RPR(NC)</td>
<td>Rassemblement pour la République (Assembly for the French Republic - New Caledonian party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURALE</td>
<td>Ruraux, unis pour une réforme agraire libérale et équitable (Settlers for an equitable and liberal agrarian reform)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLN</td>
<td>La Société le Nickel (Nickel Company)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNEA</td>
<td>Société Nationale Elf-Aquitaine (Elf-Aquitaine National Company)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPC</td>
<td>South Pacific Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC</td>
<td>Union Calédonienne (Caledonian Union)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UD</td>
<td>Union Démocratique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (Democratic Union)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UICALO</td>
<td>L'Union des Indigènes Calédoniens Amis de la Liberté dans L'Ordre (The Association of Caledonian Natives, Friends of Freedom and Order)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ULO</td>
<td>Union pour la Liberté dans l'Ordre (Union for Freedom and Order)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMNC</td>
<td>Union Multiraciale de Nouvelle-Calédonie (Multiracial Union of New Caledonia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC</td>
<td>Union Nouvelle Calédonienne (New Caledonian Union)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNR</td>
<td>Union pour la Nouvelle République (Union for the New Republic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPM</td>
<td>Union Progressiste Multiraciale/Mélanésienne (Progressive Multiracial/Melanesian Union)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URC</td>
<td>Union pour le Renouveau de la Calédonie (Union for the Renewal of Caledonia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USTKE</td>
<td>Union des Syndicats des Travailleurs Kanaks et Exploités (United Union of Kanak and Exploited Workers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTA</td>
<td>Union des Transport Aériens (Air Transport Alliance)</td>
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Chapter 1

Melanesians: the first settlers

Kanaké is one of the most powerful prototypes of the Melanesian world. He is the ancestor, the firstborn. He is the ridge-pole, the centre post, the sanctuary of the great conical house. He is the word at the source of man's existence. This same word establishes the organization system, which governs relations between men, and their relations with the geographical and mythical environment... We want to resume the dialogue, to rebuild, to tell the world that we are not survivors of prehistory, still less archaeological fossils, but men of flesh and blood (Tjibaou and Missotte 1978:5).

Although the settlement of Oceania was one of the last events in the colonization of the now-inhabited world, the detail and even the broad sweep of this colonization is still being unravelled by the collective endeavours of archaeologists, historians, linguists, anthropologists and others. While there is no doubt that the island chain of New Caledonia was settled at least 4000 years ago, the actual sequence of settlement 'poses one of the most interesting problems in Oceanic archaeology' (Howe 1984:31) because of the attribution of much earlier radio-carbon dates to conical tumuli found on the Grande Terre (the main island of New Caledonia) and on the Isle of Pines (Kunie). The origin of these settlers is likely to remain a mystery although the theory that the first settlers were hunter-gatherers who had travelled from islands north of New Caledonia (Shutler and Shutler 1975:66; Garanger 1985) is plausible as New Guinea was settled at that time. Almost certainly the first settlement of New Caledonia was from the Melanesian islands to the north but the date and form of that settlement will never be known.

The ancient homelands of the Micronesians, Melanesians and Polynesians were in Southeast Asia. There is early evidence of settlement in New Guinea where radio-carbon dates indicate human presence at least 40,000 years ago, and migrants subsequently spread southwards and eastwards from there. There is strong linguistic evidence that agricultural populations advanced eastwards into the smaller islands from about 6000 years ago. The first permanent inhabitants of most of island Melanesia were speakers of Austronesian languages (languages spoken in most of
Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia) who, by 4000 years ago, had settled as far south as New Caledonia and some 500 years later had reached Fiji. These people were dependent on sedentary root-crop cultivation and pig husbandry, a combination which enabled them to survive with a greater ease than the hunter-gatherers who may have preceded them and then died out (Howe 1984:10). Thus 4000 years ago the Melanesian ancestors of the present Melanesian (or Kanak) population of New Caledonia were already established with an agricultural economy much the same as that of their contemporary descendants.

Settlement of New Caledonia was later than New Guinea or Australia, but much earlier than in the smaller islands of Polynesia to the east, some of which, like French Polynesia and New Zealand, were not settled until comparatively recently. Polynesian settlement of the Pacific continued for a much longer period than Melanesian settlement and there has also been a westwards Polynesian movement in the last thousand years which resulted in the colonization of many small islands on the fringe of Melanesia including, probably around the mid-eighteenth century, a movement of Polynesians from the island of Uvea (Wallis) north of Fiji to Ouvea in the Loyalty Islands. This movement has given some of the population of Ouvea, and other Loyalty Islands, physical characteristics rather different from the Melanesians of the Grande Terre, and it has been suggested that the chieftaincies of Hienghene, Balade and Koumac originated in Uvea (Hollyman 1959; Le Borgne 1964:99). Traditions also recount Tongan voyages to Lifou and the Isle of Pines in the seventeenth century (Brou 1977:5). At any rate although these, and more extended ties, are now hard to establish there is little doubt of some Polynesian influence even on the Grande Terre itself.

From time to time there are optimistic suggestions, always from conservative Europeans, that there may have been occupants of New Caledonia before the Melanesians (e.g. Durand 1985). It has been claimed 'that before Melanesians arrived there was an earlier civilization (certainly white) of which a few remains exist in the north of the island and in the mountain chain' (Agostini 1985:81) and that the first occupants of New Caledonia were actually Mayas (NC 29 September 1982, 29 February 1984, 28 September 1984). There is absolutely no archaeological evidence for this (cf. Bellwood 1978) and these suggestions must be viewed in the context of the current politics of land, where the moral case for Kanak independence is partly based on the assumption that Kanaks were the first occupants of New Caledonia. If they had usurped others that moral case might be weakened.

The Melanesian settlement of New Caledonia and the outlying islands may have taken place rapidly but gave rise to extremely complex patterns of settlement and the relative isolation of many populations especially in the steep-sided valleys of the east
coast. This complexity resulted in a proliferation of language groups, although not to the extent of the more complex island groups of New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Diversity of language was matched in a diversity of cultural traditions, social organizations, political structures and patterns of leadership. Little is now known about the significance and complexity of this diversity and the extent of divisions between tribal groups in the pre-colonial era. However there were obviously many elements of cultural conformity between tribes and, more than 2000 years ago, a particular form of pottery known as Lapita pottery, after an excavated site at Lapita (near Kone on the west coast of New Caledonia), was in use in a wide area of the Pacific from New Britain, through Melanesia, and as far east as Samoa and Tonga. At this time then there was some degree of unity and cultural coherence across a wide area of the western Pacific, a unity essentially absent during the last two thousand years.

A country of stones

The environment that confronted the earliest settlers in New Caledonia cannot now be wholly known since there have been few studies of botanical and recent geological history. Undoubtedly, travelling south, the migrants found an area more impoverished than they had previously known. Indeed it has been speculated that the first settlers may have died out because they could not sustain themselves for very long in this region due to the relative paucity of edible flora and fauna (Howe 1984:31). Whether there were settlers perhaps twelve thousand years ago and if they did die out, is unknown, but the relative poverty of the New Caledonian environment is certain. Each of the known Lapita sites is on the west coast of the Grande Terre and it is still impossible to know if these settlers practised horticulture (Frimigacci 1980). Much of the west of the Grande Terre closely resembles the drier and more thinly populated parts of the eastern coast of Australia. Captain Cook, on his voyage of discovery, observed:

Nature has been less bountiful to it than any other Tropical island we know in this Sea. The greatest part of its surface or at least what we have seen of it consists of barren rocky mountains, the grass etc., which grow on them is no use to people who have no cattle to eat it (Cook 1774/1961:543).

Cook's perceptions were accurate; his comments on cattle were almost prophetic.

New Caledonia is the southernmost part of Melanesia, only just north of the Tropic of Capricorn, and far enough south of the Equator to experience clear seasons (Map 1). It is dominated in
almost every way by the Grande Terre (Maps 2 and 3), a mountainous island some 400 kilometres long and about 40 kilometres wide, encircled by a coral reef. On the east coast the reef is a true barrier, always a few kilometres away from the land, whereas on the west coast there is both barrier-reef and fringing reef, where the land has subsided. On both coasts there are a number of breaks in the reef, notably opposite Noumea although, as in many parts of the South Pacific, the fringing reefs were a constant hazard to early European explorers and no doubt to their
Map 2 New Caledonia and dependencies

Map 3 New Caledonia
Melanesian predecessors. The Grande Terre is part of an ancient volcanic ridge, another visible part of which is Norfolk Island, extending south to New Zealand. While there are no volcanoes in New Caledonia, occasional hot springs are reminders of the molten rocks below. Belep Islands and the Isle of Pines are essentially extensions of the Grande Terre. The Loyalty Islands are quite different, being flat emergent coral atolls with thin soils; even on Mare, the highest of the four main atolls, the altitude reaches no more than 140 metres despite the steep coral cliffs.

More distant than the Loyalty Islands are a series of other small islands that are also part of New Caledonia (Pisier 1979), none of which appear to have been occupied in pre-contact times. The Chesterfield and Huon Islands, as well as Walpole, have been worked for phosphate until relatively recently but, with little or no surface water they can scarcely support anything more than meteorological stations. East of Walpole are two small volcanic islands, Matthew and Hunter, the southernmost of the Vanuatu island chain and politically a source of dispute between France and Vanuatu. Both claim the islands. The dispute, flaring at the start of 1983, is indicative of considerable and long-standing tension between the two neighbours.

Excluding New Zealand and New Guinea the Grande Terre is the largest island in the Pacific. It is not the comparison with New Guinea that is made by school textbooks in New Caledonia; for them quite typically, 'it is thirty three times smaller than France. Its structure and its dimensions are approximately those of the Pyrenees' (Le Borgne 1964:12). The Grande Terre is dominated by a long mountain chain, usually falling steeply into the sea to the east but allowing a significant coastal plain on the west. These geomorphological differences have resulted in significant differences between the east and west coasts of the island, the extent of which became more substantial following European colonization. The mountain chain divides the Grande Terre without a break; even now there are few passes across the island and the main peaks, Mount Humboldt and Mount Panie, both of which are over 1600 metres, are usually cloud-covered and rise out of irregular mountain ranges. Within these mountains and scattered almost throughout the island, but mainly in the eastern mountains south of Houailou, are the mineral deposits, principally nickel and chromite, that have determined a large part of the economic history of the island. These high mountains proved inhospitable barriers to settlement and movement. Rivers are often sharply incised and rarely navigable for more than a few kilometres. (Until quite recently almost all the rivers that flowed to the east coast were unbridged and could only be crossed by ferry; the bridge over the Dihahot river at Ouegoa was completed in 1984 and now only two ferries remain in use, at Yate and north of Hienghene.) Even along the coasts communications were difficult and the isolation of the early settlers was easily maintained;
where there were extended ties these were often through mountain passes rather than along their flanks.

The climate of New Caledonia though tropical is rarely excessively hot or wet; it is sunny and normally moderated by light breezes. In Noumea there is a 6°C difference between mean winter and summer temperatures, with the mean winter temperature falling to just above 20°C; there is no record of temperatures ever exceeding 39°C. On the plains the temperatures rarely fall below 10°C but at exposed sites on the Loyalty Islands the temperatures exceptionally fall close to freezing point though such extremes are rare. Early accounts of New Caledonia rarely hesitated to note this equable climate which made it very suitable for European settlement. Nowadays the same characteristics have made Noumea a major tourist resort. Although the first Melanesian settlers must have found a cooler climate than they were accustomed to it was suitable for Melanesian settlement and the transplanting of crops and agricultural techniques practised further north.

Within New Caledonia there are significant variations in climate; the east coast, and especially the southeast area around Yate, receives about twice the rainfall of the west coast. Noumea, the capital, is one of the driest parts of the country (with about 100 centimetres per year) although it too is not exempt from occasional torrential downpours and resultant floods. Droughts, especially on the west coast and in the Loyalty Islands are not uncommon and cyclones occasionally wreak devastation (Dupon 1985b). Evaporation is greater than rainfall at west coast sites such as Koumac and Noumea, a situation only recorded elsewhere in Melanesia around Port Moresby (Brookfield with Hart 1971:21). Overall the climate is no more unpredictable than in most other tropical areas and the diversity of Melanesian agricultural systems both past and present, appears to have largely prevented any real impact from climatic hazards. (By contrast, in more recent times, it has been the cattle imported onto the cattle stations of the plains that have died from droughts and floods.) Compared with almost all other parts of tropical Melanesia, New Caledonia is cooler, drier and visibly more arid and thinly vegetated.

The landscape that the first settlers colonized was more heavily wooded than that of the present day, with an extraordinary diversity of flora, paralleled in the Pacific perhaps only in Hawaii and New Guinea. Moreover an exceptionally high proportion of that flora is native or endemic only to New Caledonia, a situation which is difficult to explain in view of the island's proximity to other countries other than as a result of extremely long isolation. A second remarkable feature of the flora is that, unlike most other Pacific islands, it consists very largely of drought-resistant plants, a result of both the relatively low annual rainfall and also the large area that is occupied by
shallow stony soils with little ability to retain water; in a number of areas agricultural techniques had to be specially adapted to this environment. Not only are soils thin but many are exceptionally prone to erosion, a problem accentuated by the removal of vegetation, especially on the red soils of the mining regions (Le Borgne 1964:689). Soils are extremely poor in natural fertility (Doumenge 1982:27) and are suitable mainly for grazing rather than agricultural use. Despite a number of hesitant attempts at afforestation in these areas few have met with conspicuous success and the environmental degradation associated with mineral exploitation that confronts air travellers to New Caledonia is as serious and disfiguring as anywhere in the world.

New Caledonia is a land of rocks and pebbles; in a land where even mountains are called cailloux (pebbles), rocks 'stake out the habitat, providing permanent markers around and over which flow the ongoing currents of social, historical and natural life' (Clifford 1982:227). On these rocks the early Melanesians left the finest range of rock engravings in the South Pacific, except perhaps for the Marquesas (Bellwood 1978:274; Maitre 1980), and around them they constructed their lives. For the late European settlers too, New Caledonia became 'a country named Caillou' (Séné 1980), an affectionate term recording their attachment to the thin and stony soil of the Grande Terre. For the present occupants of rural New Caledonia, whether Melanesian or European, this stony land is all-important.

In contrast to the diversity of the flora the land fauna is extremely limited; the only mammals of pre-European times were rats and several kinds of bats and most of these must have been introduced by Melanesians intentionally or inadvertently. The other mammals, most obviously cattle, have all been introduced in the post-contact era. Surprisingly like the large island of Australia, New Caledonia has its own flightless bird, the cagou, now sadly depleted through the ravages of hunters and their dogs. Two species of trees characterize the visual landscape. The first of these is the Araucaria pine, which led to Cook naming Kunie the Isle of Pines, as a result of the pines which lined the shores giving it the appearance of 'the masts of a naval fleet at anchor'. The other characteristic species that extends over wide areas of the western coastal plain, is the niaouli tree (Melaleuca quinquenervia), remarkable for its silvery white foliage and its thick, corky bark. Above all else, this is the Caledonian tree, so much so that the name niaouli is often given to long-established settlers in the interior of New Caledonia (Doumenge 1982:45). Although the conditions for plant growth are very like those of many of the semi-arid regions of Australia, New Caledonia has no native eucalypts and few wattles, the typical plants of Australia. The leaves of the niaouli even provide an oil, goménol, similar to eucalyptus oil, that has often been a minor export from New Caledonia. The grasslands, destroyed by bushfires as often as those of much of Australia, are fringed with mangrove
swamps resulting in a landscape very similar to that of much of eastern Australia, a comparison first made by Cook after his voyage along the coast.

The open *niaouli* landscape is largely absent from the east coast where patches of remaining rainforest suggest a biogeography that was once much more like that of islands to the north. These steep sided valleys and coastal plains must have provided the most familiar environment to migrants from the north. By contrast the vegetation of the Loyalty Islands was and is much less diverse than that of the Grande Terre; this limited diversity along with low rainfall and thin soils probably discouraged early settlers and contributed to a greater dependence on the resources of the sea than is usual elsewhere in Melanesia. The historical biogeography of New Caledonia remains largely unknown so that any thoughts on the response of earlier Melanesian settlers some 4000 years ago are no more than speculation. What is known is that there was a rapid colonization (for reasons that are never likely to be known) by migrants who had not travelled long distances, probably from the islands of Vanuatu, and who undoubtedly quite rapidly came to terms with an environment that, although drier, cooler, more barren, and thus more difficult than those further north, was not hostile to settlement. Varied Melanesian societies and cultures evolved, cultures and economies that related to this land and that were adapted to the vicissitudes of nature and the relative isolation imposed by the mountainous landscape.

**Traditional Melanesian society**

Following the dramatic and rapid colonization of the unpopulated landscape of New Caledonia, and the end of the Lapita phase in Oceanic pre-history, many of the societies and cultures on the islands of what is now Melanesia (from Irian Jaya to Fiji) evolved in relative isolation from other cultures on the same and nearby islands. Separate traditions emerged as particular societies came to terms with their own environment in different ways. In the circumstances it is not surprising that there are some differences in social organization within New Caledonia, although there are similarities that distinguish New Caledonia from other parts of Melanesia. In fact variations in social organization within New Caledonia appear relatively slight and, though it is possible to make sweeping generalizations, there is much debate on the nature of Melanesian social structure (e.g. Bensa and Rivierre 1984; Guiart 1984c, 1984e, 1985c). Nevertheless the cultural and economic relationship between people and land binds all the Melanesian societies of New Caledonia together in shared beliefs and emotions and gives them considerable empathy with societies throughout Melanesia.

As in other parts of Melanesia the traditional societies of New Caledonia were broadly shaped by the relationship between
families, clans and tribes. These ancient tribes were different from their modern counterparts which are largely an artificial imposition of the colonial system. Although tribes were weakly structured they did organize small societies into tiny independent 'states', some with their own language and each with an effective structure of government and a very close relationship to a particular land area. The configuration, alliances and rivalries of these tribes have played a major part in Melanesian history in New Caledonia. Tribes themselves were quite small, usually no more than a few hundred people living in clusters of small villages, hence 'the term "tribe" gives Westerners an erroneous impression of great size' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:234). Moreover many of these tribes were effectively divided into smaller sub-tribes and fission and fusion were (and still are) not uncommon in tribal groups.

By contrast to the amorphous tribes a greater homogeneity marked the clans which composed the tribe. Members of a clan claimed descent from a common ancestor, whose dwelling place was revered and was closely associated with clan land. When clan members left their land, for whatever reason, they always retained close ties with those who remained. The extent to which these ties were significant was especially apparent after the end of the Second World War, when wartime restrictions on mobility were lifted, and clansmen again began to visit their land and each other frequently (Deschamps and Guiart 1957:116ff). These ties between people and land, which have never been extinguished, are not only crucial to any understanding of Melanesian society and economy but have been the single most important influence on the course of New Caledonian history. As the great missionary-anthropologist Maurice Leenhardt put it: 'Each group and clan has its own place. Each village and habitat has its place and each of the various parts reflects a particular function. The plan of society is written on the ground' (Leenhardt 1947/1969:69).

In traditional society Melanesians lived in small hamlets, dispersed on crests, spurs or small hills, among their food gardens (Doumenge 1982:80). Beyond lay scrub, woods and mountains; these constitute the places of spirits (Leenhardt 1947/1969:93). Social territory coincided with natural territory. Each society was in some respects different from each other, and separated from it by mountains, ridges, rivers and seas. The small hamlets themselves were dominated by the great house of the clan (sometimes erroneously referred to as the chief's house), raised on a carefully constructed circular mound and representing the power of the clan and its ancestors. Men lived in the great house, held their councils there and received guests. Women lived with their children in smaller, more modest round houses (Douglas 1982:387-8), a distinction common to many societies of New Guinea, but less common in island Melanesia. The great house dominated village life, both in itself, and through its being framed by graceful rows of trees, especially coconuts and Araucaria pines;
the latter, a long-lived, highly resistant species, symbolized the permanence and endurance of the clan (Leenhardt 1947/69:92; Douglas 1982:388-9; Doumenge 1982:52). Clans and tribes were each headed by a chief; to some extent this was the equivalent of the 'big man' in Melanesian societies further north, whose authority spanned temporal and religious spheres, combining elements of elder statesman, wise man, priest or even elder brother, and whose legitimacy derived from the consensual support of his people, a support which implied respect and obedience. Such a man was likely to be hard-working, shrewd, and charismatic. Leaders of clan groups were, in theory, the oldest male directly descended from the clan's founding couple. The most powerful clan chief was the tribal chief: the grand chef (great chief). Succession normally went to the oldest son of the clan and tribal chiefs. Both clans and tribes were hierarchical and there was marked social stratification, especially at the upper levels, with chiefs being given extreme deference and often having their own 'court' language. Under tribal chiefs were a range of advisers, what Howe terms 'ministers' (1984:62), all forming a complex bureaucracy, perhaps almost an advisory council. Consequently arbitrary chiefly power was rare and chiefs were seen as symbols of tribal unity and the repository of cultural knowledge and thus were expected to act in the interests of the whole tribe (Guiart 1963, cited by Howe 1984:62). While there were variations from region to region the Melanesian societies that evolved in New Caledonia were complex, highly structured and had leaders who, with the support of their clans and tribes, had the ability to mobilize considerable support for diverse ends, including the waging of war and the maintenance of peace and stability. Nevertheless such leaders had limited authority, since they were neither sanctioned by religious status nor by heredity; their status derived from their position as the senior member of a descent group and their powers were regulated by custom and consensus. A chief was 'the personification of the power and prestige of the group' (Douglas 1979a:38) and if that power and prestige were diminished his occupation of the position would be short-lived.

A significant and distinct position in New Caledonian societies was that of 'master of the land', although there were also divisions of function between chiefs, war chiefs and sorcerers. Such a 'master of the land' may have been the representative of the earliest inhabitants of a particular area, that is those with the stronger claim to a tract of land, and he exerted considerable power through his relationship with the ancestral spirits of the land. Such 'masters of the land' may have been more common in Loyalty Islands and east coast societies, where Polynesian influences were greater. Division of functions, and the existence of informal councils, provided safeguards against chiefly absolutism and despotism; the authority of a chief depended primarily on his individual characteristics rather than in the sense that he was the current holder of a particular 'office'.
Unlike most Melanesian societies to the north, New Caledonian societies like those of Fiji and Polynesia to the east, had a bias towards hereditary chieftainship. However none of the great tribal chieftainships in New Caledonia could trace genealogies beyond eight generations and genealogy was not an important validation of political status (Guiart 1963:641, cited by Douglas 1979b:17). Chiefs with limited abilities or personal qualities would be replaced by kin or abandoned, but the office of chieftainship usually ultimately passed to his direct descendants (Douglas 1979b:17). In New Caledonian societies there was therefore a complex balance between ascription and achievement in succession; retention of chiefly office and power was relatively diffused between chiefs and other individuals with authority in particular areas (Douglas 1979b:18; Doumenge 1982:65-6). Knowledge of traditional chiefdoms is largely based on accounts from the east coast, the Isle of Pines and the Loyalty Islands around the time of contact. It appears that it was those areas that had the largest chiefdoms at that time (e.g., that of the Isle of Pines had influence on the Grande Terre) (Pisier 1978). Elsewhere chiefdoms were certainly smaller, with linguistic regions fragmented between tiny, rival chiefdoms, and with less of the hierarchical structure that characterized the larger chiefdoms (Doumenge 1982:66-7).

The status of the chieftaincy in the Loyalty Islands is now quite different from that on the Grande Terre. In the Loyalty Islands the greater significance of Polynesian traditions, the denser population and the different economic base (in more difficult conditions) resulted in Loyalty Islands chiefs having a much greater authority, an authority which at times may well have been quite autocratic (in part because of the greater probability of the chieftainship being passed on by inheritance to the eldest son). Society in the Loyalty Islands was more hierarchical and chiefs more powerful than on the mainland.

The societies of New Caledonia were strongly agnatic, that is they were organized around persons descended in the male line from a common ancestor. These societies were therefore patrilineal and the main corporate groups were localized patriclans, groups of men descended from the same ancestor with their wives who had married into that clan from elsewhere. Inheritance and succession were necessarily patrilineal; much land and resources were held collectively by the clan, although individuals could acquire and transmit to their male descendants rights to use that land. The widespread preference for cross-cousin marriage, a pattern of exchange which ensures the strength of ties between a clan and its land, also illustrates the value attached to equivalence and stability (Douglas 1982:392; Leenhardt 1947/69:95-6) although, in practice, marriage was necessarily more dispersed and more complex.
The term *tribu* (tribe) is currently used by both the administration and Melanesians themselves to refer to the individual villages under the authority of so-called *petits chefs* (small chiefs); these make up the larger units called districts headed by a *grand chef* (Lenormand 1953:248). Traditionally the term *tribu* applied to a group of clans united by a common allegiance to the chief of one of those clans, who was thus the chief of the tribe (Douglas 1970:180). In fact no indigenous language seems to have possessed a word for 'tribe' although the various groups so formed had names and were recognized by their own members and outsiders as forming distinctive entities (Douglas 1979a:37). Moreover both clans and tribes commonly absorbed unrelated individuals and groups, and rationalized this process in kinship terms, even to the extent that newcomers were able to become chiefs (Douglas 1979b:17). New Caledonian societies appear therefore to have been quite flexible in the roles in which men, whether locally born or not, might play in those societies. Societies were often so loosely structured that they could be perceived as 'a series of options' (Guiart 1983a:54) for individuals and clans.

Within the traditional societies of Melanesia the supernatural had an important role and was ever-present not only in social life but also in the complex of economic activities that welded societies together. There was no distinction between sacred and secular. The environment and everyday life were partly shaped by gods and spirits of different kinds; the gods varied from those powerful enough to have created and sustained the world and the ancestors to lesser spirits responsible for particular crops or particular tracts of land. All tracts of land were associated with particular gods and spirits; the most important of those tracts were those where the ancestors had been created and nurtured and each tribe had tracts of particular significance. The immediate ancestors were more closely connected with the living since, though their bodies were sometimes scattered, their skulls were stored, often in caves in mountainsides that were part of the ancestral land and themselves had a sacred role (Leenhardt 1947/79:61). Only in recent decades have these skulls and skeletons disappeared. The habitat of the dead thus merges with that of the living; 'the skull-place is the true support of the group's spatial and social domain' (Leenhardt 1947/79:93). In the Melanesian world view there is no distance between people and things; as phrased by the first and most prominent ethnologist of New Caledonia, 'rocks, plants and the human body originate in similar structures; an identity of substance blends them in the same flux of life' (Leenhardt 1947/79:61). Naturally such gods and spirits were powerful hence there was a range of ceremonial and ritual activity to gain assistance and protection. That ritual played a prominent part in the life of traditional societies is scarcely surprising; neither is it surprising that it was intricately linked with the land, the source of continued
life. The sacred and secular relationship with the land is a continuous thread throughout Melanesian history.

Beyond the wide-ranging belief systems that were 'religions' in a manner shared by Christian belief systems, there were also more complex and more varied, belief systems. Thus in many parts of Melanesia, and in a great many societies, there was 'a binary world view whereby dual categories were set in opposition to each other' (Howe 1984:66); the most widespread of these was the opposition between males and females, an opposition that was usually expressed physically in the division of villages into male and female worlds. The broad central avenue was symbolic of the men's realm; parallel, smaller and outer avenues were the women's realm - a subordinate world. These divisions, unfamiliar to outsiders, organized the operation and maintenance of traditional societies; the eventual confrontation between Melanesian and European values resulted in their slow decline and a more complex and confusing synthesis of beliefs and values.

The distinctiveness of tribes in the pre-contact era was emphasized and is still made apparent by linguistic divisions. At the time of contact only on Mare, which had one language and about 4300 people, and on Lifou, with one language for 5700 people (Howe 1977:7-9), were there significant numbers of people speaking a single language. Currently, there are some twenty-eight indigenous languages spoken in New Caledonia, twenty-four of which are spoken on the Grande Terre, many with distinct dialects. Following contact and the movement of Melanesians some languages have completely disappeared (Rivierre 1981). Only about four languages now have more than three thousand speakers and several of the surviving languages, perhaps on their way to extinction, have no more than a hundred speakers. What is extraordinary about the linguistic divisions of New Caledonia is that many languages are spoken both on the east and west coasts, but not in adjoining coastal areas, giving the linguistic map (Map 4) the appearance of a series of slices across the Grande Terre; slices which correspond to social divisions. Complex linguistic patterns are typical of Melanesia and the languages of New Caledonia generally have considerable similarities with those of Vanuatu.

Despite extensive social and economic ties between tribes, often over long distances, social life was not always harmonious. Warfare and conflicts over land were not unusual in traditional times and, although oral histories of these wars (e.g. Godard 1979:15; Negret 1983) undoubtedly inflate the violence and the number of casualties, wars were serious deterrents to population migration and growth. Around the time of contact warfare appears to have been unusually serious and wide-ranging (Brou 1977:251-2; Dubois 1984:222). In the absence of a central authority the cycle of attack and retaliation would have been almost impossible to break. The aim was not to wipe out opponents but to establish precedence and emphasize claims to land. Cannibalism was also
associated with warfare; sorcery was not unusual, and the significance of each of these overt or potentially violent practices is demonstrated in the fact that they had not disappeared at the start of the present century (Douglas 1979:42-3; Douglas 1982:385). Although in many ways traditional Melanesian societies, in New Caledonia as elsewhere, were brutal societies they had their own dynamics and should be assessed accordingly.

The pre-contact economy

The traditional Melanesian economy was absolutely dominated by agriculture and the cultivation of two principal root crops, taro and yams. In most areas fishing was relatively unimportant, gathering of wild foods was common and hunting limited by the absence of a variety of large animals. Although the economy was typical of other Melanesian economies to the north, there were at least three interesting differences. First, here in the south of
the tropics, agriculture was generally seasonal. Yams in particular were planted in seasonal cycles (Tjibaou 1976:285-6). Planting mainly occurred around September and October although the precise season varied according to the district and which of the many varieties of yam were grown. Simple wooden digging sticks were used, with the yams being planted on mounds to allow necessary free drainage around the plants. The start of the planting season was usually marked by ceremonies and was a period of maximum demand for agricultural labour. The return of many urban workers to temporarily assist in the agricultural economy is typical throughout the country at this time. Seasonality remains an important element of Melanesian agriculture and ceremonial life.

Agricultural life in New Caledonia was, and is, characterized by yams and taro rather than the sweet potato so common to the north. In a seasonal economy yams were particularly valuable since they could be stored for longer (up to four months) than any other root crop. At least ten types of yams are known in New Caledonia, and six of these existed before contact; those introduced to New Caledonia include one brought back by Loyalty Islanders working in the canefields of Queensland at the end of the nineteenth century (Doumenge 1982:46-7). In the two large areas of Melanesia, the Sepik district of Papua New Guinea (cf. Tuzin 1972) and New Caledonia, yams have a major symbolic role that transcends their simple if important nutritional value (Leenhardt 1947/79:62-3). Yams are grown to more than two metres in length and, although yam rituals are now attenuated, yams are handled with the gentle touch demanded of an infant. The cultivation and consumption of the yam demonstrate the strong link between the ancestors, the land and the whole structure of contemporary existence. The yam is one of the most important riches exchanged at marriages and funerals, and is the seal of alliance between clans. Melanesian roots are firmly embedded in the Melanesian soil: 'Landscapes, village cultures, the society, the defunct men and mythic beings form a single ensemble, not only indivisible but even practically undifferentiated' (Leenhardt 1947/79:93). Changes in recent history have distorted these relationships but they are far from absent or forgotten.

The second distinctive feature of Melanesian agriculture in New Caledonia is the elaborate and extensive series of terraces and irrigation systems constructed on the hillsides of New Caledonia. All these systems have now been abandoned although several were still in use after the Second World War. The hillsides now bear impressive witness to the ingenuity and vigour of earlier Melanesian agriculturalists (see Cook 1774/1961:538) through the grass-covered earth and stone ramparts, visible most dramatically at heights of over 1000 metres on the flanks of the Col des Rousettes (between Bourail and Houailou) and apparent even to casual tourists on the Col de la Pirogue, between Noumea and the Tontouta international airport. The extent of these
hillside terraces is remarkable as settlement was primarily concentrated in river valleys and on coastal sites, and few settlements were inland at high altitude. However the terraces themselves were probably at least partially a response to a situation where horticulture had become difficult on the dry coastal plains of the west where the original woodland vegetation was gradually displaced by shifting cultivation, and where soils were already poor. Taro requires considerably more water than yams, hence the complexity of the system in a relatively dry area. These agricultural systems of unknown antiquity (cf. Curry 1959; Spriggs 1982) demonstrate both the significance of taro cultivation and the enormous extent of agricultural systems in areas that have now been abandoned as a result of a post-contact decline in the Melanesian population and the concentration of tribes into reserves away from their traditionally owned and cultivated land. A third distinctive feature of the traditional agricultural economy of New Caledonia was the absence of livestock. As on some of the southern islands of Vanuatu, pigs, dogs and chickens were non-existent in New Caledonia before European contact; why none of these animals ever reached New Caledonia before contact is a matter of speculation, especially because of evidence of long-distance trade. That they were not there demonstrates that the economy was less diverse than areas to the north and, equally important, that the ceremonial role of the pig, so pronounced throughout most of Melanesia, was totally unknown.

Although taro and yams dominated the agricultural economy there was a variety of other food crops (and wild species, hunted and collected from land, river and sea) and some diversity in traditional diets, diets that normally provided adequate nutrition. However the diet was less diverse and more monotonous than most other parts of Melanesia; there was little meat or fish in many areas, no spices and neither kava nor betel nuts, both widespread in other areas of the Pacific. Despite the task of maintaining complex irrigation systems it was not a system that demanded large inputs of labour. Like other Melanesian agricultural systems, it could be simply described as one of 'primitive' or 'subsistence affluence'; where Melanesians were able to produce, from their own resources, as much as they can consume of the normal staple foods that they are used to, together with a reasonable surplus for entertainment, display and emergency, and a standard of housing, clothing and entertainment... that is traditionally acceptable, with the employment of a relatively small part of the total potential resources of labour and land available to them. This means that within their self-subsistent, non-monetary production system, the productivity of their labour is very high (Fisk 1975:59).
In such conditions Melanesians did not go hungry and their food was reasonably easy to obtain even with stone tools. Yet it is apparent that agricultural life was not easy everywhere; the maintenance of taro irrigation was probably laborious, while in the Loyalty Islands, even to the earliest European eyes, the inhabitants led a difficult existence, short of fresh water and spending long working hours on their inland food gardens. As one European missionary recorded, they had 'a soil which needed hard work to make it supply them with food; and they had thus been trained in habits of energy and industry' (G.A. Selwyn, cited by Howe 1977:7). Moreover despite low labour inputs and the availability of food surpluses and leisure time it was probably not a situation best described as one of 'affluence', periods of scarcity were common (Dahl 1985:5), life expectancies were probably short, limited by a variety of diseases (and minimal medical knowledge) and occasional warfare.

For women social organization may well have been oppressive. According to Leenhardt, Melanesians had observed, 'that humanity is divided between men and women, and that neither of these two parties is superior to the other in number or in power... they established between these parties the equilibrium of a harmonious mutual aid' (Leenhardt 1937:19, cited by Douglas 1982:386). Yet Leenhardt had a prevailing image of a traditional Melanesian culture and society that was 'balanced, harmonious, stable, disciplined and tightly integrated' (Leenhardt 1937:19, cited by Douglas 1982:386) and more idyllic than the historical record often demonstrates; women were usually onlookers and bystanders in ceremonies and most major, and certainly most visible, social, political and religious roles were filled by men (Douglas 1982:392). Those rare women who did achieve power and status, such as 'Queen Hortense', the wife of great chief Samuel of the Isle of Pines (Pisier 1978:15-19), were successful only in the modern era where their personal talents were valuable and recognized. Women's role in traditional Melanesian society was usually supplementary rather than interdependent and equal.

While there are many accounts of Pacific islanders around the time of European contact that refer to them as robust and healthy (e.g. Howe 1984:47-8), initial appearances may well have deceived early explorers, some of whom were certainly imagining idyllic island environments and peoples, so that Cook's account of some New Caledonians at contact is probably realistic: 'Swelled and ulcerated legs and feet are common amongst the Men; swelled testicles are likewise very common' (Cook 1774/1961:540). Dental decay and degenerative diseases appear also to have been common and old age may well have meant reaching about forty (Howe 1984:49). At the time of contact the most prevalent endemic diseases, on the Loyalty Islands at least, were yaws, filariasis (notably elephantiasis) and diseases generally associated with tuberculosis (including pleurisy) and a wide variety of tropical sores and ulcers (Howe 1977:145). Tubercular diseases may have
been introduced into the Pacific by Europeans and spread to New Caledonia by Polynesians. Diseases were common and few islanders could have escaped the impact of serious illnesses in their short lifetimes. Islanders had a variety of medicinal (and psychological) responses to disease and some early observers of local society noted that traditional remedies were often effective, especially for minor diseases. As many as six hundred local plant species had some medicinal use (Rageau 1973) and, in some areas, operations were undertaken, including the trepanning of skulls (Rochas 1862; Howe 1977:150-1), a clear indication that life in pre-contact times was rarely idyllic.

Localized trade complemented resource production within a single tribe; fish and manufactured goods (such as pottery) played a major part in these trade networks which often cemented socio-political ties. For example, the people of Mare and Lifou sent a variety of goods (such as necklaces, gourds and mats) to the Isle of Pines and southern New Caledonia from where they received goods such as jade axes and tree trunks, since the Loyalty Islands lacked adequate timber for the manufacture of large canoes (Howe 1977:8). Elsewhere there was trade at regular markets between coastal and upland tribes; taro and yams being traded for fish from the coast (Rochas 1862; Doumenge 1982:88-90) a phenomenon common to many other parts of coastal Melanesia. Trade enabled escape from any unusual environmental problems and extensive trade and social ties (cf. Bensa and Rivierre 1982) cemented social and economic relations between groups and with the land.

The history of New Caledonia before European contact is not one of static societies uninfluenced by the external world; societies evolved, changes occurred through internal migration (e.g. Guiart 1953), warfare and natural hazards and Polynesian migrants occasionally settled in the Loyalty Islands. These Polynesians were usually integrated peacefully into local communities (and, on Ouvea, founded their own communities), being given positions of some status by local chiefs in return for the transfer of whatever intellectual and technological skills the migrants possessed (Howe 1977:6); skills and techniques eventually diffused throughout New Caledonia. It is unnecessary to attribute all pre-contact social and cultural variations to Polynesian contacts; the broad differences between the cultures of New Caledonia and those of other parts of Melanesia are evidence enough of regional variations. With their advantages and disadvantages, most of the latter apparent only from the comparative perspectives afforded by hindsight, the Melanesian economies undoubtedly survived little-changed for thousands of years providing some balance between population and resources in a manageable environment.

It is naturally impossible to know what the population of New Caledonia was before European contact but it has been crudely estimated that the indigenous Melanesian population may have been
more than 40,000; it is even conceivable, but unlikely, that it could actually have been larger in pre-contact times than it has ever been subsequently. Certainly the population was larger than anywhere else in island Melanesia even in a relatively difficult environment. The evidence of former large populations is seen throughout New Caledonia in the abandoned taro terraces. There were constant fluxes in the balance of power between clans and tribes, and external influences were occasionally absorbed into New Caledonian societies. European contact dramatically emphasized the content, pace and character of change. A cyclical rhythm became linear. It is a truism that New Caledonia would never be the same again; the Melanesian world was to be overturned.
Chapter 2

European discovery

They (the white men) arrived in huge barques and they cut down our trees to fasten their sails to their boats. That was all right. They ate the yam. That was all right. But then they took the land, and the women and the young people... They must have been very unhappy in their own land, to have come so far (Daoumi of the Isle of Pines to Louise Michel; Michel 1885:45-50).

The South Pacific was the last great region of the world, a third of the globe, to be explored by Europeans and for most of the early explorers it was a great disappointment. Searching for suspected continents, and even King Solomon's legendary mines, the small islands of the south seas yielded meagre rewards to their European discoverers. In the sixteenth century the Spanish reached Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, where they attempted settlement, but the settlement quickly failed; it was only after another two hundred years that Europeans again visited these islands and it was not until the British became involved in Pacific exploration that New Caledonia became known to a wider world.

The British first became interested in the Pacific late in the sixteenth century but the journeys of the earliest British explorers, such as Francis Drake, were confined to the North Pacific and they and subsequent British ships tended to follow existing Spanish routes in the hope of plundering Spanish treasures. Consequently, in the mid-eighteenth century most of the South Pacific was unknown to Europeans. After the end of the Seven Years War in 1763, both Britain and France were able to turn their attention to other areas of mutual interest, including the exploration of the South Pacific. Moreover, 'for the first time in the era of Pacific exploration, the quest for scientific knowledge in itself was a major concern, though hopes for trade and new lands to rule were not entirely forgotten' (Howe 1984:81). The British government and the Royal Society sent Cook to Tahiti in 1768 where, as instructed, he observed the transit of Venus across the sun, before travelling on to New Zealand. His second Pacific voyage (1772-75) covered a massive area of the South Pacific, in search of the anticipated Terra Australis, and it was
in the course of this long voyage that New Caledonia was first sighted. By the end of that century virtually every island in the South Pacific had been placed on the map; the outline, but the outline only, of the geography of the South Pacific was complete.

By far the most important event in the contemporary history of New Caledonia might have been viewed as the arrival of Captain Cook and the European discovery of New Caledonia in September 1774. In practice this visit proved of little lasting significance. Cook landed at Balade, on the northeast coast, and named the island for its similarity, as he saw it, to the bare and rugged mountains of western Scotland. Prevented by the reef from sailing around to the west coast, Cook doubled back along the east coast and discovered the Isle of Pines. The Resolution remained for nine days in New Caledonian waters; Cook gave approximate dimensions to the islands, estimated the population (between 45,000 and 50,000), described the houses, agricultural systems, health and physical characteristics of the people and remarked that the landscape was very similar to that of Australia. The indigenous occupants may never have given these islands a name, certainly they never saw it as a unity and had never united it politically. If particular tribes did have names for New Caledonia they have now disappeared forever. Contemporary names such as Vanuatu ('the land') and Kanaky (roughly, 'the Melanesian people's land') are almost as artificial creations as those conferred by the early explorers. Thus one significant effect of Cook's discovery was that the outside world perceived the Grande Terre as a distinct unity and that perception was eventually transferred to the Melanesian population.

There now seems little doubt that the second European voyage to New Caledonia was that of La Pérouse. Four years after Cook's discovery, he set sail from Sydney never to be seen again. Eventually, in 1826, the remains of one of his ships, the Astrolabe, was discovered on Vanikoro in the Solomon Islands. There is some evidence that La Pérouse visited Pouebo (Brou 1984) and perhaps elsewhere in New Caledonia but the truth is unlikely ever to be known. The second European expedition known to have reached New Caledonia was that in 1792-93 of another French navigator, Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, who had been sent to search for La Pérouse. D'Entrecasteaux discovered the Belep Islands, explored the west coast of the Grande Terre and stayed for three weeks in Balade; there he described a countryside at war, with the people being thieves, cruel and cannibals, in contrast to the more sociable, honest and peaceful Melanesians described by Cook. Thus, not only were external perceptions quite different but Melanesian societies may also have been in such a state of flux that these diverse perceptions were quite valid. It is more probable that Cook, the more experienced Pacific voyager, was able to establish more friendly relations (cf. Dousset-Leenhardt 1978:47). However, there could have been famines, local warfare, changes in the leadership structure or other reasons for these
differences (Douglas 1970:182-3). When the first European contacts were made with Melanesians north of Noumea, contemporary accounts similarly described quite different societies, some much 'larger and more ferocious' than others (Saussol 1979a:57). Though Cook's comments were unusually positive, Melanesian societies varied and changes in societal structures would easily have accounted for variations in the welcome accorded to outsiders.

The establishment of the New South Wales penal colony in 1788 prompted many more voyages in the South Pacific, although surprisingly few reached the islands of New Caledonia until the sandalwood traders and missionaries arrived half a century later. Neither Cook nor d'Entrecasteaux saw the low-lying Loyalty Islands but between 1788 and 1798 all the outlying dependencies of New Caledonia were discovered by British ships. Nonetheless in many respects island Melanesia remained one of the least known maritime areas in the world and it is still surprising that the largest island in the South Pacific attracted so little interest from other explorers after Cook's discovery.

At the end of the eighteenth century France was partly preoccupied with domestic concerns, as Napoleon established his power, and French colonial ventures came no closer to the South Pacific than the Indian Ocean and Indo-China. The Indian Ocean, in the last decade of the century, was a focus of French and British struggles for naval and territorial supremacy, struggles that were to be relived in the next century in the Pacific. The British, with superior seapower, by contrast, were more strongly established on the fringes of the Pacific. By 1800 the European population of New South Wales, few of whom were real settlers, had reached 6000 and the London Missionary Society (LMS) had sent its first missionaries to Tahiti. France, after the Revolution, had lost its naval power and the discovery, conquest and colonization of the Pacific was impossible.

Trade

Cook's discovery of New Caledonia provoked no British interest in the region just as d'Entrecasteaux encouraged no great French interest. It was left to traders and missionaries to establish more substantial contacts with New Caledonia. The principal immediate result of Cook's explorations was the British decision to establish a penal settlement in New South Wales, a decision which may also have been influenced by strategies aimed at naval control of the South Pacific. The founding of the settlement at Sydney established a base for trading in the South Pacific, essential to obtaining the food supplies necessary to support the new penal colony. By the start of the nineteenth century, trade between Sydney and the South Pacific had become well established, not only for basic foods (including pork) but
for some luxury items such as sandalwood, pearl shells and bêche-de-mer (sea slug or sea cucumber) that could be traded with China. Sandalwood was traded from several parts of the Pacific, as far east as Hawai and the Marquesas but it was essentially not until the 1840s and the 1850s that the sandalwood trade reached New Caledonia and Vanuatu. Until then the fearsome reputation of Melanesians, derived principally from the experiences of traders and missionaries in other parts of Melanesia, had deterred trade and missionary contact.

The first sandalwood traders from Sydney anchored off the Isle of Pines (Kunie) in August 1841; within a few months dozens of sandalwood traders had set sail for the Isle of Pines. It soon became generally known that sandalwood was also common on the Grande Terre, in the Loyalty Islands and in the nearby islands of Vanuatu; 'the rush was on' (Howe 1984:319). For the Isle of Pines at least the first phase of the sandalwood trade appeared to benefit all because in exchange for this timber which the Kunies did not use, the sandalwood traders offered iron (which was so important to drill holes in the wood of canoes or of houses), some glass which cut more effectively than shells, and some multi-coloured cotton cloth (especially red) which was an excellent substitute for a rough tapa made with vegetable fibres (Pisier 1978:10).

The honeymoon phase did not last long; there were violent clashes between islanders and ships crews at the Isle of Pines, Mare, Balade and elsewhere, clashes vividly described by Sydney trader Andrew Cheyne (Shineberg 1971a:96-140). However by the mid-1840s there was a hesitant peace in the main trading areas and English traders proliferated; James Paddon had established a trading post on the Isle of Pines by 1846 and six years later there were six sandalwood trading posts on the island (Pisier 1978:11). Others were established at Ouvea and on the Grande Terre; traders remained for longer periods on the islands, employing island men and women as servants and sometimes marrying islanders.

As the islands became better known to foreign traders other products, such as bêche-de-mer, were traded with the islanders. Bêche-de-mer was greatly appreciated in China for its value as an aphrodisiac. Other goods exported from New Caledonia around 1850 included coconut oil, pearl shell and turtleshell (Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:51). By the 1850s the sandalwood market in China had slumped and the best wood in New Caledonia had been depleted, although the trade lingered on until around 1860. The peak year for coconut oil trade was 1868, when nearly 100 tons were exported; after that both coconut oil and bêche-de-mer production declined, and by 1873 little of either was exported (Douglas 1971:164). The decline in the sandalwood, bêche-de-mer and coconut oil trades was partly compensated and replaced by the
establishment of copra trade in 1860 (Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:68). Even before New Caledonia had become a colony it had been drawn into the complexities and fluctuations of the world economy.

Trade for the products of the land and lagoons was matched by trade for the products of the sea. Little is known about the whaling trade in Melanesian waters; in the 1840s, when whaling was at its zenith throughout the South Pacific, schools of whales ran between New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands and along other migratory routes to Vanuatu. There were whaling stations on several islands including Mare and Lifou (Howe 1978:75); Loyalty Islanders worked on the whaling ships (Doumenge 1982:99) while whale oil was exported from New Caledonia at least until 1860 (Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:68) and probably to the end of the 1870s.

In the course of these early trading ventures a handful of European 'beachcombers', traders or castaways, settled and sometimes married or lived with Melanesians. Their superior knowledge, especially of weapons, and the fact that they were no threat to the power structure of traditional society, ensured that they were generally well-received. In the Loyalty Islands and around Hienghene especially, where the famous 'Cannibal Jack' resided, a number of Europeans, mainly British, had produced métis (mixed race) children by the middle of the century, and their surnames survive (Saussol 1979a:45-6). Often in these early years Melanesians especially welcomed the first Europeans they came in contact with (Dousset-Leenhardt 1978:102). As their relations soured and as perceptions of European power changed so the welcome received by Europeans declined dramatically.

Trade introduced a range of commodities into New Caledonia; metal tools replaced wooden tools and metal fish-hooks replaced bone and shell ones. In these kinds of transactions islanders benefited as demands on their labour time declined; this transition from stone to steel was an important one throughout Melanesia but, as elsewhere, the main beneficiaries were the men rather than the women, whose laborious tasks of planting and weeding were little changed by this 'technological revolution' (Shineberg 1967:160-1). Gardening times were reduced, house construction simplified (especially with the introduction of nails) and local trading networks were often abandoned, as all necessary goods could be obtained from European traders. Consequently local food production near trading posts often increased so that the surplus could be exchanged. Some chiefs, such as the Naisilines on Mare and Bouarate at Hienghene, monopolized trade and became more powerful than their local rivals. Thus a former pattern of local and regional self-sufficiency, in which all foods and other goods that were needed could be obtained either around the village or through local trade, became gradually transformed towards a dependency on foreign traders, almost all of whom sailed from Sydney. Many foreign goods, which for a brief time were mere wants, quickly
became necessities. Melanesian communities in New Caledonia were never again self-reliant.

While none could deny the utility of the new metal tools, other new imports into the islands were less obviously universally beneficial. Even before 1853, the date of French annexation, ships' cargoes were equally dominated by tobacco and alcohol (Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:51-3) and also clothes, much welcomed, and effectively imposed by the new missionary presence. By the mid-1850s this pattern had merely diversified; beyond cigarettes and sticks of tobacco, pipes had become important while virtually the whole range of wines and spirits were traded. How much of this alcohol was actually consumed by Melanesians, rather than by the few European settlers, is not clear. Cordier-Rossiaud concludes that 'these alcohol imports seem to be one of the most notable results of the colonization of New Caledonia' (1957:59). Not only that but, with some exaggeration, it was noted that of all the imports 'tobacco and alcohol were almost the only goods that reached the native population' (Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:65). In the Loyalty Islands, it was noted, the Melanesians rapidly became 'compulsive, obsessive smokers' (Howe 1977:104). By contrast Shineberg argued that very little alcohol reached Melanesians (1967:154-5). In subsequent years alcohol and tobacco imports steadily increased to the extent that one traveller, in 1871, commented that 'the most obvious of all French imports is absinthe' (L. de Beauvoir, quoted by Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:71).

Elements of a distinct French influence were already in place. Another trade good, often argued to have had dramatic consequences in Melanesia, was the shotgun; however the available evidence suggests that they were more significant for their prestige and psychological impact than for their actual killing-power (Shineberg 1971b; Howe 1974) and that, unlike many other parts of the Pacific, guns were then unimportant in New Caledonia. Nevertheless it is readily apparent that the trade goods received in New Caledonia were often more beneficial to the traders, in ensuring the probability of a maintained dependence, than to the Melanesian recipients.

One further import, not mentioned in ships' manifests before 1853, but eventually of major importance throughout the Pacific, was food. Flour appears to have been imported for the first time in 1853, salt and sugar in 1854, bread and rice in 1855 and tinned beef and pork, biscuits and potatoes in 1856. Probably a much greater proportion of these imported foods, compared with alcohol, was eaten by Europeans (Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:60-1). Some undoubtedly were eaten by Melanesians, notably those employed by Europeans, and rather more slowly than the spread of tools or clothing, imported foods diffused into Melanesian diets. While less dramatic in their initial impact than most other imports, new foods were ultimately more influential for social change than almost any other change. There is no more poignant symbol of the French colonization of New Caledonia than the widely reproduced
photographs of Melanesians clutching under their arms their baguettes, the long French loaves.

The labour trade

One of the more important effects of the sandalwood trade was the enthusiasm with which many Melanesians turned to working for the traders, especially through travelling as boats' crew. As early as the mid-1840s almost every sandalwood trading vessel had islanders aboard as crew and, more than any other Melanesians, the Loyalty Islanders rapidly developed a reputation for being excellent sailors and hard workers. As the number of trading stations increased, 'there was even a flourishing system of migrant labour in southern Melanesian waters as entrepreneurs... gathered labourers from their various islands and took them to sandalwood depots' (Howe 1984:327). Loyalty Islanders were rapidly becoming familiar with a wider world.

Within New Caledonia there had been attempts to recruit Melanesians for agricultural work as early as the 1850s; the first French colonists required agricultural labour and initially used English recruiters, such as the sandalwood trader Andrew Henry. However most of the recruits came from Vanuatu since Loyalty Islanders preferred to work for Englishmen and certainly wanted to go further afield than New Caledonia (Howe 1984:328-9). A Marist missionary observed in 1861: 'the reason for travel, to see other countries, to become like Whitemen, to be admired, often takes possession of the young men; and many, leaving their islands, are happy to cross the seas' (Howe 1977:89-90). A very high proportion of men from the Loyalties worked overseas at some time in the nineteenth century.

It was inevitable that Melanesians, living so close to Australia, would eventually be seen as a source of cheap labour for farms and plantations in Australia. As early as 1847 Benjamin Boyd, a New South Wales entrepreneur and grazier, recruited some 150 islanders from the Loyalty Islands (mainly Lifou), Vanuatu and the southern Gilbert Islands (Kiribati), intending to employ them on his properties in New South Wales. However, none ever worked there, and all the recruits were eventually repatriated to their home islands (Howe 1978:29-31). It was an unpromising start to the labour trade, a trade which affected only the Loyalty Islands in New Caledonia, and then essentially during the period of French administration, but it meant that many Loyalty Islanders were familiar with the basic principles of labour recruiting two decades before the Melanesian labour trade commenced in earnest.

Missions

Missionary expansionism essentially paralleled that of trade and, again, it was missions from Britain that had the earliest
influence on New Caledonia. Civilization and Christianity were regarded as inextricably interwoven and, throughout the Pacific, mission organizations, stimulated by an evangelical revival in Britain, struggled to bring these two virtues to peoples who had never known the second and were universally believed to lack the first. The LMS was prominent among those missions which stressed both material and spiritual transformations. For the first time attempts were made to change the life-styles of Pacific islanders, so that henceforth they would be usefully employed principally at work or in worship. The LMS was formed in 1795 and, two years later, sent its first mission to Tahiti. Other mission societies entered the Pacific at the start of the nineteenth century but, by the time the Catholic mission established its first outposts in this vast ocean, several Protestant denominations were already established and squabbling over their mission frontiers. These early squabbles were relatively trivial compared to the major disputes that followed the establishment of Catholic missions. Not only were there doctrinal divisions but there were now national rivalries because Protestant missionaries were usually British (or American) and Catholic missionaries were French (Howe 1984:120-1). These disputes rivalled, paralleled and emphasized island feuds as traditional indigenous rivals within Pacific islands chose competing faiths for their allegiances and transferred traditional rivalries into a modern arena.

Of all the different parts of Melanesia New Caledonia proved to be the most responsive to Christian missions, in considerable contrast to Vanuatu, immediately to the north, where attempts at conversion had produced a series of catastrophes for missionaries and islanders alike. Nowhere was success more apparent than in the Loyalty Islands, where the population were 'by far the most fervent Christian islanders in the southwest Pacific' (Howe 1984:307). The LMS first visited the Isle of Pines and the Loyalty Islands in 1841 and 1842 when they landed Polynesian teachers, mainly from Samoa and Rarotonga (Cook Islands). By the end of the 1860s the whole population of the Loyalty Islands had been converted either by the LMS or the Catholic Marist Mission. The hierarchical political system of the Loyalty Islands, the manner in which chiefs used the institutions and teachings of Christianity to serve their own positions and assume greater control over the tribe, the tradition of acceptance of strangers and, subsequently, the uniformity of language, all contributed to the rapid acceptance of Christianity. 'European religious and national differences were exploited within the framework of indigenous politics on each of the three Loyalty Islands' (Howe 1984:308) and these differences have been maintained throughout the twentieth century.

On Mare the leading family in Si Gwahma, the area that first came under the influence of the LMS, was the Naisiline family. The great chief, Viewene Naisiline, welcomed the first Polynesian missionaries and, after his death, his brother Naisiline Nidoish
welcomed the first European LMS missionaries and, with missionary support, the chieftainship became a despotism (Howe 1979:8). Naisiline Nidoish's two storey stone house became a source of wonder not only to his own people but even to European visitors. Christianity had proved advantageous in Mare and 'there was a genuine and even aggressive enthusiasm for wearing clothes, churchgoing... learning to read and write and participating in church feasts and sports days. Upward social mobility was readily available to the more astute Islanders' (Howe 1979:9). Moreover the mission was associated with the new European technology; metal implements (such as fish-hooks, saws and axes) reduced the drudgery of agricultural labour, enabled the construction of wells and were also symbols of status. Indeed missionary activity pervaded every aspect of Mare life; one of the more unusual manifestations of this was cricket, a sport taught by the LMS throughout its part of the South Pacific and transformed by Pacific islanders into numerous variants of the still emerging classic form. Cricket became a major recreational activity in the Loyalty Islands, to the extent that it is now the principal summer game of New Caledonia and almost all the principal teams, even in Noumea, are composed of Loyalty Islanders, the only area where the LMS was successful. Likewise, just as English sports entered the Loyalty Islands following LMS influence so too did English words; most of the names of such innovations as spoons or beds, bees and honey, were transferred into the local languages. Only in the Loyalty Islands, are English words and English personal names numerous. The French have never managed to erase the strong undercurrents of the islanders' anglophilia, which still exist today' (Howe 1977:56).

Even before their establishment in the Loyalty Islands the LMS had reached the Isle of Pines in 1840. Although the Great Chief had requested a European missionary at this time, two Samoans were established, and there was concern that the chief supported Christianity as a means of 'obtaining property and adding to his own influence and importance' (Shineberg 1967:33-4). After an epidemic the LMS effectively abandoned the island. A few years later the sandalwood trader, James Paddon, on good terms with the new Grand Chief, Uatchioum, offered to introduce new missionaries to the islands; the LMS, perhaps wary, let the opportunity pass but the Marists accepted and in 1848 a young white missionary, Father Prosper Goujon, landed at Vao (Pisier 1978:11). Goujon, who remained on the Isle of Pines for thirty years, built a two-storey stone presbytery and a water-driven sawmill and imported cattle, vegetables and fruit trees, before apparently beginning the task of evangelization (Pisier 1978:11). Once again the material rewards of Christianity had been demonstrated, by the Catholics as much as by the Protestants, and two denominations were now established on the fringes of New Caledonia.
On Mare, rival Great Chiefs to the Naisilines saw in the establishment of the Marist mission in the Isle of Pines, an opportunity to regain the power and prestige that they had lost when one part of the island became Protestant. In 1866 a Catholic priest was permanently established on Mare and 'the French Catholic and English Protestant missionaries, bitterly divided by longstanding religious and national prejudices, were inextricably involved in the islanders' own turbulent politics as rival chiefs adopted rival faiths and, with the missionaries' encouragement, indulged in "religious wars"' (Howe 1977:14). Indeed the missions were well aware that much of their appeal 'lay in their mutual hatred and not in the merits of their respective theologies' (Howe 1984:312). These divisions were transferred in less dramatic form to the Grande Terre.

The success of Christianity on the mainland of New Caledonia was neither so easy nor so rapid as in the Loyalty Islands or even the Isle of Pines. Indeed the first tentative contact between the LMS and the population of the Grande Terre occurred at Port Saint Vincent on the west coast in 1840, but the Samoan teachers refused to go ashore because they thought the Melanesians were too fierce-looking (Howe 1984:315). However in 1841 the LMS did establish two teachers at Touaourou (south of Yate) in the southeast of the Grande Terre; they and their successor, the Rarotongan Ta'unga, were unsuccessful (Crocombe and Crocombe 1968) and the LMS withdrew them in 1845, never to return to the mainland of New Caledonia.

Further north the Marist missionaries were no more successful after their establishment of a mission at Balade in 1843, a site chosen because it had been publicized through the writings of Cook and d'Entrecasteaux (Douglas 1970:191). Despite the establishment of a second mission at Pouebo in 1847, the expansion was temporary and an epidemic and famine led to attacks on the mission stations and their abandonment. The Marists nevertheless returned again to Balade in 1851 and Pouebo in 1852, but without success until the annexation of New Caledonia by France in 1853.

A common nationality was a unifying force in such remote areas, especially in the face of so much English presence. French naval commanders and Marist missionaries generally supported each other where they could. French annexation of New Caledonia was welcomed by the Marists who believed that they would now have a measure of security. And they rejoiced that there was no possibility of the French administration allowing English Protestant missionaries onto the island (Howe 1984:316).

Indeed, under French colonial rule Marists were able to establish missions around the island under the protection of the
tiny military garrison, and Catholicism largely prevailed in New Caledonia.

The consequences of first contact

First contact was inevitably patchy so that while some areas were receiving regular European visitors and establishing patterns of trade, other areas, not far away, had no direct contact. On Mare, for example, most of the Europeans who visited the island in the 1840s and 1850s anchored in one sheltered northern bay and the tribes of the south and east were virtually isolated from direct European contact for over twenty years (Howe 1979:4). In these conditions traditional rivalries were often accentuated, especially as tribes around contact points, such as Balade, Hienghene and the Isle of Pines, consolidated their power and influence. One impact of the modern era in New Caledonia was for some small areas to become minor central places, new foci for the diffusion of the goods and values of the world beyond. Subsequently, in a rather different way following the establishment of Christianity, long-standing feuds became wars of religion as rival tribes adopted different religions; in the Loyalty Islands especially there were acute divisions between English Protestant and French Catholic areas.

One major influence of the arrival of traders and missionaries was the stimulus this gave to the more aggressive and ambitious chiefdoms and, with their success, to the generation of localized forms of inequality. This was true in the Isle of Pines, Canala and the Loyalty Islands. Around Canala, as political power increased and became more centralized, larger, multi-clan villages grew up (Doumenge 1974:67-8; 1982:81-2) perhaps four times the size of those further north (Douglas 1982:410). In their turn Europeans were attracted to well-disposed chiefs who would provide large markets, or large flocks, and security (Douglas 1982:396). Other villages grew close to coastal missions and trading posts, a pattern found throughout Melanesia, prefacing a slow but inexorable movement from the hills to contact points with the outside world. The centres of Melanesian life had begun to shift from the great valleys of the mainland to previously marginal sites. Europeans provided manufactured goods, notably tools, clothes and foodstuffs, and provided access to new and powerful avenues of ritual and knowledge. Much more important, continued association with Europeans guaranteed stability and continuity and promised future access to further commodities, skills and knowledge. For Melanesians, the advantages of a closer association with the outside world, and its material rewards, offered scope for a more exciting and rewarding life; the disadvantages were less obvious. It was nevertheless not a wholesale or rapid transformation; 'the desire for European material goods, new technology and institutional improvements was balanced by distaste for many
aspects of Europeans' laws and living patterns' (Hempenstall 1978:203). There were conscious acts of selection and rejection; Melanesian societies and individuals displayed both innovation and conservatism in their acts of conscious choice.

Throughout New Caledonia the benefits of the trading era were most apparent in the supply of new goods. Slowly regional trade networks declined, traditional mechanisms of exchange disappeared as monetization replaced barter and money replaced shells, and tribes diversified their patterns of consumption to incorporate European goods. As new goods became measures of status and prestige so too new values, associated with mercenary and missionary goals, accentuated the competitive elements in tribal societies at the expense of cooperative traditions. Yet in the period before French annexation, it was only in the Loyalty Islands and the Isle of Pines that new goods and new values had effectively begun the transformation of traditional societies; on the Grande Terre few of these changes were any more than incipient trends, and real transformations in New Caledonian life largely awaited the imposition of peace, a peace that came only very slowly during the period of French political colonization.
Chapter 3

French colonization and European settlement

Western Europeans... came to the new lands with 'capitalism in their bones'... From the outset capitalist in its structure, unencumbered by the fetters and barriers of feudalism, that society could single-mindedly devote itself to the development of its productive resources (Baran 1973:273).

Commercial and Christian interest in New Caledonia eventually and necessarily resulted in political interest, although it was largely a hesitant development, as nearby governments expressed only limited interest in the welfare of the traders and missionaries that left their shores. Metropolitan powers had little desire to translate patronage into empire. In the circumstances it is surprising that the great power that eventually prevailed in New Caledonia was France, a nation 18,000 kilometres away which had relatively little interest in the South Pacific compared to Britain. It is indicative of the strength and success of missions and trading stations in New Caledonia, and especially the Loyalty Islands, that New Caledonia was brought under metropolitan administrative control long before any other part of Melanesia. After the French annexation of New Caledonia in 1853 it was not until 1906 that the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) came under joint British and French rule; the British Solomon Islands Protectorate was not declared until 1893 and New Guinea was partitioned in 1884 into Papua (or British New Guinea) and German New Guinea. New Caledonia (and French Polynesia) have had the longest and most enduring colonial history in the South Pacific.

The dominance of British interests in New Caledonia, for trade and in the missions, would have surely suggested that New Caledonia be brought under British rule, just as Australia and New Zealand had previously been, and that there would be Australian pressure to ensure that this occurred. A clerical error had included New Caledonia within the boundaries originally assigned to the colony of New Zealand but no importance appears to have been attached to this fact by the British Government (Ward 1948:147). By contrast France, which had no more than tentative interests in distant Tahiti, could scarcely have been expected to exert a substantial claim on this remote land. Yet France prevailed without serious opposition. 'One of the most constant
factors in British policy during the nineteenth century was resistance to the acquisition of overseas territory' (Coates 1970:153) a policy which resulted from beliefs in Britain that, following the acquisition of India, Britain had taken on an empire that should not be expanded further, primarily because of the costs of administration of distant colonies. Moreover it was argued that the destiny of the Pacific islands should ultimately lie with the Australian colonies as they matured towards the independence envisaged for them.

The suggestion that Australia should eventually dominate and guide the western Pacific was naturally strongly supported within Australia. Indeed the Australian viewpoint was that no nation other than Britain should be allowed to gain political control in this region, that the British should establish a protectorate in the area, and be financially responsible for it, until such time as Australia, then concerned with its own vast expanses, would be in a position to take over. This argument was anathema to the cost-conscious Whitehall Treasury which, although willing to provide naval protection in the region, believed that any administrative costs should be borne by Australia. The islands of the South Pacific were seen as too small and too distant to be of any commercial significance to Great Britain, and commerce was a prominent theme in British colonial expansion.

In the first few decades of the nineteenth century there was little political interest in the South Pacific region outside Australia and British lack of interest in the region was much like that of France or Germany. However, after the 1830 Revolution, France began to establish an effective presence in this vast region, an interest which first turned to missionary contact with Tahiti, which was then the realm of English LMS Protestants. Through their influence with Queen Pomare IV English missionaries in 1836 prevented French Catholic missionaries from gaining a foothold in Tahiti, but they were unsuccessful in their efforts to stir up public opinion in Britain to establish a protectorate and oppose French encroachments in the island. France was able to assert its ascendancy over the Queen, put down a rebellion by her subjects in 1844-46 and, in the following year, negotiate Great Britain's recognition of a French protectorate over Tahiti, Moorea, the Tuamotus and two of the Austral Islands, the largest part of what is now French Polynesia. Not only did the French establish a colony, the Etablissements Français de l'Océanie (EFO), but the LMS, in 1862, turned over their mission interests to French Protestants, but not before strongly protesting to the British Foreign Secretary. Because Britain had previously preempted France by declaring sovereignty over New Zealand, two islands much coveted by France, Britain was not able to complain about the French acquisition of Tahiti. Consequently France may well have refrained from precipitately declaring its interest in New Caledonia.
The French acquisition of Tahiti resulted in Britain more clearly defining her policy towards the South Pacific. However British policy to a much greater extent than French policy was conditioned by ignorance; there was a 'truly remarkable inability of successive British governments to grasp even the most elementary of Pacific realities' (Coates 1970:156). At this time, and for several decades, it was widely assumed in Westminster and Whitehall that 'these cannibal islands had some kind of government [and] that normal consular relations could be established with "the authorities"' (Coates 1970:156). Consequently British policy favoured the strengthening of these authorities, rather than their colonization, primarily through regular naval visits. By contrast, France more quickly recognized the lack of 'authorities' in the Pacific, and pursued, albeit slowly, a policy in which the ultimate partition of the South Pacific between rival metropolitan powers was unavoidable.

The first real French presence on the Grande Terre of New Caledonia was the Marist mission established at Balade in 1843, under the authority of Father Douarre, a young priest from the Auvergne. In the face of British interests there was always considerable stress on the fact that it was French missionaries who were first established on the mainland of New Caledonia; not only were they French citizens but 'there is no doubt that they displayed their national colours' (Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:7) and hence it is argued that the local people 'recognized French sovereignty' (J.P. Faivre, cited by Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:7). To ensure that they did recognize French authority a French naval commander, Julien Laferrière, obtained a deed of cession, dated 1 January 1844, signed by a number of 'kings' and chiefs in the area between Ouegoa and Balade, in which they recognized the sovereignty of the King of France, Louis-Philippe, over New Caledonia (Brou 1977:150). Although 'it was a document of doubtful legal validity it virtually added a new jewel to the possessions of the French empire' (Godard 1979:21). Tardy de Montravel, a man who saw great possibilities for the development of New Caledonia, saw this as 'the date of the moral occupation of New Caledonia by France' (Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:7) at a time when New Caledonia was more widely viewed as effectively if not actually a colony of Australia.

However the French missionaries were soon forced to withdraw from Balade and in 1845, under pressure from Britain, the French government withdrew its claims to New Caledonia, in deference to Britain's superior military presence in the region. Indeed the French government several times disavowed the initiatives of over-enthusiastic naval officers when the consequences of these initiatives looked like endangering the peace (Godard 1979:21). But withdrawals and disavowals were temporary. After the 1848 revolution and the establishment of the Second Republic, under Napoleon III, France again became interested in New Caledonia. A decade after the Marist missionaries had landed at Balade, Admiral
Febvrier des Pointes, on 24 September 1853, again at Balade, annexed the Grande Terre in the name of France. Soon afterwards, advised that a British warship was heading for the Isle of Pines, he steamed south at great speed and five days later raised the French flag at the Isle of Pines, with the support of the Great Chief and the Marist missionary, Father Goujon. The chiefs of both the Isle of Pines and Balade were forced to sign new treaties with France, treaties 'which they probably did not understand and which greatly reduced their powers' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:239). Meanwhile Britain largely ignored the new French claims. Captain Tardy de Montravel was assigned to take charge of the new possession and he reaffirmed France's sovereignty in January 1854. New Caledonia and its dependencies were placed under the authority of the French naval Governor of Papeete in Tahiti and it was not until 1860 that New Caledonia became a separate French colony.

After early hesitation, and Louis-Philippe's withdrawal of initial French sovereignty, France had again acted to establish its colonial authority. There was no question that France wished to build an empire in the South Pacific; the annexation of Tahiti and other nearby islands had merely whetted appetites for further colonies in an area that, because of its primacy in exploration, France could legitimately consider that it had colonial 'rights' as great or greater than those of other metropolitan powers, especially where the separate Australian states remained British colonies. The desire to build an empire had not disappeared in the face of superior British naval power in the region. Certainly part of this desire came from a history of competition with Britain for empires in Africa and Asia; France believed that annexation of New Caledonia would forestall an imminent British move.

There were specific reasons why France wished to acquire New Caledonia. Economic potential was not one of them since opinion was divided over the value of its resources. It did however appear to have another kind of potential, as a result of its remoteness; that of a penal colony. It was more isolated than Guiana, in South America, and had a better climate, though the idea derived from that of the British penal colony in Australia. Here too morality could be attached to colonization since the reformed convicts could contribute to the development of a colony (Dornoy 1984:17). A minor reason for annexation was the frustration experienced by France after Melanesians had forced the Balade missionaries to withdraw, and after a number of shipwrecked sailors had been murdered and eaten on the east coast.

The news that France had officially taken possession of New Caledonia under the noses of the British provoked angry reactions in Australia. The Sydney Morning Herald was particularly incensed by the annexation of New Caledonia; its editorials lectured readers on the 'palpably aggressive' development and its potential
for further French expansion (Simington 1978:26). At the same time the Sydney Shipping Gazette recorded that, 'these islands, only a few of which had been visited by warships, were of greater interest than any other in the Pacific, for the Australian colony' (Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:8). Erskine, Commander of the cruiser H.M.S. Havannah, also emphasized the significance of New Caledonia and the Loyalties 'because of their proximity to Australia and the uncontrolled nature of the trade being undertaken there' (Brookes 1941:198). It would also be an excellent base for steam boats on route between India and Sydney. Merchants were largely unconcerned; in the absence of British capital, French would do and the settlement of New Caledonia would be backed with Australian supplies. Rumours that New Caledonia might become a penal colony provoked more widespread opposition though public anxiety quickly dissipated. A number of journals anticipated that Australia would eventually take over New Caledonia in any case; for example the Tasmanian Colonist smugly expected a future war to show that 'France is making for us another possession' (Simington 1978:36). This view was common for at least a quarter of a century and there are contemporary echoes of this position, now entirely from within New Caledonia.

The same decade witnessed the installation of a German presence in the South Pacific, with the development of commercial interests in Samoa, and later in New Guinea and in Micronesia. The presence in the Pacific of France and Germany increased concern in Australia, and led the British government to annex Fiji in 1874, although it was regarded as a 'tiresome financial commitment' (Coates 1970:160). Meanwhile, despite an almost permanent domestic crisis, France proceeded to consolidate its colonial possessions; after the Loyalty Islands had joined New Caledonia in 1864-65, the Chesterfields were annexed in 1878 and Rapa and other remote parts of French Polynesia in 1880-81. Elsewhere France was also expanding into Madagascar, Tonkin (Vietnam) and Egypt. Queensland, concerned over further British delays, annexed Papua in 1884 on behalf of Britain. Despite financial concerns and much reluctance, the last fragments of the global colonial empires were gradually falling into place.

Unnoticed in the slow tide of British colonial expansion France made its last colonial acquisition in the South Pacific: the two small and remote Polynesian islands of Wallis (Uvea) and Futuna, northeast of Fiji. These two small islands, overlooked by Protestant missionaries, were where the French Marists in 1837 established their first missions in the South Pacific. In 1842 the Kings of Wallis and Futuna petitioned France for annexation but the two islands did not become a French protectorate until 1887, the most remote French possession in the world. In 1913 Wallis and Futuna became a formal colony of France although France was a reluctant colonist in this case. But, in time, the annexation of France's third colonial territory in the South
Pacific was destined to play a minor but important part in the history of New Caledonia.

In one area French colonial ambitions were not entirely successful. From 1870 onwards there was a growing awareness in Australia that it had been a strategic mistake to allow France to take possession of New Caledonia and, consequently, a growing determination that the nearby New Hebrides (Vanuatu) should not become French. When, in 1871, an Australian syndicate approached the young John Higginson, a British businessman already prominent in New Caledonian nickel mining, with the suggestion of buying up land in the New Hebrides to make the islands indisputably British, he declined, explaining that he saw them as a natural appendage of New Caledonia. The French Government however, being concerned by Australian reaction and opposition, rejected outright annexation and, in 1878, in an unusual compromise, Britain and France jointly agreed to safeguard the 'independence' of the New Hebrides. Higginson, with French encouragement, founded the precursor of the Société Française des Nouvelles-Hébrides (SFNH), which bought out British landowners and acquired Melanesian land. Once again concern increased that France would take control and in 1906 an Anglo-French conference led to the establishment of an Anglo-French condominium in the New Hebrides; Britain was again a reluctant colonist, agreeing to the condominium solely in the interests of Australia, but eventually standing firm against local French pressures for the New Hebrides to become wholly French. It proved to be the last phase of French expansion in the South Pacific, but one that was critical, when the time came, to the decolonization of the region.

Although it can be argued that the dynamics of expanding European capitalism propelled overseas expansion in search of markets, raw materials, places for the settlement of surplus population and the investment of surplus capital, in the South Pacific these dynamics were blunted by the tyranny of distance. France had a less pressing need for colonies than Britain, there was no hungry or surplus population to export overseas. The economy was relatively self-sufficient, industrial production had only just begun and there was little surplus capital seeking foreign outlets. It was also preoccupied elsewhere. Britain, already engaged in establishing a major colony on the Australian continent, was even less interested in the Pacific region than France. Despite British and, less obviously, French reluctance, the nineteenth century proved to be one of the great periods of European expansion. In Britain particularly, imperial decisions largely responded either to European interests in the periphery, primarily in Australia, or to the special interests of particular metropolitan groups. France was little different. Hence annexation was highly selective, regional and without an overall pattern (Fieldhouse 1982:206), particularly in the South Pacific.
The Settler Colony

For the first seven years of its existence the new colony of New Caledonia remained under the political authority of the Governor of Tahiti, some 5000 kilometres away. A military regime was not entirely inappropriate for a country which, at that time, was largely unexplored, known to contain hostile tribes and which was also intended to become a penal settlement; naval administration thus endured until the last decade of the century. France remained largely preoccupied with domestic concerns. In the 1870s the Franco-Prussian War, the fall of the Second Empire, the fratricidal struggles in the Paris Commune and an uneasy start to the Third Republic all restricted interest in the consolidation of control in very distant colonies.

One of the first stages in the administration of New Caledonia was the movement of the new capital away from its tenuous foothold at Balade to a more protected site in the southwest, a site which de Montravel called Fort-de-France. This was not the only reason for the shift from Balade. Balade was isolated by high mountains from the rest of the island and, more important, 'it turned its back on Australia and was thus remote from the shipping routes that left Sydney' (Le Borgne 1964:149). The name of the new capital however was easily confused with that of Fort-de-France, the capital of Martinique, one of France's West Indian colonies, so that within two years its name reverted to Noumea, a name derived from nearby Ile Nou (New Island), which provided the initial sheltered anchorage. There was also water and coal nearby and the peninsula was readily defensible if necessary. The construction of Fort Constantine was the first action of the colonial administration. Its foundations, and thus the foundations of Noumea, were begun in June 1854.

One of the immediate results of French colonization was the expansion of Christianity from the outlying Loyalty Islands and the Isle of Pines. The French administration welcomed the Catholic Marist missions, especially in the more remote parts of the Grande Terre, believing that the missions had a civilizing and pacifying role. In their turn the Marists usually supported government actions such as military forays against rebellious tribes, believing that subdued tribes made mission work easier (Howe 1984:317). Church and colonial state generally operated closely together and, in the first decade of French administration, Marists were established in a number of new areas that had hitherto been hostile. Perhaps more significantly, a new mission centre was developed in 1855 at Conception, 10 kilometres south of Noumea, and then at nearby Saint Louis, where coffee growing began. Here the missionaries established some of the first converts, brought from Balade, Pouebo and Touho (Le Borgne 1964:154), the first modern Melanesian migration on the Grande Terre. Missionary expansion was largely halted after 1863 when New Caledonia was governed by the anti-clerical Governor Guillain.

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Although at the time of annexation there were a handful of European settlers, including Irish and Germans, most settlers were British and there were very few French. A few had married local women and the climate was much more amenable to settlement than the malarial zones further north in Melanesia. As early as 1854 the first land was expropriated and the first Australian cattle were imported in the same year; the trader, James Paddon, imported 50 bullocks and 32 sheep with the intention of establishing a butcher's shop. In the next three years Paddon imported a further 409 head of cattle, 2100 sheep and even bales of hay, bran and oats (Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:61-2). The grazing industry of New Caledonia had begun and by 1858 the first wool and hides had been exported. The establishment of Paddon's trading post on Ile Nou marked not only the start of Noumea as a centre but the first real colonization of the Grande Terre. Elsewhere, at Balade, only a few Marist missionaries had a tentative foothold on the mainland.

Of all the agricultural activities introduced into New Caledonia in the colonial era cattle ranching is the oldest, the most continuous and, for the European settlers, much the most important. Paddon supplied the garrison at Fort Constantine; this new market and the arrival of convicts and free settlers encouraged him to expand. In a colony without a labour force, settlers without capital, and with the rapid granting of substantial land concessions in a relatively dry area, no agricultural activity was more appropriate than grazing. Indeed the meat market was never satisfied and it has been estimated that the annual return to cattle ranching in the 1860s and 1870s was as great as 33 per cent of the capital investment; not surprisingly the new bureaucrats of the colony began to speculate in cattle (Sausssl 1981a). In these conditions the largest settlers obtained further land concessions, purchased land and became the great landed proprietors that they were to remain for another century. While the environment of the west coast of New Caledonia undoubtedly favoured cattle ranching, its significance was that it actually required no intensive land use but, with limited manpower, enabled rural control rather than production (cf. Denoon 1983:219). In these early days new concepts were introduced and English words, such as 'station', 'run', 'creek', 'stockmen' and 'paddock', are still constant reminders in local French usage of the geographical origins of settlement. It was above all the land acquisitions made for grazing (see below) that not only pushed the frontier of colonization northwards (Map 5) but that were responsible for the great insurrection of 1878, as Melanesians saw their land swallowed up.

Not only had a tiny grazing industry been established but by 1854 there had been consideration of the possibilities of establishing a sugar-cane industry. Tardy de Montravel, again thinking of possibilities for development, argued that 'it is
necessary to grow sugarcane to supply New South Wales which has large imports of sugar' (Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:73). French consuls in Sydney continually reiterated the idea and in 1856 all the machinery to establish a sugar factory, along with a manager brought from the existing cane fields of Mauritius, arrived in New Caledonia. The success of sugar-cane in other tropical islands 'seemed to predestine its role' in New Caledonia (Saussol 1981a) and it was hoped that the Grande Terre would become a 'sugar island' like the French West Indies. The arrival of sugar-cane planters, the Bourbons, from Réunion (one of France's colonies in the Indian Ocean) in 1858 effectively marked the start of rural land settlement in New Caledonia. The collapse of the sugar industry of Réunion encouraged migration to New Caledonia and throughout the 1860s there was a migration of Creoles and Malabars (Réunion Indians). With these new migrants cane cultivation slowly spread northwards.
In the universal desire to ensure that colonization was profitable a variety of crops was introduced into New Caledonia. Coffee, currently the only successful commercial crop, has had a long history in New Caledonia. As early as 1856 the Marist mission grew coffee at Saint Louis; by 1860 it was grown as far away as Canala, shortly to become a significant centre of coffee production. Subsequent penal settlers were encouraged to plant coffee and Farino became for them a significant centre. Free settlers, however, never planted coffee as anything more than a minor subsidiary to cattle and coffee consequently spread relatively slowly.

France's 'civilizing mission' also incorporated the introduction of grape vines, which by the end of the 1850s were growing around Nouméa, and possibly elsewhere on the west coast; at Pouebo the Marist missionaries had already produced a New Caledonian wine (Rochas 1862) an experiment that was not destined to last long. In all this agricultural activity, little of which achieved long-term success, the earliest settlers intended to make New Caledonia more self-reliant and ultimately produce significant exports to ensure the viability of the new colony. To do so it was necessary to own and cultivate large areas of land, control of the land being crucial to economic growth.

Acquiring the land

Much the most important effect of French annexation was the transfer of sovereignty over the land from the customary owners, the Melanesian clans and tribes, to the French state and to individual settlers and companies. Initially this was merely a legal and administrative convenience, but it quickly led to a real and effective transfer in landownership, the implications of which have been far reaching. From the mid-1850s, soon after annexation, the history of New Caledonia is in many respects a history of land tenure. Before 1855, when the first land statutes were formulated, only the trader James Paddon and the Marist mission had taken up land in New Caledonia. Attitudes to land at that time distinguished firmly between the rights of civilized nations and those of 'uncivilized peoples' who were without formal governments and other possible benefits of civilization. The official attitude in France in 1854 clearly demonstrated not only the almost total ignorance of Melanesians, and of Melanesian land tenure, but the disregard for Melanesians that accompanied the process of land acquisition:

The uncivilised inhabitants of a country have over that country only a limited right of domination, a sort of right of occupation... A civilised power on establishing a colony in such a country, acquires a decisive power over the soil, or, in other terms, she acquires the right to extinguish the
This principle was transferred into practice in the following year; not surprisingly, with this kind of approach, the 1855 declaration had serious consequences for Melanesians:

Melanesians were no longer the owners of their land; they only had rights of use and then only inside the area that was cultivated. By taking the fallow and empty land, the viable agricultural economy of the local communities was snuffed out in one brief moment. Without compensation the Melanesian groups were reduced to a situation of significant food shortage (Doumenge 1982:94).

Trouble and conflict were inevitable and were not long in coming. As early as 1856 there had been opposition (including some murders) in the area around Saint Louis, from Melanesians who had seen large areas of their best land being taken up by the Marist mission, land which in some respects the colonial administration regarded as a 'shield' for Noumea.

Although the initial fervour of settlement was followed by a period of calm, in which a few local Melanesians worked for the colonists in Noumea, and there was some cohabitation between French troops and Melanesian women, open hostilities broke out late in 1856 following attacks on mission properties and on isolated settlers and the killing of troops near Noumea. As in virtually every subsequent revolt against the European presence, 'the question of land seems in this context to have been central' (Douglas 1980:37). Substantial areas of land had already been alienated around Noumea and pressures on other nearby land areas were increasing; there was a basic incompatibility between Melanesian and European concepts of land tenure and transfer. The land was, above all, not only the principal resource of Melanesians and the source of livelihood, wealth and power, but the means of identification with the continuity of the contemporary and ancestral worlds. Its control was, and is, fundamental to Melanesian life and tradition. For Jean-Marie Tjibao, the land 'forms a fabric made fertile through the web of human ties, it is a living archive for the group' (Tjibau 1976:285), a sentiment no less important in contemporary times than it was in the nineteenth century. The social, psychological and economic significance of Melanesian land cannot be overemphasized. Land has remained for more than a century the basis of Melanesian opposition to colonial rule; it is the crux of the political and economic history of New Caledonia.

Violence escalated in the whole southwest, the prelude to a more orderly attack on Noumea. To safeguard against this the military forces organized the settlers to 'devastate the gardens, starve the natives and force them to submit' (Saussol 1979a:54).
Not surprisingly this kind of tactic created hostility between the Melanesians and the European settlers, starting in Paita and progressing slowly northwards alongside the advancing settlers. Equally, there was resistance throughout this progression; land acquisition was only 'spreading bitterness and creating guerrillas' (Doumenge 1982:97). When Dame, the Chief of Yate, refused to carry out orders given to him, the administration confiscated all the land over which he was chief. 'For the first time, a Melanesian group had been dispossessed of their lands without there having previously been an insurrection; this precedent opened the doors for further abuse' (Saussol 1979a:74).

In 1863 there was violent opposition around Koumac and in the following years at Ponerihouen, Wagap and elsewhere (Map 6). These struggles demonstrated that Melanesians, as a result of their early experiences, were now responding directly and violently to any form of white presence. At the end of the decade there were extended revolts at Houailou and Bourail; overcoming the latter opened the way for penal settlement around Bourail from 1870 onwards (Saussol 1979a:106-18). Two decades of a colonial presence, in which the actual colonization and occupation of land was slight, were marked by almost constant tension and sporadic violence.

After 1868 a new decree effectively introduced the concept of collective landownership, whereby the administration regarded the 'tribe' as owners of particular tracts of land rather than the clans that made up the tribe. The Great Chiefs were regarded as custodians of that tribal land. Defining Melanesian land areas first began in 1868 with the delimitation of land for the Manongoe tribe, which had already been displaced from the fringes of Noumea to scattered reservations west of Paita. The second phase of delimitation was at Tchambouenne south of Pouebo. Here not only was the land area available to Melanesians severely reduced but Melanesians from different areas were brought together into one 'tribe'; 'it constituted essentially an arbitrary group of uprooted people in a strange land' (Saussol 1979a:165) and contributed to continued conflict and friction within Melanesian tribes. 'For the Melanesian population, both "tribe" and "reserve" were rigid entities imposed from outside and having significance only in terms of the colonial world' (Doumenge 1982:98). It was an 'administrative fiction' (Saussol 1971:232) and from this administrative fiction was born a 'century of incomprehension' (Saussol 1983a:272). Reactions to the new legislation were rapid. From October 1868 revolts broke out, in the north at Pouebo and Oubatche, and in 1869 the people of the hills of Bonde, Canala, Bourail and also the Loyalty Islands became restive; the situation was especially tense around military posts (Saussol 1971:232). This land demarcation, both legal and exploitative (in economic and social terms), was succeeded by a more 'liberal' system in which colonists could occupy land before the official demarcation had taken place, a situation which
Map 6 Attacks, massacres and reprisals: opposition to colonization, 1847-69


Speeded up colonization, especially on the west coast, and directly contributed to the 1878 insurrection.

Against this background of sporadic violence the frontier of colonization moved slowly northwards along the west coast. Settlers like Adam, Joubert and Paddon took up large tracts of land in the plain of Dumbea. An English company (Byrne and Brown) was the single tenant of a massive area of 40,000 hectares covering a vast stretch of the Grande Terre, from Port Saint Vincent across to Canala. Indeed, based on Australian experience, the colonial state sought to grant large areas of land to private companies who would have the funds, dynamism and desire for profit, to compensate for administrative inertia, and ensure the populating of the land and the increased value of the countryside. Apart from the achievements of Paddon, who successfully developed the area around Paita, it was a largely unsuccessful experiment.
By 1864 when the first convict settlers arrived the colony was still effectively restricted to the area between La Foa and Boulari (just outside Noumea), with only military outposts, occasional traders and missionaries beyond. Although, after a decade of colonization, there were only three tiny centres outside Noumea, at Pouebo, Napoleonville (Canala) and Paita, by 1868 some 300,000 hectares of Melanesian land had become the private property of European settlers. Although this was less than five per cent of the land of New Caledonia it was, of course, much of the better, flatter land.

By 1872, after 19 years of colonial occupation, the fact that five per cent of land had been appropriated, demonstrated the massive extent of land acquisition at a time when there were no more than about three thousand Europeans in New Caledonia and few of them were settlers. Some 70 per cent of this alienated land was on the west coast, some as far north as Gomen, but most was between Bouloupari and Noumea (Roux 1979:38-9). The largest plots were also in the north and west, and already there were 'the two significant kinds of landholdings that have continued to characterize the land tenure of the island until the present day, with on the one hand the breaking down of the smaller holdings and on the other the continued existence of the great landed properties' (Roux 1979:30). These great landed properties were especially predominant in the dry northern plains between Kone and Gomen; 'the striking inequities of New Caledonia's land tenure system can be ascribed to the greed of its white settlers, the ignorance and insouciance of the administration and the incapacity of the Melanesians to defend themselves' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:375).

The penal colony

In 1860 New Caledonia and its dependencies had become a separate French colony with its own naval governor. Under Rear Admiral Charles Guillain (1862-70) the judicial and administrative framework of the colony was established, Noumea began to grow, the port developed commercial and naval functions, the first convicts arrived and white settlers were encouraged to come to the Grande Terre, where they were granted land concessions. Attracted by the mild climate of New Caledonia, the discovery of gold in 1863 and the promise of land, French and British migrants arrived from their homelands, from Australia and from other parts of the South Pacific to farm and to mine. The administration's objective was not to conquer the Melanesian population but to create a few completely secure areas where convicts could be introduced as soon as possible and agricultural development could follow.

The first convoy of convicts arrived at Ile Nou in May 1864, to be accommodated in a prison which remains (now as a psychiatric institution) the symbol of that first penal settlement (le bagne).
As in Australia, and also in most other French penal settlements, the convicts began work to create the economic infrastructure of the new colony; land was reclaimed on which to build Noumea, roads were constructed and new mining and forestry enterprises created. Only two years after their arrival Guillaumine permitted well-behaved convicts to work under contract for individual settlers and later he granted the best of these convicts smallholdings of five hectares on which they could farm. Prison farms were set up at Canala (1865) and Bourail (1867) and a farm school was established at Yahoue (Noumea); these new developments extended the area of European colonization and as freed prisoners took up small landholdings after 1869 this expansion, especially around Bourail, quickly extended the frontiers of European settlement. The Catholic Church arranged accelerated marriages between male and female prisoners, and additional boatloads of female prisoners were brought from Paris prisons specifically for this purpose, although many had little experience of agriculture, let alone a tropical environment. 'Colonisation on the island thus began on a shaky basis. Property whose title was uncertain was supplied to colonists whose commitment to the land was questionable and whose behaviour towards its legitimate inhabitants was frequently, to put it politely, irresponsible' (Clifford 1982:47). In the circumstances there was growing friction between Melanesians and settlers. Crime also increased steadily and in 1885 convicts were formally denied any hope of eventual repatriation to France.

The first convicts to arrive in New Caledonia were ordinary criminals, the same kinds of men (and women) who had been landed in Australia many decades previously. By the early 1870s the penitentiary on the Ile Nou held about 5000 bagnards (convicts) condemned to eight years' forced labour. The political prisoners who first arrived in the colony in 1872 were quite different. These included a small group of Arab rebels, perhaps no more than three hundred, from the insurrection against French colonization at Kabylia in Algeria (Collinet 1978), but the great majority were French supporters of the 1871 Paris Commune (communards). The 3000 communards, unlike the earlier convicts, were concentrated on the Isle of Pines and, again, unlike earlier convicts, were not obliged to perform forced labour but could hire out their services. While some were minor criminals and few had played a prominent part in the Commune, they included the prominent anarchist, Louise Michel (the 'red virgin') and a number of minor intellectuals. The communards 'were all agreed on a few basic ideas - socialism, patriotism, the hatred of the bourgeois and above all of the clergy. These were the men that France considered desirable to send to a young Christian group whose fervor was of the medieval type' (Pisier 1978:18; cf. Pisier 1971), hence there were conflicts on the Isle of Pines. The skills of these political prisoners were in great demand in the Isle of Pines and they played a considerable role in road and wharf construction. In 1880 the communards were pardoned in a general amnesty and most if not all returned to France. In these
few years some had had a permanent impact on the territory, some like Louise Michel even teaching in schools. Had they remained, their political views may have resulted in a different course for the historical development of New Caledonia, though many of them fought on the side of France in 1878 and turned out to be 'pompous, fat-headed white racists' (Thomas 1971/80:148). A small part of the colonization process was thus undertaken by opponents of the French government.

By the 1880s the number of bagnards had grown to around nine thousand. On the banks of the Diahot river at Ouegoa, a whole new region had been opened up for settlement (Map 7), marking a dramatic northwards shift. With the slow and steady expansion of free settlement few areas of the west coast had escaped European settlement; even if only a small part of the land had been transformed into European farms the land itself had effectively changed owners. Melanesians were particularly resentful that their land was given to convicts, many of whom had no knowledge of
farming, and relations between Melanesians and convicts were often poor.

New Caledonia remained a penal colony for thirty years, into the final decade of the nineteenth century. By the end of that era almost 22,000 convicts had been sent to New Caledonia. A century later their direct impact is now unclear; early views were that 'to them the islands owe many useful public works' (Thomson and Adloff 1971:241), especially in the Isle of Pines, but a more recent view suggests not only that their work was negligible but also that it was extremely costly (Dornoy 1984:23). This was certainly true in the agricultural arena, where the naval administration was ill-equipped to evaluate the resources of the islands; much money was wasted on abortive efforts to grow silkworms, cultivate sugar-cane and manufacture rum. The land that the convicts received was used only for their own food crops, such as corn and beans, rather than export crops. The main benefit for the colony was the supply of cheap labour to free settlers and the more effective and rapid colonization of the land, although the limited value of the labour was such that mine owners preferred to pay free emigrants seven times the wage of convict labour (Roberts 1929:521). The socialist journalist Wilfred Burchett, had an altogether more liberal view of the bagnards and especially the communards, whom he saw as the equivalent of the Pilgrim Fathers in America:

One thing is certain - that New Caledonia has suffered nothing for having been the 'dumping ground' for such people (communards). Because the old world rejected - or ejected - many of the finest spirits of the age, the New World bordering the Pacific has a virile, liberty-loving ancestry which is directly responsible for their industry and lack of subservience to privilege (Burchett 1941:122).

He could scarcely have been further from the truth; the communards had departed. Without penal settlement the frontier might have been pushed back more slowly yet, on the other hand, the image of New Caledonia was so poor that the penal colony was an obvious deterrent to free settlement.

The nickel rush

By the 1850s an infant grazing industry had been established, sugar was being grown and there was, in a sense, the predecessor of a mineral industry. In 1859 and 1860 seven tons of sulphur were exported from New Caledonia (Cordier-Rossiaud 1957:69). While these diverse activities already existed, the most optimistic explorers and merchants saw possibilities for all manner of commercial undertakings, including coal mining; there were rumours of extensive mineral resources, gold (at Canala) and definite possibilities of cotton growing. Economic uncertainty
declined with the discovery of substantial mineral deposits although, in the end, it took a century before the dreams of mineral prospectors reached fruition.

Although some of the mineral deposits of New Caledonia had been known in the 1860s it was not until the mid-1870s that they began to attract widespread interest. Like the mining ventures of other ore-producing countries in the southern hemisphere New Caledonia's mining industry depended on the availability of outside capital. Gold was discovered on the banks of the Diahot river in 1870 by Australian and French prospectors and a minor gold rush lasted for a couple of years. In 1872 copper was discovered nearby but copper mining was too capital-intensive to excite the same interest in New Caledonia that had been attached to it in Australia (Thompson 1984:68-70). However John Higginson, a Noumea trader, managed to arrange Australian finance and the Balade mine, at Ouegoa, was operating by late 1873; labour was imported from Australia, with 30 to 40 Australian miners earning from 100 to 125 francs (about £4) a week, and from the New Hebrides, with 65 indentured labourers working for 30 francs a month (Thompson 1984:71-2). The ore was taken directly from Ouegoa to be smelted in New South Wales. Even with additional convict labourers, working at less than one franc per day, the mine lost money and Higginson turned to Paris to secure additional finance; 'after a number of underhand manoeuvres' (Thompson 1984:73) he succeeded in obtaining financial support from the House of Rothschild, and a new financial era opened in New Caledonia as the source of external finance slowly shifted from nearby Australia to the distant colonial power.

The discovery of nickel, and the resultant 'nickel rush', had a much more substantial and lengthy impact on New Caledonia's economic history than sulphur, gold or copper. Although the presence of nickel had been known since the mid-1860s it did not attract attention until 1873 when an Australian miner carried out tests on a rock from Mont d'or (the Mountain of Gold, now Mont Dore), near Noumea. Confirmation of nickel began a rush for mining claims and on two of these claims, at Canala and at Houailou (where Higginson and some associates owned the claim) mining began in earnest. Thus 1874 is usually regarded as a turning point in the history of New Caledonia; the effective establishment of a major nickel mining industry. It was a labour-intensive industry, involving substantial terracing of the hillside to permit movements from one shaft to another; it is these terraces, rarely overgrown on the exposed mountain slopes, that now grossly disfigure large areas of New Caledonia's landscape. New townships were established at Thio and Houailou and, for each of the new mines, a substantial part of the capital was again Australian.

Partly to finance mining ventures the Banque de la Nouvelle-Calédonie was founded in Paris in 1873 but mismanagement, and the
funding of doubtful ventures, resulted in its demise in 1877, a demise which brought with it both the demoralization of many small miners and the loss of faith by Australian banks in the New Caledonian economy. The resultant large-scale abandonment of mining leases and the unavailability of Australian capital led towards permanent monopolistic control of the colony's mineral resources by outside interests, a development favoured both in New Caledonia and in France (Thompson 1984:75-6). Higginson, in 1877, began to construct smelters at Pointe Chaleix, near Noumea; financial crises resulted in him joining forces with Hanckar, the owner of the Canala mine and, after further amalgamations, the first la Société le Nickel (SLN) was formed in May 1880. Further financial crises resulted in the House of Rothschild having to invest two million francs in the venture, Higginson's deposal as the 'Nickel King' (Thompson 1984:77-9) and a shift in his financial interests to the New Hebrides. These difficult times in New Caledonia had already promoted a degree of antipathy towards Australia, not only because its states were colonies of France's ancient enemy, but because of New Caledonian dependence on Australia and the dismal comparison between their respective rates of economic growth. Even then, however, the more affluent French settlers holidayed and sent their children to school in Australia.

Frontier France or New World?

At the time of annexation France acquired a land that was, like Tahiti, in almost all respects more British than French. Only the Marist missionaries were proponents of French language and culture while the tiny commercial economy was in the hands of Australian, British and even New Zealand traders. Not surprisingly the French administration suspected these traders of anti-French sentiments, just as missionaries had previously suspected them of anti-Catholic feelings. The traders were consequently restricted in their contacts with Melanesians, land was less liberally available and in 1859 three Anglo-Saxon Europeans from Hienghene were shot and five exiled after being accused of inciting the local population to rebel against the French (Dornoy 1984:21). Yet most of the first European settlers were Anglo-Saxon traders and farmers, including the prominent businessmen Paddon and Higginson, and private finance and development initially came mainly from Australia. In the Loyalty Islands, by 1860, there was no doubt that 'the natives are more English than French' (Governor Saisset, quoted by Howe 1977:55) a situation that was unchanged for much of the rest of the century and on the Grande Terre itself English was still in common use, for example in newspaper advertisements, at least into the 1880s (O'Reilly 1953:211-12). It was only slowly that the new French colony acquired a more French veneer.

The growth of the European population of New Caledonia was slow. This was scarcely surprising; the new colony was half a
world away from France and, at the time of annexation it took three months to sail to Noumea. The island was also virtually unknown in France, its interior unexplored and Melanesian opposition was known and feared. Contact was greater with Australia, which then provided the bulk of the real settler population, attracted by the prospects of cheap land, the lure of gold and a Catholic colony; many were Irish Catholics, moving on from New South Wales (Simington 1978:44). By the time of the first casual census in 1867, there were 1447 Europeans, of whom 928 were French, 191 were English and 14 Germans; many of these were lone males, since there were 469 women to 978 men (Roux 1979:45-6). Government officials and military forces heavily outnumbered settlers, although this was a much greater European population than in any other South Pacific colony at the time. More than 80 per cent of them were within a few kilometres of Noumea and the majority of the remainder were around Pouebo. It was only in 1872 that there was the first real wave of French settlers; most were small farmers from Alsace and Lorraine, fleeing their lands that had been taken over by Germany, and settling around Ouaco and Moindou. By 1877 the total European population was just under 17,000. Nearly three-quarters were convicts, time-expired convicts and political prisoners; 3000 were military and public officials and their families, and only 2700 were free colonists (Latham 1982). By then the French character of settlement had become more firmly established although the 'French' included settlers from other French colonies such as the Bourbons, the cane farmers from Réunion, who brought with them an Indian labour force from the French colonies in southern India.

During the second half of the nineteenth century the economic history of New Caledonia was quite different from anywhere else in the South Pacific region, and nothing like that of the other parts of Melanesia, where the only export of any significance was copra. The combination of settler and convict colony was unique. Although there were persistent rumours of the imminent establishment of other convict settlements in the South Pacific (Simington 1978:90) none ever eventuated and by 1853 Britain had suspended transportation to the eastern states of Australia. The large convict, military, mining and bureaucratic population of New Caledonia provided a large, and reasonably affluent market for the products of settlers and for imports into the colony. Until the 1880s the administration's annual contract for beef was worth more than total exports (Latham 1982:171) hence settlers received contracts for corn, vegetables, pork and coffee production and the administration aimed at organizing the production of sugar.

The remainder of the nineteenth century was a period of crisis for the grazing industry; the problems of the nickel industry led to a falling market while many cattle had disappeared and become wild in the aftermath of the 1878 insurrection. However, new contracts were negotiated and a meat cannery was
constructed at Ouaco, although it was closed before the end of the century after a period when cattle had to be imported from Australia to keep it in operation. Animals had become wild, those who held some kind of title to land were often unable to enforce it and ownership of the cattle too was difficult to establish. The smaller settlers, with their cattle, lived a life that was sometimes rough, crude and violent, and were in some respects marginal to both the growing urban European society and the rural Melanesian society.

The expanding sugar industry faced similar problems. Though sugar cultivation had reached Bourail by 1873 (Saussol 1981a) the authoritarian practices of the 'sugar barons', bad harvests because of the unfavourable climate (both droughts and floods), locusts and poor choice of land led to the end of sugar cultivation and the last arrival of migrants from Réunion in 1875 (Roux 1979:49). The insurrection of 1878 discouraged further thoughts of expansion. Higginson's scheme of building a sugar mill at Bourail (with New Zealand finance) using convict labour lasted only a short time, despite some success in rum production. With all its economic disappointments, sugar cultivation was an important phase in the economic development of New Caledonia if only for its effective alienation of large areas of west coast land and its spread as far north as Pouembout in the west and Tiwaka and Ponerihouen in the east. If only intermittently, it had demonstrated that there were prospects for commercial agriculture in New Caledonia although it was not until the next century that commercial cultivation was again successful. At the end of the century Augustin Bernard wrote 'People are returning to coffee growing... coffee is the nickel of agriculture but that remains for the future' (Saussol 1981a). Certainly, for Melanesians, this was a propitious statement. Then, as now, la brousse (the bush) was a world away from Noumea; one early colonist, Marc Le Goupils, violently opposed the minimal interest taken by the administration in agriculture, the brief ventures of officials beyond Noumea, the exploitative charges made for goods and the patronizing attitudes of the administration to the needs of the agriculturalists they professed to support (Le Goupils 1928:79-82).

The capital of the new colony, Noumea, in the 1870s, had a non-convict population of 4000 with about 8000 convicts and political prisoners nearby 'to provide labour and controversy' and 'the only proper road in the colony until the mid-1880s ran down to the picnic spot at Anse Vata' (Latham 1982:170), now a suburb of Noumea and centre of the tourist industry. Noumea had saltwater distillation plants in the 1860s, water piped by convict-built aqueducts and a secondary school in the 1870s, gaslight in the 1880s and horse-drawn buses in the 1890s. Most public servants had at least one convict servant, departmental heads owned gracious homes on the Boulevard Vauban and, within a few decades of its founding, the landscape and style of Noumea had
begun to take on some of the characteristics of a small town on the French Mediterranean coast. 'As befitted a colonial capital Noumea kept up appearances' (Clifford 1982:30). It is this style, and these appearances, updated around Anse Vata, that is the basis of contemporary tourism. As Noumea expanded in the second half of the nineteenth century it was 'transformed from a dead end outpost to a thriving colonial town' (Howe 1977:100) with the usual entertainments. Robert Louis Stevenson described it in 1890 as 'built on vermouth cases' and the LMS missionaries regarded it in 1884 as a 'cesspool of vice and debauchery' (Howe 1977:100). One way or another it had become a more attractive place to work and trade in. Noumea was already a substantial town when large parts of New Caledonia were unchanged from pre-contact times; the contrast between developments in Noumea and their absence elsewhere in New Caledonia is one more factor that has given the development of New Caledonia a particular structure.

The growth of Noumea, and its bureaucratic and military population, had a direct impact on the alienation of land in the area, with predictable negative implications. However it is apparent that some Melanesians relatively quickly came to terms with this loss of land and with the continued presence of the French. Island food produce was traded and the Loyalty Islands became a prominent source of produce, including yams and other vegetables, pigs and fowls. By the 1870s much of Noumea's foodstuffs, such as pork, chicken, eggs and vegetables, came from Melanesian tribes; in the 1880s the list of landowners supplying beef to the town included at least two Melanesians, and four of the seven proprietors of stores outside Noumea in 1872 were designated indigènes (Latham 1975:48). Melanesians also worked in Noumea; as labourers in 1877 they were earning 1.50 to 2.00 francs per day, a wage roughly equivalent to that of freed convicts. As elsewhere in Melanesia, the local population usually had adequate land for their immediate needs, found material goods and low wages a limited initial incentive to work, did not value the social world of Europeans and Noumea, and were thus able and willing to charge a high price for their labour (Latham 1975:59). Outside Noumea, although Melanesians were already employed as stockmen in the 1870s it was generally New Hebridean labour that was sought, as New Hebrideans could be employed under long-term contracts for lower wages.

Without safe anchorages, reliable supplies of fresh water and with a topography completely unsuited to European forms of agriculture the Loyalty Islands were regarded as useless for French settlement (Howe 1977:6), a situation which significantly influenced not only the form of culture contact in the islands but ultimately led to a rather different local attitude to French colonization of New Caledonia. The French administration took no immediate interest in the Loyalty Islands because they were of no economic significance; they effectively came under French control in 1864 when Governor Guillain sent a military expedition to Lifou
to end the 'war of religion' between Catholics and Protestants (Howe 1979:11). Apart from the missionaries, there was rarely a permanent European population and there were none of the struggles for land that marked the history of the Grande Terre. In many respects, despite their large Melanesian population, the Loyalty Islands no longer attracted significant colonial interest. Once the region of most rapid change in New Caledonia, from the 1860s onwards they were largely consigned to the periphery of the new colony.

New Caledonia was not only a white settlement already far in advance of anything else in the South Pacific (including the settlement of Tahiti) but it also turned out to be by far the most important settler colony in the island Pacific, a situation of major consequence to its subsequent history. At Yate in 1864 there was even a utopian settlement (although this failed within two years through excessive idealism on an inhospitable site), an attempt at a new settlement and life-style which summarized the spirit of the age (Saussol 1979b). Only in the nearby New Hebrides was there also, and rather later, substantial settler colonization and again predominantly by French settlers. It was always an unusual colonial experience in New Caledonia and penal settlement ensured that New Caledonia would be quite distinct from other parts of Melanesia and the South Pacific.

With three quarters of the colonial masters behind bars and one thousand natives helping to keep them there, New Caledonia was barren ground for the myths of racial superiority which can be sustained when there are few Europeans and none of them poor. The children born of convict parents at Bourail and La Foa formed a malnourished illiterate stratum below the children of small farmers of Alsace-Lorraine and the small scale coffee growers introduced by Governor Feillet in the 1890s. (Latham 1980).

After the last convoy of convicts reached New Caledonia in 1897 the supply of cheap labour came to an end and the living standards of the settlers, if not the convicts, deteriorated (Thompson and Adloff 1971:241-2). The social disadvantages of the transportation of convicts, at a rate outnumbering that of free settlers, were readily apparent to the first civilian governor, Paul Feillet (1894-1902), who demanded that France 'turn off the tap of dirty water that had been flowing into the colony' (O'Reilly 1953:88). Most of the convicts, who eventually became free citizens, remained in New Caledonia, often marrying local women and becoming small farmers. Some of these old convict settlers (bagnards) were still farming in New Caledonia after the Second World War. Free and penal settlement in a French context gave New Caledonia its distinctive colonial character. Indeed had Britain claimed New Caledonia there would have been no penal colony, and hence very little free settlement.
By the end of the century the penal settlers and the small free colonists, the colon à cinq mille francs (Le Goupils 1928:104), who came with 5000 francs, and promised to devote half their land to coffee, already formed a fairly distinct group in colonial society. With limited land, capital and agricultural expertise, despised by the administration, they barely scratched out a subsistence existence. From the earliest days there was a 'poor white' population in New Caledonia and this extremely significant population group, never tiny and now long established in New Caledonia, is quite unusual in the South Pacific region and minimizes parallels with the colonial experience of other states. At the same time, despite their poverty, these settlers were nonetheless small landowners; in this they were, in some respects, allies of the large landowning individuals and companies. However from the 1880s onwards there were divisions between the small farmers - the refugees from Alsace, retired soldiers, gendarmes and convicts - and the large landowners who increasingly bought up large areas of land. There were thus incipient social classes among the settlers but there were also shared interests, including the consolidation of control over land and the maintenance of peace, which cut across these rudimentary groupings.

New Caledonia was different from other settler colonies in the southern hemisphere such as Australia, South Africa, Argentina and, to a lesser extent, New Zealand, in several respects. First, it was much smaller hence the institutions and finance that might have created an internal dynamic of development, were not only slow in coming but were often totally absent. Second, the lands that the settlers occupied were already used by Melanesians who placed a strong emphasis on systematic cultivation and attached great significance to the land (cf. Denoon 1983:3); their displacement caused problems and violence, though sometimes no worse than in Australia or New Zealand. Third, by the end of the nineteenth century, the settler colonies of Australasia, southern Africa and elsewhere had achieved dramatic transformations in economic growth that provided comparisons with boom eras, such as the Industrial Revolution, in Europe and North America. New Caledonia by contrast was a settler colony largely without settlers, where economic growth had not been achieved and where Melanesian opposition remained significant. The capital, migrant labourers, technology and markets, that had enabled in other settler colonies 'an obscure and remote outpost to grow rapidly into a relatively prosperous and populous society' (Denoon 1983:6), were inadequate to achieve this transformation in New Caledonia. Not only that but many of the earliest settlers were freed convicts, occupying small areas of poor stony ground with thin soils and often with minimal agricultural skills. For them life was often difficult and unsuccessful; they were poor but nevertheless took pride in their European language, consumption patterns and identification with a very distant metropolitan power.
In the second half of the nineteenth century the establishment of the settler colony had given New Caledonia the basis of its contemporary economic and social structure. The mining and grazing industries were established and coffee had taken over from sugar and cotton; European settlement had spread on the west coast, overcoming violent Melanesian opposition, and Noumea had become one of the largest urban centres in the island Pacific. In this evolution there were three important elements: Melanesian opposition, the struggle for land and the growth of a European population at the expense of the indigenous population. So crucial are these themes to the history of New Caledonia that they are each considered separately below. Society and economy had also become primarily oriented towards France, symptomatic of which was the mining industry. By the end of the century the House of Rothschild had consolidated control of a number of mining activities. For most of the nineteenth century mining made very little direct contribution to the colonial economy. Ore was often directly exported, export taxes were avoided, labour was imported into the country and paid such low wages that the resultant expenditure was trivial, and almost all the infrastructure of the mining operations was imported. The indirect contribution was also minimal; Thompson records wryly that Bernheim's bequest to the administration for the establishment of the Bernheim Library, still the only public library in New Caledonia, was 'possibly the only altruistic action on the part of mining operators' (Thompson 1984:80). The 'take-over of the colony's resources by the House of Rothschild' (Thompson 1984:78) ultimately placed New Caledonia at the top of the world's nickel suppliers for the next two decades, but few of the profits were channelled back into New Caledonia. The SLN brought all its supplies from France and in 1884 the Noumea smelters were closed down and smelting took place in Europe. At the same time the political influence of the SLN increased to the extent that the company's interests sometimes took precedence over those of local residents and in 1892 the 25-year old son of one of the company's officials was appointed Governor of New Caledonia (Thompson 1984:79; cf. Gascher 1974). Finance and industry had become thoroughly intertwined with politics while New Caledonia was increasingly becoming both a nickel colony and a more obviously French colony. As the missions once again expanded their activities, 'by the late nineteenth century New Caledonians were forced to acknowledge that for the time being their island was indisputably controlled by Frenchmen. Acceptance of the Catholic Church was a significant part of this recognition' (Howe 1984:318). As these trends intensified, Australian economic interests in New Caledonia declined and, after 1887 Australia was no longer New Caledonia's major supplier of goods; migration of new settlers from Australia also fell, especially after penal settlement, and France consolidated its economic and military conquest of the new colony.
Chapter 4

Melanesian opposition and revolt

Atai, war chief of La Foa, was principal leader of the New Caledonian rebellions of 1878. He never accepted French occupation of his land, protesting against repeated devastation of his people's crops by colonists' cattle. When the governor of the colony answered his complaints by advising him to build fences, Atai is said to have retorted: 'When my taro plants go eating their cattle, then I'll build fences' (Clifford 1982:124).

We must be proud of our past. We must be proud of our struggles and of our victories. Melanesians must be proud of the man who was the spirit of the 1878 insurrection: Great Chief Atai. In him is the symbol: the incarnation of this must be the model for building our country (Anova-Ataba 1984:46).

Much of the early history of French colonization and settlement in the nineteenth century can be recounted without mentioning Melanesians. For many of the colonists, free settlers, convicts, and bureaucrats alike, they were invisible in their own island, a dark and distant population who existed only to slow the pace of progress in this lonely and remote outpost of French rule. But colonization necessitated some relationship, if not rapport, with the local population. Melanesian land had to be acquired, mapped and allocated to the new settlers; roads, farms and mines were constructed on this land and animals needed fields. For a colonizing power control of the land was more crucial than control of the people, but Melanesians owned the land. Conflict was inevitable in the clash of contrasting and mutually unintelligible cultures.

The first experiences of contact between Melanesians and Europeans on the Grande Terre had already demonstrated the difficulties of life there. In the Loyalty Islands, Europeans and other visitors in the 1840s all thought that tribal warfare was virtually continuous. Everywhere such warfare was relatively formalized and loss of life was never great (Douglas 1980:28; Howe 1977:134-5); the aims of warfare were not to annihilate enemies or take their land, but to demonstrate superiority and extract
Map 8 Missions and military bases in New Caledonia, 1878

Source: Adapted from J-P. Doumenge, Du Terroir ... à la Ville. Les Mélanésiens et leur Espace en Nouvelle-Calédonie, Talence, Centre d'Etudes de Géographie Tropicale, Travaux et Documents de Géographie Tropicale No. 46, 1982:116.

tribute (Howe 1977:142). For the most part missionary expansion, in the early colonial years, and even the development of new mines, was undertaken with military escorts or concentrated on the fringes of Noumea (Map 8). For those who ventured further into the interior there was often no more than a shaky and hesitant peace and a peace that had never been negotiated.

Following annexation, contacts between settlers and Melanesians were often hostile, and the French administration was determined not only to stamp out real opposition but to deter the possibility of future opposition, through a policy of 'divide-and-rule' (Douglas 1979a:48; Howe 1984:317), that was ultimately effective against small tribal societies where coalitions had never been more than transient and limited. Most Melanesian societies 'were probably prepared not to oppose the development of the colony provided they were left alone to regulate their own
internal affairs and relations with other groups' (Douglas 1979a:47). Of course no administration could ever have allowed this to occur, especially one that required land for settlement; clashes occurred after no more than a few months of the declaration of the new French colony. In many cases the military intervened in what were essentially traditional disputes, continued and sometimes exacerbated in the post-contact era. In the Houaillou valley, for example, troops became involved in local disputes every year between 1863 and 1868 (Latham 1982), an intervention that tended to increase the level of warfare and violence rather than end it. This intervention, as in Hienghene in the late 1850s, was seen as 'an unjustifiable encroachment on the tribe's independence' (Douglas 1979a:49). There the great chief Bouarate was exiled to Tahiti, a situation that infuriated the Hienghene people to the extent that a military expedition was launched in which 40 Melanesians were said to have died, the villages and gardens of the tribe devastated and three English traders, supposedly collaborators of the Hienghene, were shot (Douglas 1979a:49; Saussol 1979a:82-4). After an uprising near Pouebo in 1867, fuelled by colonial land acquisitions and the search for gold, ten men, including a Christian adviser, were publicly guillotined on the beach 'demonstrating to Melanesians that a claim to civilization and humanity was no proof against barbarity' (Douglas 1979a:54) and provoking a rift between the colonial state and the Catholic mission. Such escalation of warfare necessarily increased the desire of Melanesians for vengeance and, in a context in which no tribe could ever expect to extract appropriate retribution, fuelled long-standing hostility to colonial intervention of any kind.

During the period of governorship of Charles Guillain (1862-70) the administration began to make a much more deliberate attempt to colonize New Caledonia through agricultural settlement. Land was compulsorily acquired and forced labour was imposed on Melanesians, especially for public works, a combination of circumstances which naturally resulted in opposition. Sometimes the opposition was direct and violent; at other times, as when Melanesians built 'sham huts' (Saussol 1971:232) on land to demonstrate that it was occupied, it was a more strategic and considered resistance. On most of the island, the administration relied to a great extent on the support of particular tribes (of which the Hienghene were initially the most important) to keep the colony reasonably peaceful and to spearhead punitive expeditions (Douglas 1979a:53). Although French military strength was adequate for the defence of the colony only around Noumea and other military outposts, the colonial administration had to put down insurrections in almost every part of the country where there had been some degree, however slight, of colonial settlement. Conflict with the French was widespread, although often impossible to disentangle from historic conflicts; traditional opposition to one such chief, Gondou, from the mountains above Wagap, resulted in Melanesians joining with the French to oppose him. In the
first two decades of significant European contact there were numerous sporadic incidences of opposition to colonization throughout the Grande Terre; the only area largely untouched by violence was the area between Bourail and Bouloupari, the centre of the 1878 revolt.

Land became a critical problem with the dramatic extension of land legislation and the policy of cantonnement (confinement) of the Melanesian population in reserves or reservations. From 1876 the policy was considered justified by the increased penal colonization and the apparent rapid decline of the indigenous population (Saussol 1971:233). Although the decree affirmed that the policy was aimed at ensuring that the land available to a tribe would be proportionate to its land and population and should 'as far as possible' be on its own land, 'this was no more than a half-guarantee, which was little applied in practice, and foreshadowed the subsequent transfers of population' (Saussol 1971:233). On top of the administrative fiction of the tribe was imposed a new fiction; the association of that tribe with a new, and reduced, area of land. The administration sought to turn both fictions into facts.

_Cantonnement_ began on the east coast around the military base at Canala, then in the neighbourhood of the convict settlements around La Foa and Bourail, where it ultimately led to 'the bloodiest revolt New Caledonia has ever known' (Saussol 1979a:233). Initially reservations were only established on traditional land of the clan groups forming tribes, and only those tribes who were considered to have opposed colonial rule were subject to confinement (Saussol 1983a:271). As settlers demanded more and more land the administration simply responded by establishing more reservations, smaller, more remote and on poorer agricultural land than those first established. Tribes were pushed into reservations on land already owned and occupied by others, thus creating inter-tribal conflict and maintaining the principle of divide and rule, or were pushed into upland valleys which could support a substantial population only with difficulty.

At the time of the 1878 revolt land commissions had only delimited reservations in some of the areas of the tribes involved although, undoubtedly, other tribes feared the effects of demarcation of land in their own areas (Latham 1975:59-60). There was good reason to fear this cantonnement as areas of Melanesian land were severely reduced to a fraction of their original extent, even among tribes who had lived at peace with settlers for some years. According to one contemporary observer: 'this was the real cause of the 1878 insurrection' (Nouet 1903, cited by Saussol 1979a:187).

A further imposition of the colonial world was forced labour, established by statute in 1871 when it became apparent that convict labour was inadequate for either the effective
extension of public works or as a labour force for the port, shipping or other activities. The administration also imposed a ban on Melanesians leaving their reserves without official authorization, further increasing local frustrations and opposition. Despite some inevitable friction between tribes, the anger, hostility and frustration of the Melanesians was almost wholly directed against the Europeans who had forced them off their land, onto land to which they had no rights and no ties, was often inadequate for them and away from land that they knew and understood, where their ancestors were buried and where their clan ties lay. This anger became channelled into the great revolt.

The 1878 insurrection

The uprisings that had preceded the 1878 insurrection were, in a sense, preliminary skirmishes. Opposition to a European presence was consistent and concerted, but Melanesians had never had more than short-term successes in their violent responses to colonization; retribution and reprisals were invariably more draconian than the initial violence. Why then was there such a dramatic opposition to colonialism as the 1878 revolt, and why was it essentially repeated some forty years later further north? Although the causes of the insurrection are, in almost every sense, firmly rooted in the Melanesian land, a variety of minor factors also played a part in this devastating event, a revolt that in many respects marked a turning point for the Melanesian population of New Caledonia; a point after which, for many, Melanesians became a beaten people, outsiders in their own land. The revolt was simultaneously the 'saddest and most glorious event in Caledonian history' (Anova-Ataba 1984:46).

Throughout most of Melanesia, and more widely in the South Pacific region, there was violent reaction to colonial intervention, yet in much of Melanesia this opposition has been limited and localized. Of all the movements opposing Europeans in Melanesia, the 1878 revolt in New Caledonia has become perhaps the most famous. Most recently the leader of the revolt, great chief Atai, 'has attained legendary status amongst Melanesians seeking independence, and the 1878 revolt has become their most powerful symbol' (Douglas 1980:22). This is most apparent in the title of the recently published book by the Melanesian priest Apollinaire Anova-Ataba: D'Atai à l'Indépendance (1984) (from Atai to Independence). Consequently the actual course of the revolt, and the role of particular tribes, is a source for contemporary dispute, between those who see it as the most dramatic manifestation of widespread Melanesian opposition to French colonialism, and those who point to a situation where a number of tribes were either neutral or actively supporting the French intervention. In any attempt to achieve a coherent synthesis of a series of complex historical events that took place more than a century ago, there is obviously more than a hint that this must
The initial events of the 1878 revolt took place in the La Foa valley, on the west coast of New Caledonia where the La Foa river separated the land of two powerful tribes (Map 9). On one bank was the tribe of the great chief, Atai, for long an opponent of French colonialism. The nearby Dogny tribe were allies of Atai. On the night of 18 June 1878, Jean Chène, a pardoned convict and settler in the valley, and his Melanesian wife and
children were murdered by Dogny tribesmen, since they had been sheltering a woman, Katia, from the Dogny tribe who, by one account (Latham 1975), did not wish to marry a man chosen for her, and who they would not return to the tribe. A local investigation was held and several Dogny and other chiefs, who were certainly innocent, were arrested and imprisoned at La Foa and Bouloupari. There, on the night of 24 June, the revolt began; the gendarmerie at La Foa was attacked, four gendarmes and a convict servant were killed and the imprisoned chiefs released. At dawn the next day the Atai and Dogny tribes attacked the village of La Foa, killing twenty-one people, including free colonists, freed convicts and New Hebridean labourers, and also attacked the nearby coastal military post of Teremba, although this attack was beaten off. A French gunboat commanded by Henri Rivière, later to provide his own account of the revolt, anchored off Teremba and the situation was secured. The agricultural settlement at Moindou was evacuated and the surviving settlers assembled at the Fonwhary prison farm (Latham 1975:50-2; 1978:26).

News of the revolt was telegraphed to Noumea and a warship with 200 troops left Noumea for the west coast. Sixteen gendarmes were set down at Bouarake, the port for Bouloupari, at about the same time that the gendarmerie was attacked. The gendarmes had not informed the local population of the prevailing day's events at La Foa; consequently no precautions were taken and about eighty foreigners - Europeans, New Hebrideans, Indians and also Loyalty Islanders - were killed in the single day. How many Melanesians were killed in these early struggles is not known but probably there were very few. Some tribes remained neutral, including the Momea and the Moindou in the La Foa valley, but a majority of tribes took up arms against their colonizers.

A quarter of a century after annexation France had now received the greatest challenge to its colonial administration. Official incompetence assisted in the development of the revolt and the French administration was now in a mood both to play down the revolt and ensure that it was ended. At Païta, far away from the La Foa valley, a chief and eleven of his followers were shot for possessing freshly made bullets, and Fonwhary and Bouloupari were more heavily fortified (Latham 1975:53). Much more important, the French sought allies among the traditional enemies of Atai and other La Foa valley tribes. The Canala tribe, on the east of the Grande Terre, were traditional enemies of Atai, before the revolt they had occupied the Sarraumea valley and also the high valley of Dogny, which belonged to Atai. However, although they were already regarded as 'faithful allies' of France, there is evidence that the French threatened to enslave them if they did not fight against Atai (Guiart 1983a:72-4; Latham 1975:49, 1978:30). Similarly the French made allies of the Bourindi of the Thio valley, who were traditional enemies of the Owí and Koa tribes, themselves allies of Atai and residents of the valleys above Bouloupari.
Embodying on a renewed policy of divide and rule, the French district officer at Canalal, Lieutenant Servan, with the Canalal tribe, crossed the mountains before the end of June and attacked their old enemies the Atai. Soon afterwards the Bourindi crossed from Thio and joined with the French to attack the Owi and the Koa. At the same time the Paita tribes attacked their old enemies across the Ouenghi river. In part, tribe had been set against tribe; and in part, tribes recognized an opportunity to settle old scores and acquire land and status in the eyes of the French administration. The escalation of the revolt drew in tribes that had hitherto remained neutral; the Moindou tribe joined the revolt, although they were apparently never allied with Atai, after a dispute over a pig killed by colonists. Similarly the Ouatom tribe had remained neutral until August when a French expedition marched through their land (Latham 1975:54) so ensuring that they too revolted. Not only were other Melanesian tribes drawn into the conflict but even the Algerian rebel chief, Abu-Mezrag, who had himself led a revolt against the French only seven years earlier and so been deported to New Caledonia, was brought from his place of exile at Ducos to lead a detachment of Arab convicts against the rebels (Burchett 1941:127). Most communards, if not Louise Michel, also fought with or at least supported the French (Thomas 1971/1980:159). However it was the Canalal tribes whose effectiveness was greatest in bringing the rebellion to a close.

The repression of the rebellious tribes, though organized by the French, was largely undertaken by the Canalal and Bourindi tribes and two tribes (Uatiao and Manongoe) from the Paita area. Melanesians did almost all the fighting, with assistance from French troops, who were too noisy to ambush the rebels and so were mainly deployed in constructing defence posts or destroying rebel villages and plantations (Latham 1975:54). From time to time the rebel tribes attacked the French military, usually in night-time raids, and there was a lengthy stalemate until the end of August when Atai and some supporters were ambushed by Canalal warriors in the La Foa valley and murdered. At the same time, in a different fight, the chief of Moindou and several of his men were also ambushed and killed. During these phases of the struggle the French military leader, Colonel Gally-Pasbosc, a man who had sworn to wipe out the native race as the English had done in Tasmania, was also killed, perhaps even by Atai himself (Anova-Ataba 1973:25). This death instigated massive French retaliation and the rebels of the lower valley were effectively surrounded and wiped out. Resistance from the tribes of the Bouloupari area, and the mountains above, lasted longer as there was more room there to manoeuvre. Despite the bitter blow of the loss of Atai and violent French retaliation, it was not until January 1879 that tribes began to surrender and the revolt was quashed.

Towards the end of 1878, as the military forces began to subdue the area between La Foa and Bouloupari, the insurrection
spread to Poya and Bourail, as tribes there, many of which had ties to those around Moindou (Guiart 1984d), also rebelled against French colonization, and especially the loss of land, here divided up into much larger estates, so large that Sausset had actually called them 'latifundias' (Sausset 1979a:231-2). Even before the 1878 revolt there had been much more extensive conflict in the Poya-Bourail region of the west coast. From early 1877 the Nekliai tribe near Poya had been fighting the Adio, from the higher mountains above Poya. The French district office at Bourail distributed arms to settlers around Bourail and set up a volunteer cavalry corps. Warfare followed in the Bourail valley and in the Poya area; much of the fighting was carried out by rival Melanesian tribes in a manner that was already familiar and was to be continued in the 1878 revolt itself. Here too there were divisions between tribes but, equally, there was overwhelming opposition to Europeans; in two days in September, around Poya alone, some 26 people (either Europeans or New Hebridean workers) were killed. At Bourail, where there was a convict settlement, the situation was similar to that around La Foa; although violence reached Bourail itself those who died in Melanesian attacks were Europeans and New Hebrideans in the rural areas (Sausset 1979a:235-9). Overall the new revolts further north on the west coast were too late to succeed in broadening and strengthening the southern revolt. Effectively by October 1878 the 'end of an illusion' (Sausset 1979a:240) had become apparent and demoralization had set in. Even so it was not until June 1879 that the official state of siege was lifted from Bourail and Bouloupari, a year after the revolt had started.

Interpretations of the context of the revolt are greatly varied. As Anova-Ataba dramatically recorded: 'when one dares to raise the "taboo" subject of the revolt... hair stands on end, teeth grind and claws reach out' (Anova-Ataba 1973:20). Anova-Ataba, who spoke figuratively of Atai as his grandfather, saw the revolt as a clash of two separate worlds, two cultures and two different civilizations, and argued that Atai was opposing the intrusion of a new, materialistic and profane society, which rejected dialogue with Melanesian society. For him the clash was not merely the result of the depredation by cattle of land and graves or the detention of native women by colonists, but a comprehensive cultural conflict: 'two groups from different civilizations were at war. Each wanted to see the other disappear' (Anova-Ataba 1973:25). This too is broadly the picture accepted by the Australian journalist, Wilfred Burchett: 'The great war chief, Atai, described as a native of great intelligence and authority, organised his people for a war of extermination against the whites' (Burchett 1941:131). For the anthropologist Jean Guiart, it was 'the first real attempt of the indigenous society to adopt a mode of political and military organization capable of permitting a viable resistance... revolutionary war does not date from today' (Guiart 1968:109-10). To Roselène Dousse-Leenhardt, historian and daughter of Maurice Leenhardt, it
was also a clash between two irreconcilable cultures, a clash that she saw as inevitable in this settler colony. For her 'the 1878 revolt was not merely a peasant uprising but the conscientious opposition of a people defending the highest values of their civilization' (1978:112). Doumenge, rejecting Dousset's 'movement of national emancipation', since no Kanak 'nation' could exist at that time, nevertheless saw that patriotism, even if confined to particular valleys, was more than mere reactions to lost and damaged land; it was a 'confrontation between two concepts of social and spatial organization' (1982:101). Others have seen the insurrection as little more than a local struggle; for Barbançon, it was no revolutionary war, and the motives of Atai were quite different from those of Jean Moulin, Ho Chi Minh or Fidel Castro, being as much concerned with opposing traditional enemies as overthrowing the French (Barbançon 1978:5; cf. Latham 1975, 1978). Nevertheless, even Rivière, charged with the task of overthrowing the revolt, was well aware of its causes:

Their fields ravaged, it was for them either hunger or work without rest. But the principal cause of the insurrection, one might say the only one, is the antagonism that can always be found between a conquering people and a conquered people. The latter must be absorbed by the former so that they will disappear (Rivière 1881:281).

He had no doubt that they would disappear because of 'their backward customs, their hatred of work and their complete indifference to a civilization whose benefits they cannot appreciate' (Rivière 1881:281). General Trentinian's official inquiry, a report that clearly laid the blame for the revolt on the actions of the administration and European settlers, was hidden for almost a century (Dousset-Leenhardt 1978), too explosive for the public eye, even where the potentially critical public were almost wholly illiterate.

There is almost unanimous agreement that land was the specific cause of the revolt; traditional rights had been comprehensively violated. How much land was transferred at that time cannot now be known (Latham 1975:60-1) but the administration probably ignored land problems in this area, leaving tribes to the mercy of the cattle ranchers (Guiart 1968:110) but giving more favoured treatment to the Canala tribes around the second biggest port in the colony. Agricultural colonization was slower there and took note of Melanesian sacred places (Guiart 1983a:76). There had been previous warnings that the scale of land alienation around the Fonwhary penal centre, built on Atai's land, was excessive and would cause problems (Dousset-Leenhardt 1978:91-5) but the administration ignored the warnings. Moreover land was certainly taken from tribes on the basis of their relations with the administration; Atai's tribe was left with 922 hectares in 1877 compared with the 2000 hectares allocated to the smaller but pro-French Farino tribe, a pattern widespread in New Caledonia.
(Latham 1975:61-2). Much of the alienated land had been given over to cattle ranching, the stations of the colonists were becoming more common than Melanesian villages and colonists' cattle often ran wild, damaging the crops of Melanesians. The damage was particularly apparent in 1878 when, as a result of the previous year's drought, cattle from the area south of Bouloupari were taken north to graze, increasing the local herds, and severely damaging taro terraces, yam gardens, irrigation channels and graves (Guiart 1968; Doumenge 1982:104) at a time when Melanesians knew little about cattle and consequently were in some fear of them. Underlying this damage was the loss of the best agricultural land; Atai is remembered for the occasion when he confronted the Governor of New Caledonia with two full sacks in each hand, one of soil and one of stones, stating: 'this is what we had, and this is what you have left us' (Saussol 1979a:194).

More simplified interpretations abound; the most straightforward was that of the Noumea paper, La Nouvelle Calédonie, which printed in October 1879 a view that seems to have been shared by the majority of settlers at the time:

The main causes:

(a) They are black. We are white. They were the first occupants of the island. We arrived later.

(b) Formerly the vast land was free. Now the stations move closer together and the colonists increase to crowd the natives out. They revolt.

Secondary causes in order of importance:

(a) Limitation of territory of tribes at La Foa made by the Commission of 1879, together with limitations caused by the establishment of the penitentiary at Fonwhary. This annoyed Atai.

(b) Compulsory labourers in the main towns were nearly always levied from the same tribes, particularly those from Boulouparis and Bourail.

(c) The work on the roads was imposed under such conditions as to hurt the feelings of the natives.

(d) The removal of native objects from the Kanak burial grounds at La Foa.

(e) Insufficiency of military posts in the interior.

(f) Lack of roads, in spite of the presence of 6000 transportees.

(g) Annoyance caused by the colonists' cattle (Burchett 1941:129-30).
Subsequently the newspaper gave two other possible reasons for the revolt: the lack of proper supervision of the tribes and (unspecified) provocations by bureaucrats and colonists. There was at least one other catalyst to insurrection; the removal of Melanesian women by white colonists, symbolized in the event that precipitated the revolt. Anova-Ataba quotes at length a speech, purported to have been made by Atai, in which he summarizes to his assembled village the reasons why revolt was essential, the loss and damage of land and the loss of Katia being the prime reasons (Anova-Ataba 1984:52-3). For Atai, and other leaders, a major crisis of sovereignty had been reached; 'elites suddenly found themselves forced to choose between total dependence on the new regime or stubborn defence of their old ways and traditional prerogatives' (Hempenstall 1978:218).

One other factor can be read into Anova-Ataba's account of Atai's rebellion; the revolt was not one more sporadic outburst of violent reaction but a considered opposition, the final outcome of years of perceived injustice, so that Atai could claim that the whole country, to north and south, supported his stand. It was, after all, a revolt of those Melanesians like Atai who were most aware of the French colonial system; as one contemporary observer noted in dismay, 'above all it is the natives who are most familiar with our customs and the most civilized who have been the leaders of these massacres and pillages' (Saussol 1979a:189; cf. Guiart 1983a:72). The idea that the revolt might have been planned long in advance, and involve substantial cooperation between tribes over a wide area, is rejected by more conservative interpretations (e.g. Latham 1975; Comité de Rédaction 1982).

The flaw in the logic of simplified explanations of the revolt is that they lump the majority of Melanesians together as a homogeneous entity, without internal differentiation or discord, and with wholesale incomprehension of and opposition to European settlers, administrators and all other alien influences. Similarly, arguments that this kind of revolt was invariably a reaction to the colonial presence, indicative of the wholesale rejection of European sovereignty and alien encroachment of lands and resources, take no note of both collaboration and the receptivity of islanders to many aspects of European culture. Moreover

the study of violent conflict in colonial societies is further complicated by the tendency of modern nationalists and their sympathizers to see all collisions involving Europeans and islanders as manifestations of nascent nationalist sentiments, as part of an ongoing struggle for national liberation from imperial aggressors (Douglas 1980:22).

Linda Latham has thus argued not only that many Melanesians had achieved a degree of accommodation with Europeans (principally
through employment for them) but that during the 1878 revolt the majority were either neutral or on the French side (Latham 1975:49). In this new perspective the Melanesians of the La Foia region appear, in Latham's study,

as anarchic reactionaries. Possessing few, if any, coherent perceptions of the implications of French presence and no co-ordinated plans of action, they lashed out because of momentary grievances and clung obdurately to customary modes of warfare and political action which, in retrospect, doomed them from the start (Douglas 1980:23).

Yet the social and military context of the colonized Melanesian population was quite different from that of the colonial administration; trans-island military alliances could scarcely have been contemplated, concerns over French settlement took somewhat different forms in different places and in many parts of New Caledonia (most obviously in the Loyalty Islands) its influence was limited or even beneficial (in the sense that material benefits occurred but land alienation did not). It was not therefore surprising that warfare remained traditional in nature rather than becoming a strategy to remove French domination. Even so the 'French were sorely troubled when confronted in the north by concerted military action beyond the purely local level, since they had expected that the extreme fragmentation of local groups would lead to rapid pacification' (Douglas 1980:49). What they found, in fact, were quite wide-ranging alliances against them, a much stronger opposition than they had anticipated and a clear indication that large elements of their colonial policies, even their presence in New Caledonia, had been abject failures.

It was not solely a revolt of whites against blacks; even for the principally Melanesian side there was some European support. Legend has it that Louise Michel, for example, taught the rebels how to cut telegraph wires and so shut down the local communication system (Thomas 1971/80:159) although her support was probably more moral than physical (Armogathe 1985; Reynolds 1985). On the French side there was much greater diversity. Almost two hundred Europeans, and those who fought on the side of the Europeans, were killed. Those who fought and died with the French included Melanesians and also Arabs (Algerians), New Hebrideans, Spaniards and Loyalty Islanders, and at least one Malabar, Chinese, Vietnamese and American (Dousset-Leenhart 1976:107-11, 158-60, 168). Melanesian casualties were much greater and the human cost was enormous; one contemporary document estimated as many as 1200 dead, around a third of those involved in the conflicts (Saussol 1979a:242). In a period of less than nine months, more lives had been lost in New Caledonia than would ever be lost again in subsequent struggles.

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The Melanesian survivors were dispersed and separated from their homelands; about six hundred fled and were spontaneously accepted by tribes elsewhere in New Caledonia, some around Canala and many in the mountains between Kone and Ponerihouen (Guirart 1968). A further six hundred were deported from the Grande Terre to the Isle of Pines, the old penal colony, and three hundred more were sent to the island of Belep; in both cases this was more than the existing population, creating obvious problems there, since they could not return to their homes until after 1886 (Saussol 1979a:245-8). Others went from La Foa to the east coast. On the west coast, between Bouloupari and Poya, the administration took over large areas of land without either drawing up official boundaries, or paying compensation, while on the east coast, where Melanesians had been sent, the local tribes experienced enormous problems subdividing their land (Doumenge 1982:105). Most of the rebellious villages were simply destroyed without trace, a situation welcomed by European public opinion which saw this as a means of acquiring yet more land (Saussol 1979a:249). The economic effects were also considerable; two hundred European cattle stations were destroyed or looted, many cattle were killed or fled to become wild and the last sugar mills were destroyed. Hundreds of houses in Melanesian villages were burnt, and taro and yam terraces were methodically destroyed. Many Europeans abandoned attempts at establishing stations and withdrew to Noumea. Yet before long they returned and the vast occupation of land in the large area between Bouloupari and Poya has given this part of rural New Caledonia an unusually dominant white European population, a legacy that remains significant.

Above and beyond the material costs of the revolt were the psychological effects, the most obvious being the consolidation of a great divide between the European and Melanesian communities. For Europeans the least problem occurring in a Melanesian tribe was seen as an incipient revolt and fears were tempered only by the belief that Melanesians were dying out. Among Melanesians the resultant problems were even greater: fear, unease and uncertainty, in the face of brutal reprisals, exile and the further occupation of land to the extent that there was a 'suicidal despondency' (Saussol 1979a:251) and a steady decline in the Melanesian population, a decline that justified European expectations, and hopes.

More rigorous control over Melanesians was introduced and by decree in July 1887 they were formally placed beyond the French law that applied to French citizens and became mere subjects of France under the arbitrary authority of administrators. Under this new statute, the Code of the Indigénat (Code of pre-war controls on the movement of Melanesians), Melanesians were required to provide free public labour (an extension of an earlier 1871 statute), or labour for the coffee harvests or nickel mines. They were not allowed to reside outside their tribes without authority or carry arms in 'European towns', engage in sorcery or
be in a state of drunkenness or nudity. Any infraction of the statutes was subject to a prison sentence (Doumenge 1982:112). The governor nominated a 'great chief' to maintain order in each district, and below him a 'small chief' in each tribe, all being subject to orders from the Service des Affaires Indigènes (the Native Affairs Office), who in practice were local gendarmes (syndics). This pyramid system was both utopian and authoritarian, utopian in that was an idealistic response that had little to do with the organization of Melanesian society and authoritarian in that decisions, many arbitrary, only travelled in one direction. Despite widespread social and economic change this administrative system lasted virtually without change until 1946.

One positive effect of the insurrection was that for some fifteen years the delimitation of reservations ended (partly because the flow of free colonists was virtually non-existent) until the arrival of Governor Feillet and the steady expansion of free colonization. Feillet's arrival in 1894 in many respects instituted a period of colonization similar to that of Guillain but, where Guillain had established the penal settlement, Feillet sought to develop free colonization. Feillet's requirement for new land was difficult to meet in a country where so much land had already been allocated to large cattle stations and penal concessions. Thus, the delimitation of reservations became more vigorous and settlement progressed northwards. From 1908 onwards the north of New Caledonia, between Kone and Koumac, was the last pioneer frontier. The impact of this was enormous; one contemporary estimate suggested that between 1895 and 1901 the administration had taken over about 200,000 hectares of Melanesian land, some two-thirds of the land controlled by them in 1895 (Saussol 1979a:291). The area of Melanesian-owned land therefore both declined dramatically and was divided into small, sometimes too small, parcels that were difficult to manage, distant from traditional homes and on the poorest land, that was regarded as unsuitable for European settlement. The economic consequences for Melanesians described earlier were considerably exacerbated.

No person was of greater importance in the events of 1878 than Atai, as a leader who united a number of different tribes, and a man whose charismatic virtues have increased with the repetition of accounts of the revolt (e.g. Anova-Ataba 1984:66-7). One of the first radical nationalist organizations was called Groupe 1878, and on walls in Noumea are daubed slogans such as 'Atai - PALIKA: the same struggle'. In this recognition of an early Melanesian leader, a man of undoubted charisma, and the search for a symbol that might unite tribally and regionally fragmented groups, there have necessarily been oversimplifications and misrepresentations (Douglas 1980:22). In the manner of Atai's death this symbolism was ensured. Atai apparently died while standing his ground in the company of his son and four other warriors; the Canala tribesmen who had killed them severed their heads and took them back to La Foa stuck on
bayonets. Atai's head and one hand were sealed in a tin container full of alcohol and sent to the Paris Anthropological Society. What happened to the remains of Atai is uncertain but, in death, the man became myth.

**The events of 1917**

Although, in many respects, the 1878 revolt was the last concerted attempt to turn back the French invaders, the defeat and subsequent repression effectively demonstrated the permanence of colonization but certainly did not mark the end of opposition to colonial rule. For the rest of the nineteenth century opposition was small scale and sporadic, declining especially after 1888 with the deportation of the Pamale war chief Poindi-Pwacili to Africa (Guiart 1970:270), and in part as a result of the administration seeking to regulate land matters more humanely and placing demands on convicts rather than Melanesians for forced labour. Yet the threat of conflict was constantly present; 'even a half-century later, memory of the great rebellion was strong, a permanent feature of white colonial psychology... The colonists were nervous and, in periods of tension, trigger-happy' (Clifford 1982:48). By the end of the century the steadily growing numbers and confidence of the European settlers had led to increased pressure on the remaining Melanesian land. The Governor, Paul Feillet, happy to turn New Caledonia into an ideal rural France, set about 'regularizing' (reducing) the boundaries of the reserves, forcing them further into poorer areas or high in the island's remote central valleys. Villages were fixed and Melanesians restricted to their reservations; a head-tax, levied on all adult males, was designed to be paid off through employment, and chiefs had to provide regular supplies of labourers, for which they received a proportion of each man's wages. Abuse of these regulations (Leenhardt 1978) continued into the twentieth century. Following his attempts to prevent the spoliation of reserve lands at Temala Leenhardt recorded in 1905: 'Land problems are our daily burden. And it is one of our more painful tasks to be working to bring people to Christ without being able always to assure them their place on earth' (Clifford 1982:58). Given that New Caledonian colonists dreamed of a situation more like that of Australia, where they could exist without administrative control and would have complete freedom to overwork and mistreat the local population (Guiart 1970:265), abuses were inevitable. Some colonists exacerbated underlying problems by making a practice of sowing tribal discord, providing free alcohol and deliberately provoking interclan jealousies (Clifford 1982:59).

For this island of discord the First World War introduced a new element,

producing in the whites a patriotic wartime mentality that did not contribute to finesse in native affairs. The
island's Melanesians underwent the pressures of military recruitment and service in the French Pacific Brigades. Over a thousand saw action on the western front in Europe. The conditions of their enlistment were seldom wholly voluntary (Clifford 1982:92)

and recruitment was often a combination of false promises and crude force. The irony of Melanesians fighting against invaders of French land, less than forty years after rebelling against invaders of their own land, was lost on most Europeans if not on the Melanesians themselves. Lands promised to the returned Melanesian riflemen were not forthcoming, nor did their wartime service for la patrie lead to their rapidly becoming full citizens as had been permitted to Tahitians as early as 1880; unsurprisingly then, in subsequent years, these anciens combattants formed a vanguard of Melanesian cohesion and nascent political activity in the colony (Clifford 1982:94). The false promises and insensitivities of the recruiters were, in part, the cause of the outbreaks of violence in 1917 and 1918; again, the central issue was almost certainly land.

The northern highlands of New Caledonia had largely escaped the early impact of colonization; settlers had acquired land further south and conflicts over that land had not involved tribes much further north than Kone and Ponerihouen although it had briefly touched Hienghene. By the end of the century however the frontier of settlement had shifted further northwards; in 1903 the inhabitants of land between Hienghene and Kone had been expelled and villages, such as Pamale, burned to make way for the cattle of white settlers, the 'last wave of graziers' in New Caledonia (Guiart 1983a:133). A decade later resentment still smouldered and some sort of rebellion was already planned (Clifford 1982:95); what has sometimes been described as 'the last Kanak rebellion' (Guiart 1970:265; Saussol 1979a:308) did not however get underway until 1917. Even then, as Guiart's study entitled 'The Events of 1917' indicates, there are grounds for dispute over the extent to which this was a concerted revolt, similar to that of 1878, or merely a series of dramatic but unconnected events.

Even as late as 1917 the mountains above Kone, the apparent 'cradle of the revolt' (Saussol 1979a:308), were still an isolated and largely uncontrolled region. In addition there was a tradition of turbulence in the region stemming at least from the last essentially 'pre-colonial' war in 1865, and, more recently, from the deportation of Poindi-Pwacili and the destruction of Pamale village. Accounts of the genesis of the revolt are unclear but the immediate catalyst for the troubles, which followed the same despair over the destruction of land, was the disruption of a pilou, a ceremony of reconciliation between two rival tribes, one of which was led by the Melanesian chief Noel, through the arrival of an army recruitment mission. This was no ordinary ceremony, being also in memory of the death of Chief Gondou, widely regarded
as a leader of resistance movements against the French (Guiart 1970:266). The military mission disrupted the ceremony near Pamale; Noel and his followers attacked the recruiters leaving two injured.

In May 1917 the first attacks were made on isolated European concessions above Kone and Pouembout and subsequently on a nearby mining camp at Kopeto; several Europeans and Melanesians were killed and the mine camp abandoned. This was followed by a number of incidents and more deaths in the Kone area, including those of a Japanese worker and an Indonesian servant. These incidents were exacerbated by the activities of an influential sorcerer who began preaching war on the Europeans and 'a shooting incident by trigger happy whites' (Clifford 1982:96). The revolt spread to the east coast, to the area between Touho and Hienghene, with a succession of raids against colonists in isolated valleys. During three months several European stations were burnt down and their occupants killed. The administration proclaimed a state of emergency and, with superior arms, put down the rebellion which, according to Guiart, may never have incorporated more than eighty rebels, with some twenty guns; one after another the principal leaders were killed or captured (Guiart 1970). The end of the 'rebellion' followed the murder of one of the Melanesian leaders, Chief Noel of Kone, by an Arab settler. Although the whole area around Kone as far as Hienghene and Ponerihouen, was a centre of rebellion, bloodshed, uncertainty and fear, there was no central focus to the rebellion. Although crop damage by cattle, loss of land and concern over military recruitment fanned the flames of rebellion, they never united tribes in the way that had occurred around La Foa in the previous century. No doubt the failure of that revolt and the reprisals that followed acted as a warning to wavering tribes (Doumenge 1982:209). Even Chief Noel, regarded as the 'ringleader' of the opposition by the contemporary French authorities and in many subsequent accounts, took little or no part in many of the more serious incidents (Guiart 1970:271). Without a central focus and with a number of disparate aims and causes, this could never have been a rebellion able to make a lasting impression on the administration, whose control of New Caledonia had become increasingly secure. The military power of the colonists was now able to resist easily even concerted Melanesian opposition; only the guerrilla activities around Kone, flaring up as they did for unexpected reasons and in unexpected places, could disconcert the administration. This was indeed classic guerrilla warfare; rebels concerned with issues that were poorly understood by the colonial authorities and the settlers, rebels who were mobile, understood the countryside and were usually armed with clubs and axes, rather than the guns of the French, but rebels who were ultimately doomed to defeat.

Once again the complex pattern of alliances and influences had spread the rebellion from the west coast across to the east coast. So complex were these alliances and allegiances that
participation or non-participation in the revolt may have cut families in two (Guiart 1983a:75). Once again, the administration sought to pacify the rebellious tribes by mobilizing 'loyal' tribes, the traditional opponents of those who were in rebellion. Several such tribes came from the Houailou area; the reprisals reminded all of 'the brutal repression of 1878, when severed heads were paid for in hard cash. Leenhardt watched in horror and disgust the returning volunteers, laden with booty and relating stories of butchery - useless decapitations and the like' (Clifford 1982:98). In the revolt itself, as such it surely was, the numbers killed were nothing like those of forty years earlier; the highest estimate of those killed on the European side is sixteen (Saussol 1979a:319) and there appear to be no estimates of the number of deaths on the Melanesian side. Again the reprisals were more severe than the rebellion itself, eventually culminating in the trial of the rebels. Although through Leenhardt's intercession, the severity of the punishment was reduced, nonetheless, of the 75 Melanesians accused of participation in the revolt, 5 were sentenced to death, 45 to forced labour, 5 to varying prison terms and the rest were acquitted (Thompson and Adloff 1971:250). As before, a further result was the disappearance of some rebel villages, the depopulation of others and the increased concentration of Melanesians in coastal reservations. The issues that fuelled the revolt were indicative of widespread concerns elsewhere in New Caledonia. They included a range of problems associated with French colonization: the destruction of customs and the imposition of non-traditional institutions, administrative sanctions, taxes, fines and the demand for forced labour, the necessity to purchase from corrupt officers the necessary authorization to leave their villages, the abuse of Melanesian women, the destruction of land and fields by wild and uncontrolled cattle, feelings of being constantly cheated by European traders and the unnecessarily crude and brutal threats of military recruiters (Guiart 1970:267). With the exception of military recruitment none of these complaints were either new or isolated; they clearly demonstrated that, after more than half a century of intermittently crude and violent colonization and confrontation, the pattern and the result remained the same. Only the incorporation into these later struggles of elements of religion, or perhaps more properly, sorcery, a common theme in more recent phases of opposition to colonial rule (Hempenstall and Rutherford 1984; Ranger 1968), has prevented more widespread recognition of the significance of this more recent opposition movement. However, like the revolt of 1878, the events of 1917 are also remembered. The current indépendantiste leader, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, recalled in 1983 how his grandmother was killed as she fled the soldiers, carrying Tjibaou's father, then six years old, on her shoulders: 'our people have never given in. Our history is the history of the French imperialists who came here to take more and more of our heritage and who deny the fact that there is an indigenous people' (Bole-Richard 1983). Consciousness of history is rarely absent from Melanesian thought and action.
The aftermath of insurrection

In France and elsewhere the 1878 revolt raised the perception of New Caledonia as a trouble-spot, a dangerous island to be avoided in future by small farmers seeking to become settlers in new lands. Melanesian opposition, alongside its status as a penal colony, had thoroughly tarnished the image of the colony. Penal settlement had appropriated much of the best land and the question of land tenure threatened the future of all settlers. Subsequent insurrections around Kone, although less dramatic, were regular reminders that the frontiers of settlement were far from peaceful and that new settlers were always likely to threaten and be threatened by Melanesian landowners. Nonetheless, throughout the centre of the island, the military might of the French had triumphed, even if most of the fighting had been conducted by Melanesians armed by the French, and the indigenous population were cowed and beaten, without land in some cases, and forced to resettle in restricted, inadequate sites. A land of exile for French criminals was rapidly becoming a land of exile (Dousset-Leenhardt 1976) for the Melanesians whose land it had been.

At the start of the twentieth century contact between the Melanesians of the Grande Terre and the European population was primarily confined to missionaries (not all of whom were European) and settlers, while the colonial administration had very little to do with the native population of the island. Relationships between settlers and Melanesians were, on the surface, mixed. In some areas, particularly close to the frontiers of settlement, there was unveiled hostility while, in areas closer to Noumea, there was often cooperation rather than conflict and significant economic ties. At the same time, underlying these relations was mutual incomprehension; Melanesians naturally feared further frontier encroachments on their land and did not know when if ever any end was in sight. Settlers, few of whom had the heroic attributes often attributed to frontier colonists, were ill-prepared for sustained dialogue with another race. A sense of racial and moral superiority was not confined only to missionaries; settlers from the lowest strata of European society 'saw themselves as the heirs of a superior civilisation' (Mamak and Ali 1979:128). Consequently settlers distrusted Melanesians, saw them as inferior, at the bottom of the rank order of humanity or, at best, as potential workers who were all too often 'lazy' and 'unreliable'. They were then fit subjects for new-rangled anthropologists (cf. Denoon 1983:206) or, of course, for missionaries who might instil in them some notions of civilization and the civilizing mission of France. Yet missionaries who tried to forge new relationships were also not to be trusted; at the turn of the century Leenhardt's life was threatened by settlers (Clifford 1982:51), the more so when he understood more of Melanesian life. This then was the essence of settler-Melanesian relations, a fundamental detachment beyond the superficialities of
scraping a livelihood, a detachment which entered far into the twentieth century.

Just as the Melanesians resented the occupation of their lands by settlers and usually had as little to do with them as possible, so too the settlers had poor opinions of the Melanesians. Indeed many were certain that the only future for the colony was with continued European settlement until the Melanesians had died out. Even those who were most sympathetic were equally convinced; the Marist Father Rougeyron argued as early as 1867: 'in a few years there will only be whites as least on the main island of Caledonia... let us be kind to the poor natives until the end' (Coulon 1985:41). Opinion of other races, and ex-convicts too, was little better as most Europeans scarcely departed from the entrenched sentiment of hierarchy:

The Kanaks have no initiative, rarely working on their land and then only at certain times. The convicts that the administration provide for the service of free settlers do as little as possible, with rare exceptions. The remainder are freed convicts, Asians and New Hebrideans whose recruitment is difficult and expensive (Devillers 1898:23).

That there were problems of reconciling Melanesian and European interests was inevitable; even without disputes over land the differences in life-styles and attitudes were so great that conflicts could not have been avoided. Effectively conquered, for the moment, by superior European military strength Melanesians withdrew geographically and socially into their own tribal world but it was a world that was physically depleted by European land acquisitions and socially disrupted by new missionary teachings and by the values that had accompanied the new material world. The Melanesian world had contracted and, in this diminished environment, the Melanesian population itself contracted. For the indigenous population of New Caledonia the insurrections directly caused substantial loss of life but their aftermath, where 'the shock of defeat was aggravated by separation, physical and spiritual, from the moorings of mythic geography' (Clifford 1982:45) was even more devastating. Melanesian tribes, even those allied to the French, were embattled, surrounded and confused.

More than twenty years after the 1878 insurrection, vanquished villages had not regained much semblance of normal life; of a village close to Nassirah, Le Goupils wrote:

Poor small village! It's no more than a wreck of a tribe and six or seven houses hold the whole population. But at least it is a Kanak village. Perhaps if there had been more progress they would have become more Europeanized. It was their dream to return to their own land, to a village like that from which their families had been chased, following the horrors of the 1878 insurrection (Le Goupils 1928:195).
The confusion and disintegration of Melanesian societies had one other important effect; as numbers declined and Melanesians withdrew to the reservations there were labour shortages that led to the importation of labour from elsewhere. This new migration was a basic factor in the further marginalization of the Melanesian population.

Before the 1878 revolt there had already been a series of localized insurrections, initially around Balade and in the Isle of Pines and then, after annexation, throughout most of New Caledonia, all put down with a degree of violence. The scale of the 1878 revolt was new; hundreds of Melanesians were involved simultaneously and the area of the conflict was almost 5000 square kilometres (Doumenge 1982:101), more than a quarter of New Caledonia, even including the Loyalty Islands. Further localized opposition, especially in northern areas, culminated in the events of 1917 when the 'insurgent zone' again covered a large part of New Caledonia. What is even more remarkable than merely the area covered by the struggles, is the fact that at these and other times almost every part of New Caledonia was, at one time or another, engaged in a struggle with the colonial invaders; even those tribes who scarcely participated in revolts had often merely been cowed by superior military strength and the lessons of earlier reprisals. Above all, the revolt of 1878 was no isolated, mysterious incident, but was part of a general pattern of conflict associated with stresses caused by the existing social, economic and political order. In the process of the transformation of small-scale, self-reliant landowners to peasants dependent on the largess of an ignorant and uninterested colonial regime that saw Melanesians as markets or manpower but rarely as people, this was inevitable. Only on Belep, the Loyalty Islands and the Isle of Pines, remote from the invaders, settled only by early traders and missionaries and left as reservations were there no real insurrections.

In the Loyalty Islands the era was relatively peaceful. Constant feuding, however, between rival tribes and between Protestants and Catholics led to a number of islanders being imprisoned in Noumea (Howe 1977:57-62). On Mare disputes and factions were more serious and, of all the Loyalty Islands, the French administration had greatest difficulty in achieving peace and political stability there. Following one dispute in the 1870s the French attempted to demarcate land boundaries on Mare and bring about a localized peace. Rejection of their attempts by the Great Chief, Naisiline Nidoish, resulted in the familiar French punishment of exile; Naisiline and several of his allies from other tribes were exiled to Tahiti for six months (Howe 1979:12). A decade later other dissidents were despatched to France's Asian colony of Cochin China (Vietnam) where eleven of them died. Because the islands were regarded as unsuitable for European settlement or economic exploitation, they were declared Native Reserves in 1900. In subsequent years the Loyalty Islands
achieved a degree of peace and prosperity which, although not generated in the islands themselves, was nowhere else apparent in New Caledonia. Despite the longer period of contact in the Loyalty Islands, the general peacefulness of this contact, rapid missionization and modernization and extended trade, the limited potential for European economic development meant that the islands have never had more than a few European residents; 'the Islanders were able to live their lives much as they wished, spared the almost inevitable implications of a frontier society in their midst' (Howe 1977:116). Much the same was also true of Belep and the Isle of Pines which also escaped European settlement, but not the resettlement of deported Melanesians.

Overall the extensive scale of conflicts, the long duration and the large number of mortalities in New Caledonia are paralleled nowhere else in Melanesia. This was peasant warfare on a grand scale, the only inevitable response of a people subjugated by the military might of a European power. In this opposition, not only were there echoes of the earlier revolts against French rule in Algeria (Wolf 1969), but it is not too far-fetched to suggest that there were even structural similarities with opposition to French colonial rule in Southeast Asia and again in Algeria half a century later. French colonies have experienced more than their quota of bloody uprisings.

It is the widespread extent, in time and place, that so distinguishes the revolts in New Caledonia. The Melanesian alliances against the French, even when tenuous and unable to include many tribes, had a special significance. Indeed it is ironic that it is the part of Melanesia, and the South Pacific, that was most opposed to colonization that has not achieved independence. The reasons for concerted opposition in New Caledonia (the loss and destruction of agricultural land, the size of the colonial population and the relative rapidity with which colonists occupied the land) were unique in Melanesia. That the uneven expansion of the colonial frontier was marked also by cooperation and compromise, as Melanesians and Europeans attained some measure of consensus, cannot disguise the fact that rebellion and armed struggle were characteristic of New Caledonia. More than anywhere else in Melanesia this was a violent frontier.

While there was also opposition in other parts of the South Pacific, notably in Samoa, most forms of violence were localized, fragmentary and temporary, in response to more particular and specific causes, as in the case of the Malaitan massacre of 1927 (Keesing and Corris 1980). Nevertheless opposition was widespread enough for it to be concluded that 'to Europeans of the nineteenth century violence and conquest were inevitable features of colonisation' (Hempenstall 1978:201). No doubt Melanesians and other subject peoples viewed the situation similarly.

The Melanesians of New Caledonia amply demonstrated a 'capacity... to organise concerted resistance to the threat posed
to their lands and way of life' (Douglas 1972:400). There have, of course, been similar movements elsewhere and, in the wider Pacific region, the similarities with Aboriginal wars in Australia and the Maori wars in nineteenth century New Zealand are striking. In New Caledonia, Australia and New Zealand and in settler colonies elsewhere the historical experience of conflict and warfare constitutes the basic, and inevitable, response to the spread and diffusion of capitalism from its north European heartland. The central focus of this new kind of society, its ideological base, was that land, labour and wealth were commodities to be sold, not merely to be used. Control of these commodities was therefore crucial to control of the new land. Land then had to be stripped, by force, of social obligations (cf. Wolf, 1969:277) and reservations created. Melanesians were alienated from the production base that had previously guaranteed their existence. Violence around the colonial frontier was one of the basic regularities of settler capitalism, resulting in the displacement of stable communities through pressure on land and, subsequently, the survival of the dispossessed by their own displacement of others (Denoon 1983:222). The crucial role of land in the revolts, and hence the absence of violence in the Loyalty Islands, Belep and the Isle of Pines and the support of the French by many Melanesians, demonstrate that the revolts were not a total rejection of Europeans and their civilization. Those who retained their land could benefit from collaboration with colonialism; the benefits and the losses were inevitably extremely uneven.

Even the harshest military occupations have seldom been able to dispense with collaborators. The existence of collaboration in an island divided by fierce internal enmities must have been a major threat to extensive resistance. It may well be that the people, or at least the leaders, in the Canala area, who had earlier experienced loss of their own land to the garrison of Napoleonville, saw collaboration as an opportunity for a form of revenge or, at least, the gain of new land and opportunities. That the Canala area has been for some time one of the areas of strongest contemporary nationalist sentiment, demonstrates the poor fit between externally induced cleavages in society and more long-standing commitments to certain issues and ideals.

While the loss of land affected many, the dislocations that it produced could not weld together, in a brief period of time, a 'peasantry' that had long been divided by linguistic and other factors. Generally the 'history of Pacific island politics... is the history of elites, not mass movements' (Hempenstall 1978:218); in the alliances, and oppositions, of élites that had existed for centuries, local aggressions and rivalries were rarely subsumed into a wider anti-colonial opposition. However while 'few Pacific groups possessed a coherent, vigorous commitment to ideology, sufficient to keep them at war with Europeans for any length of time' (Hempenstall and Rutherford 1984:94), New Caledonian leaders
had actually drawn their followers into frontier violence, united by the one ideological thread that was possible; the relation between people and their land. It is the legitimacy of the struggle for land that most closely ties the events of 1878 to the contemporary nationalist movement. Atai and other Melanesians of that era were, in many respects, traditionalists seeking to re-establish a disrupted order and recapture the past rather than look towards the future. However, widespread unity in defence of Melanesian identity and territorial loyalty have ensured strong connections between these 'primary resistance' movements and modern mass nationalism (Ranger 1968:437). Though there was always ambiguity towards acquiescence or rejection of the colonial world, the great Melanesian revolts were the most important mass movements in the Melanesian world.

Perhaps, above all, it is the enduring legacy of Atai's struggle against the French and the imagery and reality of the link between blood and land that was the major impact of the series of revolts. Although Melanesians had been forced into submission, the memory of Atai and the great revolt never faded; it was merely transformed. Contemporary Kanak nationalism (Chapter 14) has succeeded in achieving mass commitment partly by using similar methods (appealing to Melanesian consciousness, stressing land losses and so on) and partly by appealing to the memories of the historic struggles; this is 'the one "traditional" memory that can be appealed to which transcends "tribalism" and which can quite logically be appealed to at the same time as tribal authorities are being attacked and undermined' (Ranger 1968:635). Continuity between past and present is ensured. For the Catholic priest, Apollinaire Anova-Ataba, the only Melanesian whose comments on the revolt have been recorded in print, almost a century later: 'the native should be proud of the man who was the guiding spirit of the revolt in 1878: the High Chief Atai' a man who became a 'martyr'. (Anova-Ataba, 1973:20-21). But this is not the only contemporary view of the 1878 Revolt. Conservative sentiment has mischievously claimed that Atai was killed by a member of the same tribe as the indépendantiste leader Eloi Machoro (Agostini 1985:82) while a spokesman for the Canala tribe, Marc Ouaremoin, has stressed the valuable loyalistic role of 'the people of Canala who, rallying the French troops in July 1878, prevented further extension of the indigenous revolt. Under Lieutenant Servan and War Chief Nando, 400 warriors crossed the chain and undertook pacification' (NC 9 May 1983). Those Melanesians who currently seek to remain within the French state have forged a different set of symbols from the same event.

The various struggles of Melanesians through much of the first century of colonial contact demonstrate both that Melanesians were not without history and that this history, with its traditional conflicts, usually over land, was transformed into more modern, more violent and more catastrophic conflicts, again over land. Melanesians had their own consciousness, their own
views of power and their own cultural values and religion; all
encompassing crude and violent threats to economy and society were
met with a culture of resistance. For Anova-Ataba this was the
only relevant history, with Melanesians far from passive
spectators in their own colonization.
Chapter 5

Demographic colonization

Psychologically, the abundance of cheap penal labour was responsible for the disdain with which the Caledonian whites have looked upon all manual occupations and for their perennial efforts to bring in immigrants who would perform such tasks for them (Thompson and Adloff 1971:365).

The consolidation of European settlement, through the possession of Melanesian land and the confinement of Melanesians to reservations, was firmly in place by the end of the nineteenth century. Subsequent events around Kone merely served to emphasize and ensure the permanence of these trends. As the settler colony spread and developed so the European population expanded and non-European migrants came to New Caledonia. A new strand in the colony's complex demographic history began to emerge. The most important event that paralleled the establishment of the European settler colony was the decline of the Melanesian population, a trend seemingly apparent to almost all observers at the end of the nineteenth century, and in vivid contrast to the growing white population. In these contrasting fortunes are the seeds of present conflicts.

The potential for a decline in the Melanesian population is apparent. New weapons and diseases had been introduced, the labour trade had taken recruits from the islands, the scale of warfare (and, following it, retaliation, repression and exile) had increased, and the results of these direct influences had produced a state of apathy and anomie in the majority of the Melanesian population. In these confused conditions sorcery took on renewed prominence. Moreover in the First World War, of the 1134 Melanesians who fought for France, some 374 died, more than half from disease rather than from injuries (Thompson and Adloff 1971:251). Though not yet a minority in their own land their traditional ties with the land were being destroyed as fast as the colonists established their own ties. For the first time Melanesians were experiencing both absolute and relative deprivation. Life had become empty of purpose. Yet, despite all the factors that might have been expected to contribute to a drastic decline in the Melanesian population, there remain doubts
over exactly how dramatic and wide-ranging such a decline really was.

Certainly most conventional accounts argue that at the end of the nineteenth century the Melanesian population was declining; it has been suggested that between 1887 and 1911 the Melanesian population declined by more than one-third (Métais 1953; Thompson and Adloff 1971:359) and that de facto government policy was to let the Melanesian population die (Crapanzano 1979:viii). Alcoholism, disease, apathy, social and cultural disintegration, were all rampant and when Maurice Leenhardt arrived in New Caledonia in 1903 he was greeted by the European mayor of Noumea with the words 'What are you going to do here? You've come for the Kanakas, but in ten years' time there won't be a single Kanaka left' (cited by Tjibaou and Missotte 1978:10). The disturbance of traditional agriculture aggravated problems of nutrition, where seasonality was always a problem; 'infanticide, use of abortives, and the simple decision not to bring children into a hostile world, though elements of the traditional demographic/ecological equilibrium, now took on dangerous proportions' (Clifford 1982:45; Dubois 1984:30-1; Guiart 1970:280). When Leenhardt began to travel round the island he was confronted with responses like those of the Canala chief: 'Just let me drink and die' (Clifford 1982:46). Scarcely surprisingly, not only did he wage war on alcohol, then rampant in the islands, but he took as his principal text 'Be fruitful and multiply' (Clifford 1982:69). In the end his exhortations were successful but that end was still some two decades distant. Until after the First World War the administration's relations with the Melanesian population were confined to maintaining order, collecting head-taxes and requisitioning labourers for public works; 'on the assumption that the Kanakas were a dying people, it left them largely to their own devices in the reservations' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:247). Indeed the last governor before the war publicly acknowledged that the administration had no native policy; only the missionaries were concerned with Melanesian welfare.

The exact size of the population decline is unknown; several estimates around the time of contact suggest a population of about 40,000, although all such estimates (most of which derived from each other) were unreliable. Some, including Doumenge (1982:149-50), have suggested that it could have been as high as 62,500, an unlikely figure. Brou accepts 50,000, a total derived from Cook's estimate (Brou 1980:33) but 40,000 may not be far from the truth. The first recorded attempt to accurately measure the Melanesian population was in 1880, after the 1878 revolt, when the population was probably around 33,000 (Table 1). The first census was conducted in 1887 and this gave a total of 42,519 but, although these official results are certainly much too high, errors in subsequent censuses prevent their being modified adequately. Only in the twentieth century are the census data relatively accurate (Shineberg 1983:36-41). In 1901 the Melanesian population was
around 28,000; after a slight increase, it fell again until 1921 when the total of 27,100 was the lowest recorded Melanesian population since contact. The fall may well have continued briefly into the 1920s to reach a trough in 1923 (Doumenge 1982:152-3); its significance had not gone unnoticed by the local Bulletin du Commerce which lamented the declining Melanesian workforce and argued that it was necessary 'to apply preservationary measures for the beautiful native race that we have the happy chance to possess' (Saussol 1979a:336). Beyond occasional missionaries altruism was rare.

Table 1 The Melanesian population of New Caledonia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>40,000 to 62,500 (est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>33,000 (est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>42,519 (about 33,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>33,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>31,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>30,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>31,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>29,206/27,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>28,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>28,829/28,075/28,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>27,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>27,490/26,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>28,502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>28,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>29,048</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Only in the Loyalty Islands was there little evidence of population decline. Although the population of the three principal islands did decline in the second half of the nineteenth century this was largely attributable to extensive labour migration; 'the nineteenth century populations of the Loyalty Islands were not drastically upset by European contact and it is very doubtful if the term "depopulation" has any relevance here'
Populations were controlled by abortion and infanticide and the continuation of abortion into the present century (Dubois 1984:30-1) suggests that some self-determined form of population control was considered necessary. The population stability of the Loyalty Islands was often compared with that of the Grande Terre, where observers had no doubt that by the end of the century the Melanesian population had declined. The causes of this are not clear.

The 'labour trade'

The labour trade that had such an enormous impact on social and economic change in island Melanesia, was relatively unimportant in New Caledonia. 'From its beginnings in the 1860s until it ended early in the twentieth century the Melanesian labour trade for Queensland and Fiji cotton and then sugar plantations employed well over 100,000 Islanders, mostly males aged between sixteen and twenty-five and mostly from the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands' (Howe 1984:329). Although 1100 Loyalty Islanders went to Queensland, there were apparently none from the Grande Terre or even from the Isle of Pines.

Loyalty Islanders, whose reputation for hard work was increasingly well known, were eagerly sought as labour recruits in the 1860s. This activity provoked opposition from missionaries (mainly in the New Hebrides) and others who were concerned at accusations of deception and cruelty, and perhaps concerned also at the absolute decline in some island populations and the harmful impact of mass male migration. Such concern was often unjustified here, since despite undoubted violence and cruelty, labour migration was largely a cooperative venture with Melanesians often as anxious to earn money, receive trade goods, escape pressures in their own societies and sample new worlds and new experiences as the European recruiters were to obtain cheap labour.

Opposition to the labour trade was not only for humanitarian reasons; the French administration in Noumea complained to British authorities about vessels from Australia taking away Loyalty Islanders who they considered to be French subjects. That there were grounds for complaint are indicated in the establishment of a royal commission by the New South Wales government in 1869 to investigate 'certain alleged cases of kidnapping' in Vanuatu and the Loyalty Islands (Howe 1984:331). While the commission found isolated instances of deception and kidnapping, these were relatively rare, and certainly not typical of the Loyalty Islands where missionaries made no complaints, rather commenting on the young men's 'great rage, almost a mania' for emigration to Queensland or Sydney. Some islanders lit fires at night to attract passing vessels and others swam far off-shore and begged captains to take them abroad (Howe 1984:332). Nevertheless labour recruiting in the Loyalty Islands ended in the early 1870s both
because most people who wished to travel abroad had already done so and because the French now effectively claimed the Loyalty Islands as French territory. All future Loyalty Islands labour migration was to the Grande Terre.

The trader James Paddon, who had the earliest trading station in Noumea, was credited with being 'the first to work out the principle that, in order to get natives to work well, you must take them away from their own island, and leave them entirely dependent on their employer for food. He also adopted... [the] plan of bringing them in limited numbers from different islands, so that they could not combine against their employer' (Inglis 1887:201, quoted by Howe 1978:24). In this manner Paddon was perhaps the first employer to bring Loyalty Islanders to work on the mainland of New Caledonia. Hiring of labourers from the Loyalty Islands increased throughout the century, especially after the expansion of mining in the 1880s, and essentially continued for the next century. In the 1880s, Loyalty Island missionaries spoke of a new 'craze for migration'; many men were in Noumea, others were contracted to pick coffee and in 1906 there were officially 386 Loyalty Islanders in New Caledonia and by 1911 some 405 (Howe 1977:100). They were in such great demand that the Governor demanded in 1893 that a laissez-passer should be issued to all who wished to work on the Grande Terre. Thus Loyalty Islanders (and New Hebrideans) were the first Melanesians to be employed in the Noumea area, long before Melanesians from the Grande Terre were attracted to wage labour.

Perhaps as many as several thousand New Hebrideans and a few hundred Solomon Islanders worked in New Caledonia before the end of the century, many preferring New Caledonia because of the ease with which guns could be obtained there. By the mid-1880s however more distant islanders had lost their enthusiasm for working in New Caledonia since living and working conditions were much tougher and the pay poorer than in Fiji or Queensland (Howe 1984:329, 337). Certainly the death rate in the New Caledonian mines was exceptional, as high as 30 per cent of the work-force in some years, and perhaps the highest of all workplaces in Melanesia (Coates 1970:138; Thompson 1984:78). Once again Loyalty Islanders became prominent in the New Caledonian labour force and, although between 1865 and 1918 more than 10,000 New Hebrideans went to New Caledonia to work as prison guards, in agriculture and coastal shipping, with women working as domestic servants (Shineberg, in Pacific Islands Monthly (PIM), March 1985:50), New Hebrideans only again became important in the New Caledonian work-force during the nickel boom.

Although, by 1868, Governor Guillain requested action to be taken to prevent labour migration from the Loyalty Islands, which he claimed was 'tending to depopulate' them (Howe 1977:92), his concern was political and any depopulation could only have been short term. Even the impact on fertility is not likely to have
been substantial. The labour trade depopulated neither the Loyalty Islands, nor New Caledonia, as a whole. It did however contribute to a more experienced and aware population in the Loyalty Islands (cf. Howe 1977:110-11), a distinction sustained for many decades, as Melanesians from the Grande Terre only gradually took up similar kinds of 'modern' opportunities. In the migration away from the Loyalty Islands there were some shared characteristics with early labour migration from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu but the early establishment of a commercial mining and agricultural economy soon gave New Caledonia a rather greater similarity to Fiji, through the immigration of cheap labour from Asia but, in this case, essentially from French-influenced Southeast Asia rather than the British colony of India.

Disease and medicine

Just as the impact of modern weapons on the morality of Pacific islanders has been exaggerated, especially in the case of New Caledonia, so too the impact of new diseases, inadvertently introduced by traders, beachcombers and others, has also often been exaggerated. The 'fatal impact', popularized and graphically described for Australia and Tahiti (Moorehead 1966), and certainly true of some island groups such as the Marquesas (Dening 1980), has rarely been apparent in Melanesia. Nevertheless at least until the 1920s there were widespread beliefs that the Melanesian population was dying out, and that it was no more than a matter of time before many islands would be depopulated. This Social Darwinism, through which only the fittest race would survive, was opposed almost solely by missionaries and those few who recognized in the Melanesians a valuable labour force. In these attitudes there was a very strong reflection of earlier attitudes to the Aboriginal population of Australia where, at their most humanitarian, nineteenth century policies attempted to do no more than 'smooth the dying pillow' of the Aboriginals. The Aboriginal population of Australia did decline substantially in the nineteenth century, a situation now constantly referred to in the debate on the future of New Caledonia. Similarly, the administration in French Polynesia believed that they ruled a dying people: 'the main thing is to let them die in peace' (Dening 1980:266). In Melanesia, where there was a population decline, it was often extremely localized and due to very particular factors; close inspection of the evidence for a decline in islands such as Aneityum (Anatom) in Vanuatu (McArthur 1981) has revealed that the actual decline was never as catastrophic as contemporary accounts proclaimed.

At the time of contact life expectancy was short, infant mortality was high, and diseases such as yaws and filariasis were endemic in New Caledonia, so that few inhabitants escaped the effects of disease in their short lives. Moreover, in the Loyalty Islands at least, it seems most likely that these diseases
worsened in the period after contact. The increase in the significance of diseases probably followed the smoking of poor quality tobacco and worsened hygiene following an increase in the number of pigs and chickens (Howe 1977:146-7). In some places even simple cases of influenza and consumption, another newly introduced disease, were apparently enough to wipe out whole groups (Saussol 1979a:252; Métails 1953). Changes in clothing and diet, often regarded as causes of increased ill-health elsewhere in the South Pacific, had limited impact in the Loyalty Islands. By the 1880s the diets of islanders included flour, rice, tea and sugar, but not in quantities that could possibly have contributed to poorer health. Loyalty Islanders adopted loose European clothing and, since rainfall was low, rarely walked around in wet clothes (Howe 1977:147). By contrast Brou has argued that on the Grande Terre, alcohol, a European diet, leprosy and wet clothes did contribute to the decline (Brou 1973:249, 1980:39). Leprosy, first recognized on the Grande Terre in 1865 and in the Loyalty Islands in 1883, became a menace and, at one time, it was estimated that there were 4000 lepers in the colony, including some Europeans (Firth 1944:461). One result of pacification was the consolidation of the population into larger villages; in these villages, sanitation was often rudimentary and occasional epidemics not uncommon.

Until the widespread adoption of European remedies for illnesses, an extremely belated response in most parts of the Grande Terre, reaction to epidemics, especially those that were unknown before contact, 'was one of helplessness and despair until the disease passed away' (Howe 1977:151) or claimed its many victims. Dispirited, in a new environment, Melanesians were often no match for the more virulent epidemics. On the Isle of Pines alone major measles and influenza epidemics wiped out many people around 1870; a few years later a leprosy epidemic killed many more to the extent that by 1911 the Melanesian population there was less than half that of fifty years earlier (Pisier 1978:15-22). Undoubtedly similar events occurred elsewhere but they were almost certainly more severe in places like the Isle of Pines, where villages had regrouped close to mission centres, than in areas distant from European centres, where life-styles were relatively unchanged.

Few of the early missionaries or traders had significant medical knowledge and, although able to distribute medicines and ointments, they had little time to devote to medical care. In the Loyalty Islands, for example, it was not until towards the end of the nineteenth century that the French administration did any more than send doctors for brief visits (Howe 1977:152) and, by that time, as a result of a combination of missionary and administrative assistance, the Loyalty Islanders' own efforts, and improvements in material standards of living, health was improving and had probably already become superior to that of pre-contact times. It was only several decades later that the same could be
said of the Grande Terre; a medical service was only introduced to
the tribes in 1911 and an influenza epidemic of 1918 caused
substantial loss of life (Thompson and Adloff 1971:359). However
by the time of the Second World War every village was reported to
have an aid post of some kind, and a telephone with which to
summon assistance; health care was taught in schools and there was
a bi-annual medical inspection throughout the country (Burchett
1941:136). But by then the Melanesian demographic revival had
been long underway.

A common notion, especially in the nineteenth century, was
that the introduction of alcohol had a devastating impact on the
social and medical welfare of Pacific islander societies. So bad
was the situation that in 1903 the administration banned alcohol
sales to Melanesians but, within a few months, under pressure from
local economic interests, amended the statute to include only
spirits that were more than 12 per cent alcohol (Doumenge
1982:114). In the 1930s Maurice Leenhardt wrote of the people of
the Grande Terre as being 'submerged in a flood of alcohol'
(Leenhardt 1937:106) and constantly preached against the 'demon
drink'; in Houailou he drew attention to the way in which the
local language had incorporated new words to describe the
particular states of stress and degeneration brought on by alcohol
(cf. Métais 1953). In the Loyalty Islands at least, there was
very little alcohol consumed in the nineteenth century and
references to 'drunkenness' were blamed on the experience of
islanders in the mines of the Grande Terre (Howe 1977:152) where
the situation was undoubtedly worse. Alcoholism however may well
have directly contributed little to population decline but merely
been one further symbol of the malaise that was widespread in
mainland Melanesian societies.

Without question there was a population decline among the
Melanesians of the Grande Terre, and that decline lasted as far as
the third decade of the twentieth century; however it was not as
catastrophic as earlier authors have suggested, and certainly not
as dramatic as in the Marquesas. Yet the exact causes of the
decline are difficult to disentangle; warfare and its direct
aftermath (whether in New Caledonia itself or through disease on
the battlefields of France) took many lives and persistent and
recurrent epidemics took many more but, above all, the decline
must be attributed to the despondency of a defeated population
confined to reservations, and divorced from the land with which
they had long maintained an ecological balance (cf. Roux
1974:300). The excesses of colonization provoked Melanesians to
move from initial admiration of Europeans towards fear and then
anger; the failure of widespread revolts produced a colonized and
conquered people. Despondency contributed in some way to
increasing the mortality rate but severely reduced the fertility
rate and, in that way, lengthened the period required for
recovery. While these variables may be intangible, they are very
real, being much the same as those that caused similar population
declines in the Indian reservations of North America and among Aboriginal Australians. In any case, all these changes occurred among a population that probably scarcely grew in pre-colonial times; the dramatic impact of the early colonial era massively increased the vulnerability of the population.

On the Grande Terre despair and population decline were less apparent among the larger tribes of the east coast, where land losses were fewer, where several tribes (notably around Houailou and Canala) fought alongside the French and where chiefs retained considerable power. There too were many of the first mission stations and schools. Significantly it was in these areas that in the immediate post-war years Melanesians were the first to become involved in politics (Saussol 1979a:294) and, later, played a major role in the struggle for autonomy and independence. Much the same was true of the Loyalty Islands. By contrast in the west, where tribes had been lumped together in small areas, away from their ancestral land, there were sustained and belated revolts so that population decline, and the eventual loss of tradition, were much more rapid. Early demographic data, until well into the twentieth century, are so unreliable that any accurate estimate of population decline is impossible, but there seems little doubt that, after three-quarters of a century of colonization, the Melanesian population of New Caledonia at the start of the 1920s was little more than two-thirds what it was at the time of contact.

**European ascendancy**

The experience of the Melanesian population was exactly the reverse of that of the Europeans. Not only did Europeans intend to populate the new colony, even to the extent that female convicts were imported specifically to marry and multiply, but they effectively contributed to the decline of the indigenous population and the subsequent import of other migrants as a cheap labour force. One of the effects of transporting wives for convicts was that the imbalance of sexes in New Caledonia was always short-lived; for this, and other reasons, few settlers married Melanesians. Only in the 1860s and 1870s was there significant intermarriage, especially of convict settlers around Noumea (Saussol 1979a:215; Latham 1975:60). In the next decade the shortage of women was resolved by the recruitment of what were euphemistically called 'barmaid's' from Australia to the extent that, for many years, Noumea was seen in Australia as the Pacific haven of vice (Thompson and Adloff 1971:341) and 'barmaid' long survived in local French usage. Minimal intermarriage has resulted in a small métis population, quite different from French Polynesia, where intermarriage was common, and from several other French colonial territories. In New Caledonia racial distinctiveness has largely been maintained. Europeans directly contributed to the Melanesian decline but they were unconcerned.
A population regarded as inferior, which still occupied large areas of good land, fortunately appeared doomed to extinction. Social relations on this colonial frontier remained violently racist.

Despite the dramatic events associated with the acquisition of land in New Caledonia the actual European settlement of New Caledonia was extremely slow. From the start of transportation in 1864 until about 1890 the majority of the European population of New Caledonia were either convicts or freed convicts, a situation which naturally contributed to the miserable image of New Caledonia. By an active propaganda campaign and by offering potential settlers 25 hectares of freehold land, Governor Feillet induced 525 French families to migrate to New Caledonia between 1885 and 1902. Of these, 300 stayed on, raised large families and soon substantially outnumbered the convict population. Feillet also pushed forward the policy of resettling Melanesians on reservations, to ensure that there was adequate land for settlement, and promoted the immigration of Asian labourers as a work-force for the European settlers and mining companies. For potential European settlers the conditions of settlement were much improved although uncertain economic conditions frustrated many pioneer agriculturalists.

Many settlers were 'woefully incapable of surviving the trials of a pioneer's existence. At Houailou, for instance, their numbers included painter-decorators and consumptives' (Roberts 1927:528). The long commercial crisis of the first decade of the century precipitated many failures so that a large number of colonists turned to a more profitable role as grog-sellers to the convicts and Melanesians, while other failed settlers drifted into urban employment. The rural European population declined in the first half of this century but those who remained consolidated their presence in the agricultural economy and in the evolution of a European small farmer and petit bourgeois society.

By the end of the nineteenth century almost two-thirds of the European population of New Caledonia was in Noumea and, outside the capital, only at Païta and Bourail were there more than 300 European settlers (Saussol 1979a). Although miners had prospected in many areas, much remained unmapped and, after the violence of 1878 especially, the interior, la brousse, was a menacing area.

Denizens of the capital were more interested in the price of nickel and the perpetual political maneuverings of the Paris appointed Governor and the local Conseil-Général. Perhaps now and then a shabby farmer, herdsman or priest would arrive from the island's opposite coast, bearing news of a cyclone... Often there would be word of 'troubles', rumours of an insurrection brewing. Noumea was a refuge, an ingrown European city clinging to the lower tip of the Grande Terre.
At its back stood the forbidding empty mountains of the island's southern chain. Noumea was not a gateway to New Caledonia (Clifford 1982:31).

So the colonial capital had turned in on itself; admittedly the budget was in arrears (Thompson and Adloff 1971:245) yet, despite official enthusiasm for colonization of the land, there was no interest in contact with the Melanesian population. And there was little scope for contact outside the missions and farms. Few mainland Melanesians were to be seen in Noumea, let alone lived there, and the menial tasks required by European residents were performed either by New Hebrideans or Loyalty Islanders, neither group having any real contact with the local Melanesian population. The town and bush were already two separate worlds. Despite the persistent administrative focus on New Caledonia as a colony for European agricultural settlement, for the whole of its history, the vast majority of Europeans have lived in towns, and especially the southern capital of Noumea; in total contrast, Melanesians have remained in the north and in rural areas. It is this distinctive rural-urban population distribution, alongside the numerical extent, that has given New Caledonia its unusual colonial character.

The European settlement of the island declined or stagnated for the whole of the first half of the twentieth century. During this period France continued to fall behind its European neighbours demographically, a situation which reinforced the Jacobin tradition of extreme centralization of political power in France and in the colonies: 'lacking population to pursue an energetic policy of colonization, France deployed here considerable talent at Gallicizing a class of natives who would behave as surrogate Frenchmen overseas' (Houbert 1985:219). By 1936 the penal element of the population had been reduced to 329 individuals, of whom 224 had been freed, most living in Noumea (Sausso1 1981b). European migration and settlement largely ended after 1903; a substantial part of the present rural settler population (now known as Caldoches) are descendants of those who migrated to New Caledonia at the end of the nineteenth century. By 1936 the end of this phase of colonization had had a major effect on the demography of the colony; of the 15,795 Europeans

1The word Caldoche is a recent invention, referring to the white population of New Caledonia who have been there for at least a generation (Holleyman 1983:34; Sausso1 1985b). Though initially a pejorative expression, it has been reclaimed with pride, much as many Melanesians reclaimed Kanak, and is used alongside Caledonians. Its rapid and recent acceptance shows how much the concept, with its partly affectionate implication of a distinctive folk, retaining French values in a distant and alien landscape, and maintaining a stolid, stubborn attachment to New Caledonia and the land, met the need of the times. Somewhat like the poor whites of Algeria the Caldoches have developed (and also had thrust upon them) a new cultural identity, with its own dialect, customs and folklore, whilst retaining an enormous affinity for the France that some have never seen. Amongst the Caldoches, regarded at best as 'country-cousins' of the metropolitan French, there has developed a pride in French identity and a vocal French nationalism.
recorded in the 1936 census, some 1912 were 'foreigners' (that is of non-French origin) and, of the others, 12,600 (80 per cent) were born in New Caledonia (Brou 1975:169). The settler colony had implanted its roots; they are long-established in the New Caledonian rural and urban landscape.

The Asian experiment

The difficulties experienced by settlers and other potential employers in obtaining Melanesian workers from the Grande Terre initially resulted in the Loyalty Islands and the New Hebrides becoming the first sources of cheap labour for the Grande Terre. The people of the Grande Terre were never employed in large numbers. Disorganized and demoralized, concerned with their own security and renewal, they were an unwilling, intermittent and inadequate labour force. But New Hebrideans lost interest in the difficult conditions existing in New Caledonia and demand for Loyalty Islanders was always greater than supply hence, quite early on in the history of the colony, employers turned to Asians from other French colonies.

The first Asian migrants were Indians, for work in the sugar-cane plantations; Chinese were engaged by the SLN in 1884 (Doumenge 1982:12) but, long before that, Paddon had Chinese workers (Brou 1980:50-2) and, by the end of the nineteenth century, there were Tonkinese (Vietnamese), Javanese and Japanese in New Caledonia. The number of Asian migrants grew in the early decades of the twentieth century and many descendants of these early migrants remain in New Caledonia, mainly in Noumea, to complicate the demography of New Caledonia. By the start of the twentieth century, Asian migration and settlement was already important and, for a settler like Marc le Goupils, New Caledonia had already become 'a mosaic of races'; he or his neighbours employed Vietnamese, Javanese, New Hebrideans, a Japanese, two Solomon Islanders and an Indian (Le Goupils 1928:172, 185). Many of the Arab 'convicts', although amnestied in 1895, had also remained, married Melanesian women and become small settler farmers at Nessadiou, south of Bourail (Collinet 1978; Kohler 1982), where an Arab cemetery on the side of the main road is one of the few remaining signs of these early and distinctive settlers. At the turn of the century ethnic diversity was already substantial.

New Caledonia was not the only colony in the South Pacific to experience Asian migration but it was the first. More than a decade before Indian workers were taken to Fiji, there were Indians in New Caledonia. The Indian workers on Nakety cane farms came originally from French colonies, such as Pondicherry, in south India, but were recruited in Réunion, the West Indies or French Guiana. From 1864 to 1875 some 454 Indians, mainly bachelors, came to the sugar-cane farms between Bourail and the
Bay of Saint Vincent (Roux 1981a:12-14). The collapse of the sugar-cane industry resulted in the administration encouraging the Indians to move on to the cane fields of either Queensland or Fiji, although 'reliable' settlers were settled around La Foa where they were granted land to cultivate; by 1884 only 173 Indians remained in New Caledonia, of whom 26 were women and 25 children (Roux 1981a:15). Inevitably many of these intermarried with Europeans or Melanesians and by the end of the 1970s there were only four distinct Indian families at La Foa, who were then fifth generation settlers like some of their European counterparts. In most respects the Indian migrants to New Caledonia have become almost completely assimilated into New Caledonian society. Of all the non-European migrant groups the Indians are the only group to have virtually disappeared without trace.

The end of deportation in 1897 created immediate labour problems for the colonists, and for the colony in general. These problems more or less coincided with the establishment of Brazil as a major world coffee producer and a slump in New Caledonian prices. This in turn led to a decline in free migration to New Caledonia and the return of some recent colonists so that the European population fell steadily for the first two decades of the twentieth century (Table 2). European colonists were forced to seek out a new labour force. Despite the Code of Indigénat, imposed to ensure that Melanesians provided cheap forced labour, it was not possible to get an adequate Melanesian labour force for the coffee plantations. Asians began to take on a much greater importance and, from around the turn of the century, became a consistently important minority in New Caledonia.

Japanese migrants to New Caledonia came first as contract nickel workers for the SLN, not long after the first Japanese contract workers had gone to the sugar-cane plantations of Hawaii. The first convoy of 600 Japanese workers, with a doctor and three interpreters, arrived at Thio in 1892 to work in nearby mines (Kobayashi 1980:58). Within a few months they went on strike, complaining of the harshness and long hours of mine work, but further convoys of workers arrived so that at the end of the century there were more than 1300 Japanese in New Caledonia. Between May 1900 and January 1901 some 1208 emigrants arrived in New Caledonia to take up five-year labour contracts, many being offered better wages by the petits mineurs (the small mining companies) than by the SLN. Migration continued until the difficult conditions of the First World War although in 1919 there was one final convoy of 111 workers for the SLN (Kobayashi 1980:63-4). Officially, between 1892 and 1919, some 6880 Japanese entered New Caledonia although most returned to Japan. Those Japanese who chose to remain often became storekeepers and traders but the majority worked in agriculture, as market gardeners.
### Table 2 Population of New Caledonia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Melanesians</th>
<th>Europeans</th>
<th>Wallisians and Futunans</th>
<th>French Polynesians</th>
<th>Indonesians</th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>16,600</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>27,700</td>
<td>23,450</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,500(^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>28,500</td>
<td>19,300</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,200(^b)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>27,100</td>
<td>14,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,200(^c)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>47,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>14,900</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9,700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>28,500</td>
<td>16,400</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11,600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>28,800</td>
<td>17,400</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>18,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>33,500</td>
<td>20,400</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>11,500</td>
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<td>66,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>34,970</td>
<td>25,160</td>
<td>1,230(^d)</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>2890</td>
<td>3,450</td>
<td></td>
<td>68,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>41,190</td>
<td>33,360</td>
<td>3,020(^e)</td>
<td>2540</td>
<td>3560</td>
<td>2,810</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>86,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>47,300</td>
<td>36,900</td>
<td>6,220</td>
<td>3370</td>
<td>4400</td>
<td>1,850</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>100,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>55,600</td>
<td>50,760</td>
<td>9,570</td>
<td>6390</td>
<td>5110</td>
<td>1,940</td>
<td>3860(^f)</td>
<td>133,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>61,870</td>
<td>53,970</td>
<td>12,170</td>
<td>5570</td>
<td>5320</td>
<td>2,380</td>
<td>4080</td>
<td>145,370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Population data is only broadly accurate from the 1950s onwards and even subsequent Melanesian totals must all be revised upwards (Rallu 1985:727) hence this table and Figure 1 must be regarded as no more than a guideline to demographic change.

\(^a\) Includes about 500 Indians and more than 1300 Japanese.  \(^b\) Includes about 660 New Hebrideans.  \(^c\) Includes about 2000 Japanese.

\(^d\) Includes some New Hebrideans.  \(^e\) Includes 1050 New Hebrideans.  \(^f\) Includes 1200 Ni-Vanuatu (New Hebrideans).

supplying the Noumea market, and as coffee growers or fishermen. Their commercial success, such that it seemed that there was 'no village in New Caledonia, too small or too poor to support a Japanese store' (Burchett 1941:146), threatened French traders and on the eve of the Second World War there was widespread recognition of a 'Japanese problem' (Burchett 1941:146; Thompson and Adloff 1971:446). Without further immigration the population fell to 1126 in 1941, almost one-third of whom were in Noumea (Kobayashi 1980:67): half the stores in Noumea were owned by Japanese (Firth 1944:450). Almost all the remaining Japanese were transported to prisoner-of-war camps in New South Wales and, after the war, most survivors returned to Japan so that the 1946 census recorded only 97 Japanese in New Caledonia. The few that remained have only recently taken on a new status in New Caledonia with the consolidation of substantial Japanese tourism.

Migrants from Tonkin (Vietnam), and also Annam and Cochin, arrived in 1891; usually referred to as 'coolies', they were actually deported insurgents following the suppression of anti-French revolts. Others were more formally recruited for New Caledonia, the New Hebrides and Tahiti.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century a group of French merchants recruited Annamites, through Chinese agents, for work in the Pacific islands. All the phenomena of early contract labour, under the appearance of legality, characterized this abominable trade - the separation of families and deception about the work and its fabulous salaries. The first period 1890-95 was the worst and few lived to be repatriated (Thompson 1937:163).

It is scarcely any wonder then that New Hebridean migration was declining while Melanesians of the Grande Terre were unwilling to seek formal employment. A rich Dumbea settler introduced the first convoy of 768 Tonkinese, but there were no more migrants until the end of the nineteenth century and, until 1920, migration of these early Vietnamese settlers was never more than intermittent. Like most other Asian migrants they worked mainly in the mines, many recruited by the Ballande company, and most left when their contracts were completed. It was a hard life, one recounted graphically by Jean Vanmai (1981), the son of a Vietnamese mine worker and himself born at the appropriately named Chagrin mine. After 1920 however numbers increased dramatically with the expansion of the nickel industry and in 1929 reached a peak of more than 6500 as a result of women being allowed to join their husbands. Though the nickel crisis of 1930 resulted in many being repatriated the Vietnamese population grew again to 4000 on the eve of the Second World War.

Vietnamese migration to New Caledonia was once a small part of a grand imperialistic venture in which the Asian colonies, with their apparent excess of men and money, would be linked to the
Pacific colonies, languishing because of a perceived lack of capital and labour. 'A flourishing New Caledonia, an increasing French interest in the New Hebrides and a renascent Tahiti, linked to Saigon on the west and Panama on the east, would build up a belt of French influence stretching across the South Pacific, and outshine by no other power' (Roberts 1927:289). The glamour of the scheme led to reformers proposing in 1921 an \textit{entraide coloniale} between every French colony in the Pacific region; by 1923 the idea had been widely adopted as a means of stimulating the French colonies in the Pacific. New steamship lines linked Saigon to Noumea and Tahiti, and Indochina even financed migration schemes from Java. Yet, in the end, the 1930s depression was enough to end forever the economic links between widely separated colonies, a scheme that was never welcomed in Indochina where it was seen as a form of subsidy to the South Pacific.

Unlike the Japanese or the Vietnamese, the Javanese came more obviously as a work-force for the coffee planters, although just as many were employed in the nickel mines. The first Javanese arrived in 1896 and by 1911 there were 1254 on the Grande Terre. From 1920 onwards the number increased dramatically to almost 8000 in 1929; like the Vietnamese, the population fell during the depression years but increased again to 9000 in 1939. Again, there was a post-war decline as recruitment ended and by 1955 there were no more than 5000 Javanese in New Caledonia. Broadly then the ebb and flow of Asian immigration and repatriation was much the same for each ethnic group.

The volume of Asian immigration (seen by almost all Europeans and Melanesians as a homogeneous mass) was considerable; in the 1920s 'the flow of Asian labourers became a flood' (Dornoy 1984:45) and their numbers tripled, to the extent that in 1929 the Asian population, at its peak of over 16,000 was actually greater than the European population and about one-third of the total population of the Grande Terre. This peak too occurred in the same decade that the Melanesian population fell to its lowest recorded level (Figure 1). Moreover in the inter-war years the Asian migrant workers had children; these children, especially those of the Javanese, were known as \textit{niaoulis}, apparently since their mothers attached their children to the trunks of the \textit{niaouli} trees as they worked in the fields (Hollyman 1983:121). For them, just as for European children born there, this was their homeland and, unlike their parents, they had no aspirations to return to a 'native' land. Their arrival marked the consolidation of a new and important element in the demographic history of New Caledonia.

There were always strong reactions against Asian migration based on the usual racial fears and misunderstandings. Characteristically lumping Asians together Le Goupils wrote of Annamites: 'there's scarcely any house in New Caledonia where a Chinese has not tried to poison his patrons' (Le Goupils 1928:166). Only passing travellers expressed more positive
Figure 1 Population change in New Caledonia


sentiments: 'and so the human stream flows on - people of all religions, all countries, specimens of humanity of nearly every race and clime on earth... Chinese, Japanese, Javanese, Cingalese, Tonquinese, Indians, Annamites, blackamoors and brownamoors, all mixed up in the most artistically delightful medley possible' (Smith 1924:17-18). More widespread negative attitudes and the onset of the depression contributed to the end of recruitment and then Asian return migration. After all the sole purpose of Asian migration was to obtain a supply of cheap, tractable and docile
labour that was unobtainable from Melanesians. For a short period, however, it appeared that the demographic, and hence economic and political, history of New Caledonia could have taken a quite different turn.

The new demography

The supposed depopulation of many of the islands of the South Pacific has now generally been seen to be a myth, a myth essentially created by Europeans, many well-intentioned, who saw what they wanted to see. What they saw was the 'contamination' of traditional societies by European artefacts and ideas, and the loss of what Alan Moorehead erroneously saw as 'a life of primeval innocence' (quoted by Howe 1984:350). In fact South Pacific societies, in New Caledonia as elsewhere, did not disintegrate with the experience of European contact or even settlement. While there was considerable disruption and dislocation, massive discontent and armed insurrection, alongside some passivity and withdrawal, the Melanesian societies of New Caledonia were sufficiently substantial and vibrant to adapt to European contact, settlement, colonization and exploitation, even on the reserves to which they were forced to withdraw. In the only settler colony in the South Pacific it is surprising that the ultimate impact of colonization on the Melanesian societies of the Grande Terre was not greater (when there had been such massive depopulation in the Marquesas and elsewhere); to what extent this resilience is a product of the strength of indigenous cultures or, belatedly, to the aspects of civilization that eventually followed French colonialism provides scope for continued debate.

The removal of Melanesians, from areas required for European settlement, to lands that were already occupied, although creating tension and inter-tribal conflict, was surprisingly harmonious (or perhaps merely poorly documented), even during Feillet's oppressive cantonnement. Under pressure, the masters of the land among the recipient clans gave land use rights to the newcomers, even where they themselves became a minority on their own land. While the population was stable, or declined, there were fewer problems. When, in the 1920s, the Melanesian population again began to grow steadily the pressure on resources also increased substantially and there were renewed problems on the tribal reservations.

In New Caledonia there was no immediate paradox, as occurred in many other areas, where the processes of containment, subversion and forced withdrawal of the peasantry coincided with a rapid acceleration of population growth, thus exacerbating the situation (Wolf 1969:281). This did not occur widely until after the Second World War and to some extent the reservations may have assisted in demographic revival, by enabling Melanesians to experience a 'separate development'; Roux goes as far as to argue
that, 'the native reservation which at the end of the nineteenth century seemed to have become the grave of the Melanesian race was the conservatory that permitted demographic growth after 1926' (Roux 1974:300). Yet if it was an artificial construct, for Melanesians it had by then become a harsh reality, and overcoming the trauma of cantonnement resulted in demographic revival. By the 1920s few of the young men and women on the reservations had known the disruption and trauma of confinement, but had grown up in a largely Melanesian world preserved from the more rapacious colonialism that had overwhelmed their parents. This revival was the aftermath of a long period of slackening French colonisation, when little land was lost, and coincided both with the arrival of 'alternative candidates for laborious toil' (Lawrey 1982:15) and the onset of economic development in the reservations. Two decades later, after the war, wider recognition of Melanesian 'improvement' contributed to political change, the achievement of citizenship, and a new era in development.

In the inter-war period the process of delimiting reservations continued, although free colonisation had virtually come to a standstill, and pressure on land resulted in concessions being granted higher and higher into the still remote valleys of the central mountain chain. The pressures on land came from the children of the early colonists; born at the end of the nineteenth century they now sought farms and stations of their own and, in the bush, families of eight or nine children were far from rare. There were other kinds of demand for land; as one colonist argued in 1928, 'By what monstrous aberration do we continue to let the natives have more land than they can cultivate and that they need to live on?' (Saussol 1979a:323). 'Land for the colonists' became a more widespread call and in 1926 a Permanent Consultative Commission on Land was established; between 1926 and 1928 the last stages of cantonnement took place, mainly in the north of New Caledonia between Ouegoa and Kone. A vigorous campaign to establish colonists on the Isle of Pines was rejected, largely because the soils there were too poor (Saussol 1979a:326-7) with the result that reservations were wholly confined to the Grande Terre. Indeed the land taken for penal settlement on the Isle of Pines was actually returned to its traditional Melanesian owners. Despite growing population pressure on resources the minimal alienation of Melanesian land halted the greatest physical and psychological threat to the Melanesian population; with the establishment of a Melanesian commercial economy, welfare services and an Asian labour force the revival occurred. In that decline, and the slow recovery, are some very basic elements in New Caledonian history.

As crucial as the actual change in population numbers was the changing distribution of the population. Initially the European population essentially grew in Noumea and on the west coast. Although only a relatively small number of Melanesians were removed from there, by 1891 they had become a minority in
ever area south of Bourail and Yate, much of which had been
historically unpopulated. Their minority status was further
emphasized by the concentration of Asian migrants in the areas of
white settlement. Melanesians were overwhelmingly a minority in
Noumea, even though the Melanesian migrants (from the New Hebrides
and Loyalty Islands) were concentrated there. In 1891, in the
vast area of the Grande Terre south of Paita and Yate, and
including Noumea, there could have been no more than 1500
Melanesians (Shineberg 1983:39) whereas there were more than
12,000 Europeans. This massive disproportion was even greater in
later years, and by the 1920s Melanesians had become a minority in
their own land. Not only were they a minority but in 1921 some 40
per cent of the Melanesian population were in the Loyalty Islands,
far away from Noumea and the Grande Terre. The Loyalty Islands,
Belep and, from the start of the twentieth century, the Isle of
Fines remained almost entirely Melanesian enclaves in the white
colony.

The world depression of the 1930s that caused an exodus of
Asians from New Caledonia coincided with a demographic revival of
the Melanesian population even at the very low rate of 0.5 per
cent per year. For the first time the Melanesian population
belatedly grew. The 1936 census, the most accurate so far,
officially recorded a Melanesian population of 29,055. Leenhardt,
as a missionary, argued that Melanesians had finally overcome
their overwhelming despondence and depression through the
adaptation and modernization of their traditional beliefs; more
probably, reduced social pressures, economic development and
superior and more extensive medical services contributed to the
slight increase. One of the first regions of the Grande Terre to
be marked by a Melanesian population increase was Houailou where,
by 1910, births were greater than deaths. Leenhardt's role there
in education and opposition to alcohol may already have been
important (Saussol 1979a:334). Yet if the revival remained
slight, the Melanesian population may well have been growing
faster than elsewhere in Melanesia, and the revival was sustained
in the post-war years.

If New Caledonia had become a colony in some ways
characterized by a variety of races it was emphatically not a
multi-racial or multi-cultural society, in the sense that there
was significant mutual respect and tolerance between ethnic
groups. Indeed race relations were formed through prejudice and
ignorance. While Leenhardt was gradually coming to understand the
Melanesian world others, less interested, had neither the interest
nor the patience. A disinterested yet often perceptive scholar of
French colonialism, Stephen Roberts, was able to write as late as
1929 of the New Caledonian population: 'The natives, too, are
poles apart from the merry Polynesians. They are the lowest of
the black Melanesians, infinitely more archaic and repulsive, and
more like the negritos than the gentle, tawny Polynesians, who are
almost Caucasians' (1929:517). Almost in the same breath, his
criticisms of the French for establishing reservations, in the course of which French policy progressed from being 'merely grotesque' to becoming 'a tragedy' in their destruction of the chiefly system, were attributed to the fact that the French were 'never prone at any time to attach over much importance to the Melanesians' (1929:524). In this spirit of mutual incomprehension, and the superior strength of the colonizing power, conflict and dissent were inevitable.

Decades later casual visitors to New Caledonia were still able to carry away the worst attitudes of the French settlers and maintain and prolong the caricatures that often passed for an understanding of the Melanesian population. Burchett, while sympathetic to Melanesians, had similar misconceptions: the 'natives proved very truculent and showed a disinclination to give up their simple pleasures of fighting tribal wars and dancing pilou-pilous (corroborees) to go and work on white men's plantations' (Burchett 1941:82). More casual visitors were even less well informed:

It transpired that these childlike people, when a young couple became engaged, would brand the girl on the bosom as a sign of her happy state... The tribes were all very dirty and lazy, and contented themselves with cultivating a patch of garden sufficient for the most meagre existence, and then spend the rest of their days lolling around in happy sloth. [The French doctor] Ferron's explanation of this was that, when they were forbidden to go on their cannibalistic missions by the horrified missionaries, they lost their zest for life, and became apathetic and lazy. He explained that had they been taught football, as the Maoris were, they would have retained their former strength and vitality, whereas now, with no interest in life, they were sliding fast downhill (Fallon 1952:54).

Where attitudes of this kind prevailed, even among bureaucrats outside Noumea, not only was there little incentive to provide the infrastructure for development, but there was real hope that the problem would soon go away. Melanesians, overwhelmingly aware of these kinds of attitudes, saw little future in reconciliation or cooperation with the colonial administration.

At the end of the 1920s there were discussions in the New Caledonia General Council on the need to establish segregated schools, cinemas and railway carriages for Asians, Melanesians and Europeans, alongside the demarcation of particular areas on the fringes of Noumea in which they would live. This however was always a minority view and, formally at least, there was never segregation in New Caledonia (Brou 1975:53). In practice economics determined segregation and the suburbs and cinemas of
Noumea were effectively as racially segregated as any legislation would have contrived. In rural areas the reservations ensured separate development, and while that separation may have contributed to economic and demographic revival, it had emphatically not contributed to any degree of understanding between races. Though free settlers also despised *bagnards* (cf. Le Goupils 1928:155ff.), there was universal contempt for Melanesians and the Asian 'problem' had become a 'threat' to Europeans, hence the possibility of harmonious racial relations in the inter-war years was non-existent. Yet, on the eve of the Second World War, after a period of decline and equilibrium, Melanesians were again becoming a majority in New Caledonia. In this slow demographic revival, although they had gained some dignity and self-respect, they had achieved no economic, social or political equality, only various degrees of deprivation in their remote reservations, as Europeans consolidated control over every aspect of life in the settler colony.
Chapter 6

A quiescent economy

A clan which loses its territory is a clan which has lost its personality. It loses its hill site, its sacred places, its sociological as well as its geographical points of reference. The group's whole universe is shaken; its network of relationships with its brothers, with its internal protocol, falls into general confusion. In this chaos everyone loses a part of his identity since... names are closely linked with the land. It is remarkable that after the group has been displaced geographically, some people keep their names, the name of the ancient hill-site near which they used to live, and which identified them before the tribe changed locations... The Kanaka cannot stand back and take a topographical aerial or overall view; he participated in it from the inside. Space serves as the living record of the group... A material support for the Melanesians who live on it, it is one of the components of their personality (Leenhardt 1947/1969:60; cf. Tjibaou 1976:285).

At the start of the twentieth century, despite the vigorous efforts of Governor Feillet to encourage free settlement, there were only a few more free Europeans than convicts and time-expired convicts. Nevertheless this shifting proportion had finally reversed the convict dominance that so characterized most of the first half century of the infant colony. Yet the image of the convict colony had not been dispelled; nor had memories of the 1878 revolt. The end of penal transportation had increased the land's attraction for free settlers; but its end also emphasized labour shortages, reduced French government expenditure in the colony and the domestic market declined with the reduction of the military garrison. Although the wave of free settlement may briefly have imparted some new vigour to life in the bush (Lawrey 1982:5) the colony had entered into a lengthy period in which economic activity was fitful. In the first decade of the century there was a severe economic depression and thus some optimism among the European population when it was reported that an Australian agent had offered £60 million for the colony (Sington 1978:264). The colony was close to bankruptcy and several letters had gone to Australia, requesting annexation; 'at a time of
disarray [New Caledonia] expressed the wish to be separated from France and attached to Australia, then in a period of affluence' (Le Goupils 1928:9). Just before the war retail prices and the mining industry revived, the great trading firm of Ballande set up a blast furnace at Doniambo (Noumea) and the SLN followed with a new foundry at its Thio mine. The contemporary economy was largely set in place. The basis of the settler economy was still small-scale peasant farming, increasingly supplemented by large-scale animal husbandry. The nickel industry had, to some extent, overcome a cycle of boom-and-bust with the introduction of new techniques in 1911 but mining was not yet the colony's predominant source of wealth.

Administration too had scarcely changed. Until 1939 New Caledonia had no direct representation in the French parliament, and was still administered by the Governor, assisted by a Council and seven nominated members. Since 1885 there had also been an elected General Council (Conseil Général) of fifteen members, which occasionally initiated proposals on financial matters, although generally there was little doubt that the Governor was essentially in control of policy in New Caledonia and that his decisions were primarily influenced by the situation in Paris. Throughout the first few decades of the century there were pressures from within New Caledonia for a greater decentralization of political, administrative and financial responsibility to the colony. The members of the General Council became increasingly opposed to the brief periods that metropolitan public servants spent in useless administrative posts. Instability characterized the whole colonial service and the well-known 'waltz of the governors', where few stayed long enough to understand even the essentials of colonial life, was probably made even more rapid by pressures from the General Council (Thompson and Adloff 1971:254). Thus even where control of the colony was not directly vested in France it was administered by officials more conscious of their own status and prospects in metropolitan society than of the needs of the colony.

Relationships with Melanesians remained controlled by the Service des Affaires Indigènes (Department of Native Affairs) in Noumea. Local supervision of Melanesians on the reservations, and those working for colonists, was undertaken by gendarmes (or syndics) in the main district centres; very much subordinate to them were the Great Chiefs of the specially constituted tribes. Special regulations applied to Melanesians under the Indigénat. They were forbidden: to leave the reservations without permission (to prevent them evading forced labour and taxation as had occurred in other colonies) (cf. Cordell and Gregory 1982), to trespass on private property, to enter bars, or to carry traditional weapons near a European residence. In Noumea, 'at gun-fire at eight o'clock, all Kanakas, i.e. blacks of all description, must be in their houses' (Smith 1924:22), a situation maintained by a continued strong military presence. Until 1932
Melanesians had no legal status in New Caledonia but a series of decrees in the next two years allowed adults to obtain French citizenship on certain conditions: the ability to read and write French together with long service with the armed forces or civil government; obtaining qualifications such as being a school teacher; and marrying a Frenchwoman, provided there were children (Firth 1944:460). Very few Melanesians obtained any of these qualifications hence almost all remained subjects of France, subject to French laws (sometimes modified for New Caledonia), confined to their reservations, and without the rights or privileges of citizenship.

Mining malaise

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century there were a series of attempts to extract the various mineral resources of New Caledonia. Phosphates were exported from Walpole Island until the Second World War and throughout the Grande Terre mines of different kinds opened and closed. Just before the war, growing demand resulted in the opening of an iron ore mine at Goro (south of Yate) by the Société Le Fer, a company founded mainly with Japanese capital, using Japanese workers and exporting exclusively to Japan. The war effectively ended iron ore production in New Caledonia as world demand declined and more profitable high-grade resources elsewhere came into production.

Cobalt was mined for many years until soon after the First World War, when the discovery of larger and richer deposits in Canada and the Belgian Congo (Zaire) made New Caledonia's deposits uneconomic to work. A small amount of copper was exported in the inter-war years, gold was discovered in a number of places, but never in commercially viable quantities, and even oil was extracted near Koumac. Antimony, manganese and oil have all been mined and attempts were also made to mine mercury, lead and zinc. Coal too was mined for many years at Dumbea and Moindou but, although deposits were large, the quality was poor and local production did not even meet the requirements of the Doniambo nickel furnaces. The combined effects of the distance of New Caledonia from overseas markets, the depression and the discovery of richer, more profitable resources elsewhere, confined the mining industry to two principal products, nickel and chromite, both of great importance to the island economy.

In the inter-war years New Caledonia became firmly established as the second largest nickel producer in the world, although far behind Canada, which consistently supplied around 90 per cent of the world's nickel. From 1910, instead of the unprofitable export of unprocessed low grade ores, treatment in local furnaces diminished costs. In 1927 the SLN completed a hydro-electric power plant at Yate, enabling the export of ferro-nickel. In the post-war years new companies, like Société
Ca ledonie, began in the colony but the 1930s depression led to amalgamations of mining companies and the concentration of mining at only three centres: Thio, Bourail and Kone. Before the war exports increased again, following massive demand for armaments, especially in Japan, to the extent that the capital for one new mine in 1936 was provided by Japanese interests and in 1939 a second new mine at Kouaoua was opened. Chromite production was always second to nickel production, and the significance of New Caledonia as a chromite producer declined during the inter-war years as other countries, including the Soviet Union, began production. For some time, Tiebaghi was the most important mine although there were short-lived mines in the south of New Caledonia, including Ouen Island and Plum, from time to time. Japanese finance also contributed to the development of chromite mines in the 1930s.

The problems of the mining industry forced a number of smaller concerns out of business, and a much greater consolidation of mining interests in the hands of the SLN itself 'controlled by a spectacular constellation of big banking and financial interests in France and Belgium' (Lawrey 1982:8). Many of the shares were owned by the massive German firm of Krupps (Burchett 1941:52) making the SLN the first great multinational corporation to operate in New Caledonia. Krupps was also buying ore directly from the petits mineurs to supply its armaments factories. Through export taxes, employment and the provision of infrastructure the SLN made a rather greater contribution to the colony's development than the fluctuating development policies and funds of the French government, though neither was substantial. The establishment of the nickel smelter at Doniambo in 1910 not only resulted in the industrial transformation of Noumea but also marked the establishment of an urban proletariat. Of the 200 workers employed there in 1910 there were 170 Europeans and 27 Melanesians and before the First World War the work-force had grown to 320. This early white proletariat was unusual for a tropical colony and unemployment among the white workers in the 1930s depression was even more exceptional (Brou 1975:229); this era marked the birth of a working class (Guiart 1983a:124-6). Unemployment in the nickel smelter from 1930 onwards was the first real unemployment in New Caledonia in the sense that the unemployed could neither find other work, nor could they return to agriculture (Brou 1979:39). The distinctiveness of New Caledonia with its poor white settlers and urban proletariat was obvious. Whatever its difficulties the mining industry remained the most important source of export income throughout the twentieth century; in 1920 exports of chromite and nickel constituted just under half (47 per cent) of the value of all exports. Behind them were copra (16 per cent), cotton (7 per cent) and meat, coffee and skins were also exported in substantial quantities. In the inter-war years New Caledonia had a diversified export economy, more so than anywhere else in the South Pacific, where few colonies offered more than monoculture, and also to a greater extent than
in subsequent decades, when the nickel industry came increasingly to dominate the economy.

**Agricultural stagnation**

The problems of developing a modern agricultural economy that plagued the nineteenth century colonists did not abate in the twentieth century. Previous failures dented the optimism of many settlers, some of whom moved to Noumea. The low fertility of thin and mineralized soils, lack of irrigation and fertilization, floods, droughts and pests all combined to make commercial agriculture difficult while distance from markets made export costs substantial. These factors were combined with a shortage of labour, as Melanesians remained on the reservations, or were forced into public works, a shortage that was reduced by the import of Asian labour and the seasonal movement of Loyalty Islanders to work on coffee, cotton and copra plantations.

In the inter-war years there was only one real attempt to encourage further European migration to New Caledonia. Following a favourable, and somewhat biased, account of the potential of the colony by Max Long, the Mayor of Noumea, the more deprived residents of the northern areas of France, devastated in the First World War, were encouraged to migrate. In 1925 the first group of Nordistes (settlers from northern France) arrived in New Caledonia; they settled mainly around Moindou, and further north, but without capital and farming experience it was a dismal failure despite considerable assistance from other settlers who feared that they might become submerged by Asians or even Melanesians (Thompson and Adloff 1971:366-7; Brou 1975:39-43). After the partial failure of Feillet's massive effort to encourage white colonization, this new attempt, described by Thompson and Adloff as a 'fiasco', put an end to any further encouragement of migration from France. There was, at last, a growing recognition that the land of New Caledonia was poor, already settled and scarcely adequate even for the children of earlier colonists. The focus of European economic interest had irrevocably shifted towards mining and hence resulted in urban rather than rural development. Until the Second World War agriculture, and especially cotton cultivation, played a significant part in the colony's economic development. The needs of the First World War, and problems of production in Queensland, enabled this classic colonial crop to be so successful that at one point its price was 50 per cent higher than that of good American cotton. Attempts were made to mechanize production and there was considerable success until the collapse of the international economy in 1929; cotton production limped on until the war but was then finally abandoned (Saussol 1981a). By contrast the production of coffee grew in importance in the inter-war years, for both Europeans and Melanesians, aided by a coffee bounty and the introduction from Java of both the robusta species and cheap labour. Coffee
essentially replaced copra, still the most important agricultural export until the 1930s. Other crops flourished briefly; rubber was grown and exported on a small scale in the early years of the century and rum was still being manufactured at the Saint Louis Mission (Noumea) at the time of the Second World War. Rice at one time was thought to have considerable potential; one exceptional colonist, Maurice Janisel, had 300 hectares of rice at Pouebo, cultivated with Javanese and Melanesian labour and a rice factory, using hydro-electric power, survived from the 1920s to the 1960s (Barbault and Brou 1985). Few other colonists were nearly as enterprising and expectations for agricultural development constantly exceeded reality. Governor Guyot, after travelling in the north of New Caledonia in 1926, during his second year in the colony, observed 'the vast Diahot river... a small Caledonian Nile' and, at Pouebo, where Janisel had his rice plantations, he declared the 'marshes transformed into rice fields rivalling the most beautiful in Indochina' (Brou 1975:44-5). Without lavish capital, agricultural prospects in the north especially were extremely poor; the Diahot was scarcely 50 kilometres long.

The grazing industry too experienced a period of depression almost throughout the inter-war years; canneries came and went, many cattle ranches switched or diversified into coffee cultivation and stations were over-run with lantana scrub. Meat consumption fell in the 1930s and only the large Ouaco factory managed to keep going; in 1934 freshly-killed prime beef was selling in Noumea at no more than a penny a pound (Firth 1944:479). The administration sought overseas contracts with the penal administration of French Guiana and the French army, which just kept the Ouaco factory in business. The war, and the arrival of American troops, proved a great boost to the grazing economy, propelling it into the modern era of intensified ranching in association with the growth of a market that it could never completely supply.

In the inter-war years life for European settlers especially in the more remote regions of the Grande Terre was narrow, introspective and for many one of considerable poverty. Guiart's retrospective account of this poor-white society is one of the few accounts there are of white settlers in the inter-war years (Guiart 1959:25, cited by Lawrey 1982:7). Though Guiart was often over-critical of the white settlers of New Caledonia the picture he paints of a poor white society, discriminated against as much by rich settlers as by an urban administration, and becoming something of an impoverished under-class in white society, is a valid one, especially for areas like Ouegoa, populated largely by ex-convicts. Other more affluent settlers, such as Marc Le Goupils, recognized the division between themselves and the poor whites, often time-expired convicts, on their tiny farms. These petits colons (poor white colonists) had horses, and perhaps a pair of oxen, but agriculture was essentially practised on foot (Le Goupils 1928:105). All were conscious of the gulf between
white settlers and Melanesians, a gulf neither bridged by inter-marriage nor yet by economic change in the Melanesian reserves. Food supplies for Europeans were limited in the bush; deer, whose numbers had grown dramatically, were often the main source of food (Brou 1975:13). In contrast, there were tinned sardines, butter from Normandy, milk from Switzerland and even canned beef from Australia (Le Goupils 1928:70-1) for the less impoverished settlers, a measure of the inability of the agricultural economy to diversify and support the food requirements of even the rural settlers, let alone Noumea. By the inter-war years it was readily apparent that inequalities in access to land had established clear divisions between the white settlers themselves; on the one hand were wealthy ranchers and mine-owners and, on the other, 'a far larger number of subsistence farmers barely able to eke out a living from the small-scale cultivation of a few crops' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:367). For the whole of the century these divisions have been quite unchanged.

As free settlement declined so Europeans began to lose some forms of contact with the metropolis; the children of the earliest settlers had no ties with France and in the 1930s perhaps three-quarters of the white residents 'had never had any direct contact with France and had almost none with French culture' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:259). While they thought of themselves as wholly French and their colony as a distant province of France this was not a view that was always shared by the authorities in Paris. A colonial society was growing apart from the metropolis. In Noumea there were other kinds of Europeans, who had come not to settle or to carve out an existence from the bush, but simply to earn money. These newcomers were known as soreilles or zozos, quite distinct from the settlers (colons) who had invested in New Caledonia. The zozos had merely come for a short time, to save and spend little in New Caledonia (Brou 1975:224); 'the French officers bring everything they can with them from France, and save all that is possible for their return after two or three years to their beloved country' (Smith 1924:15). The 'waltz of the governors' was also true for many bureaucrats and traders; few spent long in the bush.

There remained a 'certain western ambience' which even extended into Noumea; 'stage-coaches', deer-hunting and dynamite explosions all added to a situation in which, in the bush at least, Europeans (and many Melanesians) owned a gun and travelled on horse-back while labourers took their guns to work, on the off chance of seeing a deer or even a fish. So much did the gun dominate rural life that Le Goupils spoke of his nearest neighbour, a man who lived on wild pigs and deer, as being 'a few gunshots', or six kilometres, away (Le Goupils 1928:109). 'At the great balls, there were magnificent brawls, where the rural settlers (broussards), with their handle-bar moustaches, took their shoes under their arms to keep them clean' (Brou 1975:223). While Brou speaks of a situation that evoked images of Kansas City
he barely mentions the Melanesian population of New Caledonia. Their role was simple; to serve but not to be seen. They had no place in this transplanted European society.

Melanesians in the material world

For Melanesians the second half of the nineteenth century had been nothing less than traumatic. The population had declined steadily and on the Grande Terre it was not much more than half what it had been at the time of annexation. By 1903 almost all the Melanesian population of the Grande Terre had been confined to reservations. Already this area constituted no more than about seven per cent of the Grande Terre, much less than the area demarcated for European settlement, and a fraction of that required to maintain the long-fallow agricultural system. Not only was land acquired 'legally', as the administration pushed the declining Melanesian race further beyond the pastoral frontiers, but there were also thoroughly illegal sales of land. On several occasions individual Melanesians sold, or sought to sell, land to individual colonists, illegal activities which effectively betrayed their clans, further reduced Melanesian land areas and caused social discord.

After the drama of Feillet's drastic cantonnement général, between 1897 and 1903, the creation of reservations was largely over. Because Europeans had now been granted large proportions of the best agricultural land, at least for a ranching economy, there was little left to redistribute. In some regions nothing remained of Melanesian land; in the area of the 1878 revolt, Melanesians retained nothing. Moreover, except around Voh, the majority of Melanesian land was in the central mountain ranges or on their flanks. The more apparent the European colonial presence the more fragmented and tiny the reservations became. At a time when, further north in Melanesia, the European presence was little more than tenuous with many areas unexplored, the European colonization of New Caledonia and the appropriation of land was almost complete. Between 1903 and 1945, those who lost the most land in the last phase of land acquisition were the Melanesians of the valleys above Hienghene, Touho and Kone, a situation which provoked the revolt of 1917. These last land acquisitions, the 'tail of the cyclone' (Saussol 1979a), were stimulated by demands for more land by European settlers. Around Noumea, the reservation of Conception was cut back, and parts of Ouen Island taken over. However elsewhere population pressures on some reservations had resulted in the administration allocating more land on the fringes, so that between 1903 and the Second World War, as much land was gained as was lost. By 1945 the reservations occupied 7.4 per cent of the Grande Terre (Doumenge 1982:139), a marginal increase of 0.1 per cent compared with the substantial population increase in the same period.
Traditional Melanesian agriculture was, to a considerable extent, preserved in the reservations, partly constrained by a lack of land and labour but also influenced by cash cropping, monetization and the more widespread consumption of imported foods. The basis of Melanesian subsistence agriculture changed little in the first half of the twentieth century, although cassava became a more important root crop, being relatively resistant to droughts and valuable in conditions where fallow times had been reduced. Taro terraces and yam mounds correspondingly declined in size and extent but taro and yam remained the food plants at the very centre of the traditional economy. Pressures on food crop production were intensified towards the end of the pre-war decades, as the population increased and as Melanesians began to participate more extensively in the commercial economy.

The doctrine 'Christ and cash crops' was as valid in New Caledonia as it was in other parts of the South Pacific, where missions also propagated the monetary economy. The Marists produced coconut oil and grew cotton in the Loyalty Islands in the 1860s and villagers followed their lead. By the 1880s villages around Bonde were growing coffee, and one village chief around 1905-06 had decreed that his 'subjects' plant 2000 coffee trees each (Saussol 1979a:337-8). From around 1900 onwards coffee became the plant in vogue and from then onwards it was planted on the majority of Melanesian reserves; 'first stolen by curious Melanesian workers, it was not planted properly but being the symbol of European agricultural strength, Melanesians greatly desired to have the same rights of cultivation' (Doumenge 1982:119). Coffee, taxes, material goods and forced labour irrevocably drew Melanesians towards the cash economy, but it was not until the 1930s that the cash economy became at all significant in the Melanesian reserves. Nevertheless as early as 1928 it was estimated that Melanesians owned about 5000 cattle, 5700 horses, 5000 goats, 6000 pigs and 370 sheep (Firth 1944:473), all animals unknown in New Caledonia a century earlier and all requiring large land areas.

From 1930 onwards the Department of Native Affairs instigated a campaign in support of coffee growing by Melanesian tribes. The decision to encourage Melanesians to cultivate their own export crops, specifically coffee, on the Grande Terre (since Loyalty Islanders had long sold copra) was designed to encourage the embourgeoisement of Melanesians, on whom France could consolidate their rule (cf. Joseph 1977:126-7). However it provoked a minor political crisis, as European planters feared the loss of labour so soon after the repatriation of the bulk of the Asian labour force. For one correspondent in the Bulletin du Commerce the administration was 'softly torpedoing colonization' (Brou 1975:95) and Melanesians were asked not to extend their coffee plantations further. Colonists and the influential Bulletin du Commerce argued that aid to Melanesians should
concentrate on improving their health and welfare, in order for them to be a more effective labour force, rather than encourage their own economic development (Doumenge 1982:120; Saussol 1979a:339). As Brou records, it was a 'general revolt of whites' in which there were formal demands that the colony become a dominion, like British dominions, to escape France's financial constraints, the 'first written demand for autonomy' (Brou 1975:95). These demands coincided with world depression; as the economy revived so the demands disappeared and Melanesians began to expand coffee production on those reservations where adequate land was available. Even in 1923 Melanesians had planted 1473 hectares of coffee and production had reached 224 tonnes; before the war it reached over 500 tonnes (Brou 1975:97). Copra production by Melanesians was 607 tonnes in 1932, much of it from the Grande Terre, and reached almost 2000 tonnes in 1939; corn was also produced by Melanesians in substantial commercial quantities. In comparison with every other part of Melanesia many tribes of New Caledonia were far advanced in their participation in the cash economy.

The social and economic effect of the spread of coffee in the 1930s was such that Doumenge called it nothing less than an 'agricultural revolution' (1982:121); for Saussol, its 'silence hid its depth' (1979a:339). It was a revolution in that it brought Melanesians for the first time adequate purchasing power, introducing them to 'the seductions of the market'. Incomes were no longer directly dependent on Europeans and there was some degree of parity with European agriculture (Saussol 1979a:348-9). In the agricultural revolution were 'the seeds of a social revolution' (Doumenge 1982:121); to the slogan 'Christ and coconuts', the Grande Terre had replied with 'schooling and coffee' (Doumenge 1982:121), though 'schooling' was neither appropriate nor comparable with that received by European children. Coffee cultivation also brought disadvantages: incomes were not always wisely spent, there was pressure for individual landownership, and land and income inequalities became a source of grievance and friction. Before the war it was reported that the coastal coffee growers were 'by way of becoming small capitalists and they can afford luxuries beyond the means of their mountain-bound companions' (Burchett 1941:65). Population pressure on limited land resources aggravated these problems. Economic risk accompanied and accentuated subsistence risk as food crop areas declined. As labour too became a commodity the social role of that labour force declined and traditional cultural institutions and especially traditional leaders lost more of their significance. Thus the spread of capitalism forced men to seek defences against it; 'they could meet this end either by cleaving to their traditional institutions, increasingly subverted by the forces they were trying to neutralize, or they could commit themselves to the search for new social forms which would grant them shelter' (Wolf 1969:282). Inevitably, as some chose each
strategy, discontents remained and friction followed the coexistence of old and new values.

The ramifications of economic change on society were equally matched by parallel social changes. Just as Melanesians first began cash cropping in the Loyalty Islands, under missionary influence, so education also started there. Even in the 1860s the LMS schools at Lifou and Mare each had more than 400 pupils (Howe 1977:126). Ahead in education and commercial development, and stimulated by the early labour trade, the Loyalty Islands was a quite distinct region, a dependency of New Caledonia; it was only tenuously linked to the Grande Terre by steamer services. Yet Loyalty Islanders participated to a greater extent in the European commercial life of New Caledonia than did the Melanesians of the Grande Terre; they were employed seasonally, or for longer periods, on European plantations, worked as domestic servants in Noumea, where there were few other Melanesians, and three or four times a week boats from the Loyalty Islands brought fruit and vegetables for sale in Noumea (Burchett 1941:184; Firth 1944:488). Perhaps 600 men from Lifou alone were working each year in New Caledonia in the 1930s (Firth 1944:503). Consumption patterns in Lifou, in the inter-war years, were so much more like European patterns than elsewhere in New Caledonia that there was even a greater incidence of dental caries there (Firth 1944:505). Elsewhere the slow, and more often resisted, spread of missions and other European institutions, had meant a much slower spread of European values.

Education in the reserves of the Grande Terre was a new phenomenon at the start of the twentieth century, offering new abstractions with which to cope, and a means of introducing new values, aspirations and confusions into traditional societies. Education, both from the missions and the administration, reached many Melanesians. By 1925 some 2230 Melanesians were in school, mainly mission schools, where they learnt the rudiments of French, the basics of hygiene, housekeeping and other virtues. In 1939 there were 26 government and 59 mission schools serving 4300 Melanesian children (Firth 1944:462). Once again in comparison with the provision of social services elsewhere in Melanesia, New Caledonia was quite advanced. Like the new rhythms of work that followed forced labour, education too contributed to a new sense of time that the mission sabbath had already established. These new notions of time 'removed the cyclical time of rituals in which a legendary past was re-enacted to legitimate and prolong the present. Most important in the new sense of time was a notion of progress and of a break-out from the present' (Dening 1980:284).

In the disappointments of the past there was some prospect, at least for the missionaries, of a new vision of the future in which a European sense of order and progress would overlay and over-rule the apparent disorganization and irregularity of Melanesian life. Through education, missions, manual labour and cash-cropping, Melanesians slowly came to share these obsessions and
regularities. In attempts to impose order, colonial institutions were faced with the disorder of the reserves themselves, where Melanesians went about their own lives at their own pace, and with societies where dispossession was associated with social disruption, the demand for new material goods, and the ready availability of alcohol. But it was eventually through that dispossession that a new order emerged.

If there was one area above all in which the Melanesians of the Grande Terre thoroughly opposed European values it was in their conscious and universal rejection of the work ethic; this was one area in which there was virtually no accommodation between Europeans and Melanesians. While contemporary accounts merely concluded that Melanesians were lazy, more recent authors have commented on their being unmotivated 'by the lure of gain' (Dousset-Leenhardt 1978:107). Others have noted that most Melanesians simply sought to withdraw as far as possible from this most direct contact with the colonial economy. Roadbuilding in New Caledonia, the main administration use of Melanesian labour, was a thoroughly colonial device, common elsewhere in the French empire (cf. Dening 1980:264) and, in time, also extremely important in Papua New Guinea. Yet Melanesians remained aloof from any commitment to public works and to the government that imposed a new code of laws onto an old one. Their incomes were earned where possible through work on their own land.

Melanesians, displaced to remote and distant reservations, were in some respects ripe for social change. Diversity in economy and society, at workplace and home, in school or in church, introduced choices, options and variable responses all of which ushered in social change, foremost in which was the emergence of capitalism in this periphery of the world economy. Melanesians had become marginal participants in the European capitalist economy, with lives less regulated by the agricultural seasons and festivals and more by the rhythms of seasonal and cyclical migrant labour in the mines and (for some) in Noumea. Politically and socially they were even more marginal; confined to reservations and without citizenship, their status and pride had been substantially eroded and the blandishments of the material world were a scarcely adequate substitute.

By the time of the Second World War the confinement of Melanesians to reservations had resulted in the establishment of a thin veneer of European culture and a transformation towards European life-styles. The concentration of groups of Melanesians, sometimes speaking different languages, in small areas, contributed to the destruction of old forms of social organization and the decline of the clan system. Education provided 'modern' knowledge and with that came lack of interest in traditional values, customs and knowledge and disinterest in the wisdom of elders. The universal acceptance of Christianity encouraged this trend: clothes, house-styles, food and drink became more European.
Yet paradoxically, the secular power of the chiefs, especially the 'great chiefs', often increased, as they were incorporated as minor but autocratic officials into the French administration, under the French gendarmes. Maurice Leenhardt published in 1930 three photographs of the Great Chief of Houailou, Mindia Neja, taken between 1872 and 1912, demonstrating the transition from young man in traditional regalia to middle-aged man in full French military uniform, with three medals and 'an expression of discomfort and confusion' (Clifford 1982:132), exemplifying the loss of pride so crucial to the man and to the Melanesian race. Power in the modern world was for Melanesians no more than superficial. Even in the most modernized part of New Caledonia there was no doubt that, then as now, traditional values remained important, just as they do throughout Melanesia. As Leenhardt noted:

> If we recall that the people of the Loyalties are civilized, that their chief lives like a European, that many persons have shops and boats which allow them to do business in Noumea... the ceremony in the chief's enclosure can be very instructive... We understand that a very old society with unsuspected settings still remains behind the modern appearance (Leenhardt 1947/1979:121).

Though the complex social fabrics that bound societies were weakening, and as conflicts for power and prestige diverged into a modern arena, Melanesian societies demonstrated a great deal more continuity than change.

**The quiet colony**

For all the many predictions of great commercial success, New Caledonia in the inter-war years never lived up to these expectations. Promise was invariably unfulfilled. Overseas markets were inaccessible, there were constant problems of obtaining adequate labour supplies (either from within or from outside New Caledonia), the necessity to import coal reduced the profitability of the mining industry and natural hazards plagued the agricultural economy. The infrastructure was limited; in 1923 the main west coast road did not extend past Poya, and the rest of the island was linked to the capital only by small coastal steamers. A railway, from Noumea to Paita, always ran at a loss, but survived from 1902 to 1944 (Rennie 1974). By the Second World War the road had reached Pout and in 1936 the first road crossed the mountains from Bourail to Houailou. Skeletal it was, but the new routes of the inter-war years ended the isolation of many parts of New Caledonia and enabled the consolidation of a commercial economy virtually throughout the island. As Brou points out, for the first time for more than half a century, at least to its administrators, 'New Caledonia no longer ended at Bourail' (1975:281). Beyond these more local factors there were
constant problems of capital. France provided little direct financial support and the establishment of a colonial fund, the crédit colonial, in 1935 did little to improve matters since its total capital was only 20 million francs. The settlers themselves had little capital, most beginning their overseas life with little more than the 5000 francs necessary to secure free transport to the colony. Moreover commercial development was actually hampered by French tariff policy, as well as by tariffs in Australia and New Zealand, the two countries that were the most obvious markets for New Caledonian minerals and the most obvious suppliers of food and manufactured goods. New Caledonia consequently traded, at considerable expense, with Europe and the United States. If the growth of the local economy, especially during the 1930s depression, was at best limited and at worst non-existent, comparison with colonies elsewhere put New Caledonia in a more favourable light. New Caledonia then not only appeared to be one of France's most prosperous colonies but, for Burchett (1941), minerals made it a 'Pacific treasure island' and, to some, it was, after Hawaii, 'the most prosperous... of the South Sea Islands' (Bellamy 1933:166-7), comparing favourably with Fiji, one of the few other places with a significant commercial economy.

At the end of the 1920s Roberts summarized the policies of the French in New Caledonia:

the French have done little in the way of medical reform and nothing at all for the education or the economic improvement of the natives. They seem satisfied that the New Caledonians are more or less confined to the wild regions... and so divided by language-differences and so weakened by leprosy and tuberculosis that they cannot effectively combine against the government. The native remains the Canaque, a person held in a grinning contempt that is unusual in the French colonies... The island is 14,000 miles away from Paris, and France wants from it, not problems, but nickel and chrome (Roberts 1929:526).

While Roberts is not always a wholly reliable interpreter of French or Melanesian colonial life this is not the account of a colony without substantial economic and social problems. Vacillations in colonial policy contributed to making 'economic life one continued uncertainty' (Roberts 1929:529). In these circumstances further settlement was discouraged and in the inter-war years New Caledonia had firmly returned to the 'trance of inertia' (Roberts 1929:8) that characterized much of the previous century.

On the eve of the Second World War economic development in New Caledonia was limited and the colony had effectively stagnated. Moreover it was largely unknown to the external world. When Europeans from New Caledonia arrived in France to fight in the First World War they received a 'chilly reception'; 'they
found most of the Metropolitan French so ignorant of geography in
general and of their colonies in particular that the Caledonians
were regarded not as patriotic citizens volunteering for the
defence of their fatherland but as "creole" conscripts' (Thompson
and Adloff 1971:251). In subsequent years nothing had changed
that would have enlightened the metropolitan French further on the
status of their colony; indeed, with the end of transportation
from France, New Caledonia had slipped into oblivion.

If France was uninterested in its Pacific colony, her
'scarcely-wanted daughter, Tahiti's ugly sister' (Lawrey 1982:9),
Australian lack of interest and ignorance was just as great. It
had strategic importance for neither Australia nor France in the
inter-war years and, even in the late 1930s, the defence of New
Caledonia was seen entirely as a French responsibility (Simington
1978:308) as France became more obviously an ally and not an
opponent. The situation reflected a widespread decline of
interest, both expansionist and more genuinely commercial, in the
Southwest Pacific. In any case perceptions of New Caledonia were
such that Australian interest was unlikely to be great; if the
colony, only 1500 kilometres from Australia, was perceived at all
it was viewed as 'a sort of French Botany Bay on a cannibal
island' (Lawrey 1982:9) and popular books such as James Griffith's
*In an Unknown Prison Land* (1901) recorded only gloomy visions
and inaccurate stereotypes. For Burchett, who saw the Pacific as 'the
world of the future', it was still an unknown land (Burchett
1941:11).

In the more patronizing manner of the time a visiting
geographer, James Parsons, noted that

New Caledonia has long been a neglected stepchild of the
French colonial system... The geographical isolation of the
island, absentee proprietorship, native rebellions and a
lingering reputation from penitentiary days as *la terre du
bagne* have all contributed to the stagnation of white
settlement and a parallel retardation of economic and social
development (Parsons 1945:12).

The assumption as always was that development required white
settlement and leadership and a modern economy; Melanesian
development was at best irrelevant.

The first four decades of the twentieth century were, for
the European economy, a period of stagnation or even decline;
nickel mining and, with it, the SLN, came to exert dominance and
control of the economy. The 'last revolts' of 1917 finally cowed
Melanesians into submission before superior military strength and
forced them to submit to a sometimes brutalizing authority. Peace
was thrust upon them and in these stable conditions there was a
resurgence of population and the genesis of a commercial economy,
spreading from the Loyalty Islands to the east coast. As the
European agricultural economy, starved of labour and capital, regressed so the Melanesian economy survived, revived and became transformed. Had the European economy continued to grow, as in Australia and New Zealand, a modern Melanesian economy might never have emerged.

The abandonment of violent opposition to French colonization and, at the same time, the end of indigenous warfare between Melanesian groups was an important event in New Caledonian history. The subordination and encapsulation of New Caledonian societies into the French political order enabled French commercial interests to become more dominant. At the same time Melanesian capitulation enabled their own greater participation in the cash economy. However, by giving up their right 'to secure by force their safety, gain and glory' (Sahlins 1968:7), Melanesians ensured the incorporation of their societies into a colonial state which subordinated local production to expanding capitalism. Coffee plantations enabled the gradual accumulation of 'precious money, indispensable to relations with whites' (Brou 1975:228). Inexorably, cash brought economic and social inequalities. In addition, 'the dance of commodities brought on an ecological crisis' (Wolf 1969:280). Population growth and confinement to reservations disrupted a traditional system where Melanesians had worked out a stable combination of resources to establish a limited but adequate livelihood. Increasingly this was no longer possible; taxation, the steadily increasing lure of commodities, and acculturation through education and missionization, drew Melanesians into the wider material and moral world.
Chapter 7

Boon and bust: towards the contemporary economy

For me the 'generosity' of France does not consist of an open-ended commitment to provide ill-used and poorly-shared financial manna: an economy which is based for 35 per cent on transfers from metropolitan France is a perverse economy (François Mitterrand, NC 31 January 1985).

The Second World War, which only indirectly affected New Caledonia, brought to an irrevocable close the quiet of the first forty years of the twentieth century. The tyranny of distance, which led New Caledonia to gain little from France, eventually ensured the overthrow of the Vichy government's authority; local pressures for General de Gaulle's Free French movement received the support of the wartime Australian government. 'Unwillingly at first but with increasing zest' (Paul Hasluck, cited by Lawrey 1982:1) the Australian military presence intervened to ensure the establishment of a Free French administration and the withdrawal of Vichy supporters to Indochina. New Caledonia became a major United States military base; the Americans built four airfields, impressive roads, employed Melanesians at high wages and launched the colony into the modern world. After the war the status of New Caledonia was officially altered from that of 'colony' to 'overseas territory', so being considered by the French government as an integral part of France. Regulations on the movement of Melanesians were withdrawn, Melanesians were enfranchised and the Indigénat abolished. New Caledonia shared with France moves towards liberalization and decentralization; indentured Vietnamese and Indonesian contract labour was banned (which immediately created a labour problem for the mining industry) and discriminatory legislation against Melanesians also ceased. Melanesians were no longer confined to the reserves but were free to be employed at wage rates comparable to those of Europeans. The expansion of the nickel industry absorbed available Europeans and Melanesians, replacing repatriated Asians, and the sources of labour were rapidly widened to incorporate other French territories in the Pacific.

The war itself contributed to the first economic boom in contemporary New Caledonia. The most immediate impact was the rising demand for nickel and chromium which, in pre-war years, had
come almost entirely from Japan; by 1941 the United States was ready to buy as much as it could get (Lawrey 1982:58) and this contributed to a boom throughout the mining industry. The second, and longer-term impact, was the result of the presence of large numbers of foreign military, to the extent that around the end of 1942 there were considerably more than 100,000 American and New Zealand forces on the islands (Lawrey 1982:120), the impact of which was considerable. Directly it resulted in the construction of roads and airstrips and the inevitable demand for more material goods. It stimulated agricultural development (as the demand for local produce boomed), with the first large-scale 'scientific production of fruits and vegetables' (Bowman 1946:431) and the hiring of Melanesians at wages two or three times higher than before. Indirectly, through casual contacts with men of a quite different kind, it contributed to the regeneration of Melanesian pride and morale, and new patterns of consumption in the reserves. For Europeans too, the Americans were seen as 'thousands and thousands of Father Christmases' (Brou 1975:227). So dramatic was the boom that, at one point, French banknotes simply ran out and replacements had to be quickly manufactured in Noumea. Although the administration feared the effect of massive wage increases on the future supply of plantation and mining labour they tolerated them because increased trade made the fortune of a number of key Noumea business houses (Doumenge 1982:115). Simultaneously the mines were in full production, the fully-stretched agricultural sector fell far short of the demands of the local market, commerce was thriving and wage-earners, whose numbers increased substantially, were enjoying levels of consumption barely dreamed of in pre-war austerity. Peace, and the withdrawal of Allied forces, ended that early boom, but the economy and society had been forever changed; this ensured political change. New Caledonians had simultaneously demonstrated their intense patriotism and asserted their independence (Thompson and Adloff 1971:276) in a period of unprecedented prosperity.

In the post-war years, as the mining industry grew, the New Caledonian economy increasingly became more urban and more capitalist. The agricultural economy, and the role of New Caledonia as a colony of rural settlement, has slowly faded and new migrants have moved almost entirely to Noumea. The boom in mining contributed to the parallel expansion of commerce and the public service, in large part funded directly from France, as the colonial economy increasingly became part of the French economy and subject to the cycles of global capitalism. As the nickel boom turned to bust, economic diversification favoured tourism rather than agriculture, and rising food imports measured the extent of external dependence. Continued financial subsidies emphasized the desire of France to retain control of its distant territory. In all these transformations the Melanesian rural economy remained secondary and the gulf between urban prosperity and rural poverty tended to widen. Melanesians played their part in the expansion of the urban economy, but essentially as wage
labourers rather than owners or employers and, as the New Caledonian economy became more firmly incorporated into a wider area, Melanesian ability to determine the economic destiny of New Caledonia scarcely increased, despite substantial political change. For all the importance of land the economic history of post-war New Caledonia is essentially that of an increasingly externally oriented economy for markets, finance and even labour, quite unlike that of other parts of Melanesia, where the production of agricultural commodities dominates economic life. It is an economy shaped by European interests in which the Melanesian economy is peripheral and Melanesians largely remain bystanders.

Mining

The basis of the New Caledonia productive economy is nickel mining and refining and French emphasis on this industry has resulted in the neglect of other sectors of the economy, especially agriculture and fisheries. The trends of the immediate pre-war and war years, where the mining industry had grown and increasingly become dominated by nickel and the SLN, were re-emphasized after the war. Nickel has absolutely dominated the whole economy of New Caledonia. The mining industry, from its nineteenth century antecedents, became in the twentieth century an alliance of overseas (French) capital and a local (mainly landowning) ruling élite, with a significant part of its labour force imported into New Caledonia. French capital and foreign labour contributed to economic growth with minimal social and political change. The whole evolution and expansion of the nickel industry took place with only the most trivial Melanesian participation. In this it was exactly the same as the subsequent tourist industry.

In the post-war years the SLN grew to almost completely monopolize the mining industry; by the time of the nickel boom, the petits mineurs were pushed towards the background. The SLN owned two-thirds of the island's richest concessions and, with the sole smelter in New Caledonia, at Doniambo in Noumea, 'has been able to control New Caledonia's nickel production and prices as well as most of its sales', a situation due not to technical ingenuity, goodwill or financial acumen but to 'the company's ample financial resources and influential connections, its shrewdness in cornering production, the lack of alternative remunerative occupation for New Caledonians and, above all, the world shortage of nickel' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:401). New Caledonia had become a company colony where the 'very dependence on a "soulless monopoly" has been galling to the local population' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:401), despite superior employment and income levels.
The war years saw nickel production reach new heights; in 1940 a record 478,000 tons of ore were mined and, although production fell to less than 100,000 tons at the end of the 1940s, the Korean War stimulated new demand. For a territory with a product in 'virtually inexhaustible supply and for which world demand is rising' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:401), so that prices too were rising, this was the genesis of the 'nickel boom', a boom which transformed the economy and society of New Caledonia as never before. The Korean War placed unprecedented demands on the SLN, which began to develop new mines, construct a hydro-electric dam at Yate and expand its labour force. The number of employees doubled between 1954 and 1964, to reach a total of more than 3000, and its share in the non-socialist world's nickel production rose from 10 to 18 per cent (Thompson and Adloff 1971:405). By the end of the 1960s it was clear that the global nickel industry was going through a period of dramatic expansion. A series of strikes in Canada also contributed to the boom in New Caledonia. Rather more important was the Vietnam War which, as the Korean War had previously done, resulted in an unparalleled demand for armaments and thus nickel, so much so that it was predicted by President Pompidou that by 1975 the per capita income of New Caledonia would be the same as that of oil-rich Kuwait. In 1970 New Caledonia produced 120,000 tonnes of nickel, some 20 per cent of world production and second only to that of Canada, and reached a peak of 150,000 tonnes in 1971. Even critics of the structure of the New Caledonian economy could only eulogize at the time of the boom. Yet 'for a remote island which has increasingly neglected food production, the exportation of agricultural products and even local processing industries in its concentration on promoting nickel mining and smelting' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:429) the cost of the euphoria was still to come. The brief 'Caledonian economic revolution' (Brou 1979:43) set in motion a series of new mine developments, associated with the expansion of power supplies and refinery capacity, which in turn led to extensive public works programs, the expansion of the bureaucracy, growth of the construction and commercial sectors (but not agriculture) and a massive increase in the demand for labour, resulting in a new wave of migration to New Caledonia.

As always 'boom' was soon followed by crisis and, despite a brief recovery, the New Caledonian mining industry faced more difficult times in the 1970s. Low nickel prices, high oil prices, strikes at the SLN and the collapse of the US dollar, resulted in a new fall in mine production and commerce declined in its wake. Salary levels fell, French workers returned to the metropolis and Melanesians to their tribes. 'Caledonian individuality' resurfaced in opposition to France and the tightening of belts in New Caledonia encouraged new separatist feelings (Brou 1979:45). Economic decline stimulated political dissent.

Despite the disappointments of the decline, it was initially not so acute as the boom; moreover in 1978 demand for nickel began
to revive, reaching a global peak in 1979. Once again strikes at the Canadian International Nickel Corporation (INCO) factories, alongside new demands from the aviation industry, resulted in a rise in world prices; a new trade agreement gave New Caledonia half the Japanese market for the next three years. Expansion was reflected in another upturn in production (Figure 2) and foreign multinational companies, including AMAX and INCO, became involved in exploration with a view to future mining there. The extreme depression in nickel prices in the 1980s, and SLN pressure on the French government (Bradbury 1985:140), ended such dreams.

Production of nickel ore again fell steadily in the 1980s; total production in 1983 and in 1984 (2.2 million tonnes of ore) was less than half that of 1980 and exports fell at much the same rate. Over the same period the export price increased by less than five per cent; with a parallel fall in the value of the French franc (to which the Pacific franc is tied) the real value of nickel ore exports fell to even less than half that of 1970. The fall in the export of refined ore was just as spectacular; export of mattes (75 per cent nickel content) and ferro-nickels (25 per cent nickel content) halved in the same period, and the price changes were virtually identical. This collapse in the value of nickel exports has inevitably led to the contraction of the industry; the SLN closed its mining operations at Poro and even at the newest centre, Nepoui, but maintained its total output by increasing production around Thio, the main centre of the mining industry in New Caledonia.
Mining is a capital-intensive activity which has a very limited impact on the creation of employment. Even in the boom years total employment in mining, smelting, transport and ancillary activities in New Caledonia never exceeded 7000, although it did stimulate the growth of employment (perhaps by as much again) in other sectors of the economy. Chromite mining, though the second most important mining activity, employs less than 150 people. Although the employment generated by mining has been small, its importance is intensified because of the payment of wages and salaries far above those in the agricultural economy, creating very substantial income inequalities and depressing the agricultural sector. Moreover the skilled nature of many mining operations prevented, even during the boom, the entry of many unskilled local workers into the industry. Subsequent unwillingness to train Melanesians and pass on expertise has tended to maintain this situation. Thus the need for a skilled labour force at a time of rapid expansion intensified and intensified the division between Melanesians and the immigrant Europeans. Contraction of operations resulted in the decline of the SLN labour force to only 2239 at the end of 1983 out of a total mining work-force of around 2600. Of the SLN work-force 1669 were employed at the Doniambo smelter and 560 in the mines. Not only were 468 jobs lost in a single year but hours of work were reduced from 37.5 hours to 32 hours at the smelter and 35 in the mines (Terzian 1984:105) resulting in the SLN making savings but with much reduced wages and salaries flowing on to the remainder of the economy. The decline in employment in the 1980s was twice as rapid for the mines of the petits mineurs who were much less able to withstand the collapse of the world market than the SLN. As in the 1930s the SLN consolidated its position while smaller companies were going closer to the wall.

Mining concessions cover 380,000 hectares, about 22 per cent of the surface of the Grande Terre. Most of those concessions are owned by eight major companies; the SLN has 175,000 hectares. Of this vast area only a small part is actively mined. In 1971, at the peak of the boom a maximum extent of 21,500 hectares was being mined but by 1981 this had fallen to 8700 hectares. Much the most important area of nickel mining is on the east coast, between Houailou and Thio; the nickel ores of the Plateau de Thio have been continuously mined since the last century and have produced 17 per cent of all New Caledonian nickel ore. With Kouaoua and the more recent workings at Poro and Nepou, both developed largely during the 'nickel boom', this area accounted for two-thirds of all ore produced in New Caledonia at the start of the 1980s (Bird et al. 1984:12-15). These four areas produced about 80 per cent of New Caledonia's nickel, a concentration that increased after the closure of the Ouinné mine, owned by Georges Montagnat, then the largest operation of a petit mineur in New Caledonia. Further recent contractions have led to ore production being almost entirely concentrated at Kouaoua and Thio, with Kouaoua now producing twice as much as Thio.
For more than a century, opencast mining by miners and mining companies with no interest in conservation or management has transformed the landscape of the Grande Terre. Removal of vegetation and soils has emphasized the erosion caused by mining, silting and polluting rivers and creating new deltas. Degradation is most apparent in the heavily mined areas around Thio, where the mountainsides are seared by opencast terraces, little forest is left, navigation and fishing in the Thio river are no longer possible and infertile masses of sediment have slumped down hillsides; 'compared with other mining areas elsewhere in the world, the impact of opencast mining in New Caledonia has been exceptionally severe and extensive' (Bird et al. 1984:49).

Pollution from mining and forestry operations has been a source of tension in several areas. At N'goye on the east coast a new nickel mine polluted the land and lagoon of the nearby tribe for two years from 1976 to 1978, though also providing them with employment. After a series of unsuccessful protests local Melanesians struck and picketed the wharf to stop the loading of ore; when gendarmes arrived to disperse the strikers a few were injured by gunshots and stones (Ward 1982:25-6). The extent to which, here as elsewhere, there were disputes simply over the extent of pollution or with the scale of compensation and earnings is not clear. Libération Kanake Socialiste (LKS), the Kanak Socialist Liberation Party, in one demonstration in January 1983, denounced the whole of colonial economic development and its related pollution although more constant demands, including those of Jean-Marie Tjibaou (e.g. NC 5 September 1984), have pressed for greater mining diversity and, above all, the investment of profits within New Caledonia. Though there is certainly a residual view that tearing the earth open to take its riches is an offence against the land and ancestral spirits (Woodcock 1976:190), a more strongly held view is that Melanesians have been denied adequate compensation and royalties for mineral extraction. Economic goals have reduced blanket hostility to mine pollution.

The 'conspicuous devastation' (Bird et al. 1984:49) that nickel mining wrought on the landscape was accentuated by the fall in nickel prices during the 1970s which led to the end of mining activities in many areas. 'Abandoned, the hilltop mines stand as stark, derelict, unvegetated landscapes' (Bird et al. 1984:49) and only recently have attempts been made to reduce erosion. For many parts of New Caledonia landscape management has come too late; the conservation movement is insignificant and demands for reforestation come from those with little political power. 'A long-term programme of stabilization and revegetation ... is now needed to rehabilitate the landscape ecosystems of this ravaged South Pacific island' (Bird et al. 1984:52). There is absolutely no indication that such a program has even been seriously contemplated. This most exploitative form of extraction has left what is likely to remain a permanent wasteland.
After the war interest in other minerals virtually ended; the search for gold was abandoned but copper and asbestos deposits were investigated thoroughly before being declared uneconomic. Iron ore was again exported from Goro, between 1955 and 1966; large reserves remain in the south of New Caledonia but the absence of good coal has proved a disincentive to mining. Historically cobalt mining was of great importance; until 1909 New Caledonia was the major, and at times the only, world producer, although no major mining company was ever involved. Cobalt nodules were collected by *petits mineurs* throughout the length of New Caledonia from the Plaine des Lacs to Belep. Canadian production brought an instant end to cobalt mining before the war, but at the start of the 1970s New Caledonia contained 18 per cent of the world's known cobalt resources. Although seabed nodules contain a substantial cobalt component the current economic prospects for seabed mining remain poor although the future prospects for a cobalt industry in New Caledonia are considerable.

Chromite was mined continuously, and profitably, until 1964 when the Tiebaghi mine (which produced 60 per cent of New Caledonia's chromite) closed following technical problems and high production costs; new mines were opening elsewhere in the world and New Caledonia's production fell from 25 per cent of the world's output at the turn of the century to no more than four per cent before the war. During the Korean War New Caledonian chromite exports reached record levels but a spectacular decline followed; the American market was closed to New Caledonian chromite and France itself could not be persuaded to purchase more than a third of its requirements from New Caledonia because industrialists complained that it was too difficult to concentrate (Thompson and Adloff 1971:412-14). The Tiebaghi mine briefly re-opened in 1967, closed down a few months later, but opened again in 1981, with mining undertaken by a large consortium, COFRAMINE, formed from a number of other companies, including the French bank PARIBAS and INCO, who at last secured a toehold in New Caledonia. Since then production has expanded steadily, in considerable contrast to nickel, as new techniques pioneered by INCO enabled a much higher level of efficiency. Chromium exports rose from nothing to 18,800 tonnes in 1982 and 64,152 tonnes in 1984; not only did exports rise but, again unlike nickel, the price also rose. The long-term future is less certain however, with an export slump (by a third) in the first half of 1985. Virtually all current chromite production is from Tiebaghi and mining there has not been influenced by politics. Though the once-diverse mining industry of New Caledonia has now contracted to just chromite and nickel, potential diversity remains and future mining prospects may lie with quite different minerals.

For all its problems the future of the mining industry is crucial to the future of New Caledonia, which has only one dominant productive sector; Bernard Brou has thus argued that as in other one-sector economies, 'when the mine goes, everything...
goes' (Brou 1979:47). However with many Melanesians now involved in agricultural production substantially outside the formal economy and with a massively subsidized bureaucracy, the future of mining is not now so critical as it might be in an independent state or a more predominantly industrial economy. It is however extremely important. The mining industry accounted for 12.5 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 1982, far in advance of the only other productive sector, agriculture, which barely contributed three per cent (INSEE 1984a:10); these proportions have been largely maintained for the past decade. Before the boom, in 1965, agriculture contributed 10.5 per cent of the GDP and the mining industry 20.6 per cent. Although the mining sector contributed more than a quarter of the GDP in the boom years between 1970 and 1972 its contribution has since fallen, and the greatest fall has been in the processing sector, where the greatest value is added. New Caledonia continues to export largely unrefined ores, a situation typical of many ore producing developing countries.

Every study made of the operation of foreign mining operations in small national economies, all much larger and more diversified than that of New Caledonia, has revealed that substantial profits have been generated by the foreign corporations (e.g. O'Faircheallaigh 1984; Lanning with Mueller 1979; Bosson and Varon 1977). Even the most conservative of these studies concluded that 'the record of the world mining industry in responding to the needs of the developing countries is dismal' (Bosson and Varon 1977:179). New Caledonia is certainly no exception this rule. Although the mining industry has been technically efficient, that efficiency has been directed towards obtaining adequate mineral supplies for rich nations and ensuring profitability which, at times of crisis, has meant that the depression is most apparent in peripheral states where governments have been unable to acquire a reasonable share of mining profits to finance development. Where the peripheral state is a territory of a distant colonial power, this inability is multiplied because of limited political control over legislation to control the activities of giant corporations. However nickel processing has been carried out in Noumea at least partly because the territorial status of New Caledonia has hitherto guaranteed political stability and little labour militancy. Local employment if not income has thus been generated, although there is no means of assessing what tiny proportion of SLN profits has remained and been invested in New Caledonia. The Territorial Assembly of New Caledonia has never had any real impact on production and employment, trade or local investment of the mining companies, for the petits mineurs as much as for the giant SLN. As a wholly owned subsidiary of major French companies the SLN is without local shareholders. Because of the significance of the mining industry economic management of the territory has thus been restricted.
It is not therefore paradoxical that, at the time of the boom, the SLN's unprecedented prosperity and its considerable future prospects provoked further hostility to the company. The very dependence of New Caledonia on the SLN provoked antagonism. Even before the 'boom' had really begun the SLN was responsible for a third of territorial revenue and employed a fifth of all wage-earners outside the public service. Its two main shareholders, the Rothschild Bank and the Banque de l'Indochine et de Suez, the only bank in New Caledonia until 1968, were already unpopular because of their monopoly of credit facilities and their failure to invest more in the territory; the SLN too had largely repatriated its profits rather than investing them in New Caledonia (Thompson and Adloff 1971:406). Opposition to the SLN covered a wide range of the political spectrum, from the liberals and radicals of Union Calédonienne (UC) to 'the ultraconservatives, as represented by Senator Lafleur and the other petits mineurs' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:407) each, in separate ways, concerned over the SLN's failure to invest in the territory, its monopoly position (which excluded other investors) and its fluctuating contribution to employment and unemployment.

At the end of the 1960s, as the boom appeared imminent and France strengthened its support for the SLN, Thompson and Adloff commented: 'in the immediate future, New Caledonia, in return for a radical expansion of its economy, is involuntarily being deprived of its chance to gain greater autonomy, and in political terms, the price it is called upon to pay seems very high' (1971:411). That price is still being paid. The high prices at the start of the 1970s which made New Caledonia a 'small mining Eldorado' (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:73) resulted in the reorganization of the structure of the SLN, to consolidate French control of what had become an economically and strategically valuable industry in the face of increasingly interested overseas companies. In 1974 the French government through Société Nationale Elf-Aquitaine (SNEA) bought out 50 per cent of the shares in the SLN leaving half with IMETAL, which was owned by Rothschilds and the Banque de l'Indochine et de Suez. By then the SLN was the third largest nickel company in the world.

Complex and wide-ranging debates have subsequently reviewed the monopoly position of the SLN but, despite various attempts by other major multinational mining companies such as the American AMAX and the Canadian INCO (the largest nickel mining company in the world) to enter the New Caledonian mining industry, which would have involved substantial and more diverse foreign capital, the power of the SLN has never been effectively broken (Thompson and Adloff 1971:407-11; Dornoy 1984:145-9; Ward 1982:62). The nickel industry has historically proved too important to the French economy for France to risk jeopardizing its control over that industry and at times of either crisis or success it has strengthened national financial participation in the nickel industry. For France nickel has been one of the few raw materials that has earned foreign exchange; in the late 1970s half of all
nickel produced in New Caledonia was exported to France and only 15 per cent used there (Dornoy 1984:148). But now France is no longer as dependent on New Caledonian nickel as it was during the boom when the SLN provided 70 per cent of France's needs. By the mid-1980s the SLN provided no more than a third of France's nickel; the industry is no longer as crucial as it once was to France and, by the same token, New Caledonia is also much less important economically. 'Nickel exploitation is not now a sufficient reason for France to stay in New Caledonia, though the denial of the resource to other powers remains important' (Ward 1982:62). Nevertheless, through all these fluctuations, the SLN has been in the fortunate position of being virtually a monopoly producer of one of France's sole raw materials so that, despite constant pressure from a range of political and economic interests inside and outside New Caledonia, national support for the company has rarely weakened. Even with the contemporary slump in world nickel prices, the SLN has continued to dominate New Caledonia.

La Société le Nickel is now a major multinational corporation and is effectively a subsidiary of three major French companies: ERAP (which has a 70 per cent shareholding in the SLN, and is an important mining and oil exploration company), IMETAL and SNEA (both of which have 15 per cent shareholdings). SNEA is an oil company and IMETAL is predominantly a multinational steel industry with substantial interests in the United States and Brazil. Its present structure dates from 1983 when the French socialist government intervened to exert further state control over the industry; the nationalization of the Rothschild Bank in 1982 initiated this movement and each of the three shareholders in the SLN is now wholly owned by the French government. Thus the SLN is one remote part of a mixture of multinationals, primarily involved in mining operations, but wholly owned by the French state. In its turn the SLN owns the New Caledonian supermarket chain, Magéco, the company Nippon Nickel in Japan, and other subsidiaries in France. The SLN lost considerable sums in the 1980s, with the largest loss being A$100 million in 1982. In 1983 only a government loan of 700 million francs (A$130 million) kept the company in operation. This prompted the company to renegotiate its tax structure in New Caledonia, argued to be a long-standing handicap for the SLN compared with its competitors, resulting in a decision that from 1984 the SLN would only pay taxes in New Caledonia on its profits, thus substantially reducing the income generated by mining in New Caledonia, though ensuring that the SLN would remain in business.

La Société le Nickel has not been the only presence in the mining industry. The ironically named petits mineurs have always managed to retain some degree of independence from the SLN, especially after 1952 when they were able to obtain direct export contracts for ore. In the 1960s there were still some 110 petits mineurs. Only a few of these, including Senator Henri Lafluer and the entrepreneur, Edouard Pentecost, were important though
widespread wealth made 'the term petits mineurs extremely inapposite' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:403). Rationalization and consolidation in the post-boom years meant that by 1984 only five significant petits mineurs remained in the nickel industry, all exporting ore (more than one million tonnes in 1984, which was half the total production) to Japan. Small mines, like those of Pentecost, Lafleur and Ballande, have had to diversify their production to include iron ore in order to remain in business. The most prominent petits mineurs such as the four largest, Pentecost, Société Minière du Sud Pacifique (in which the Lafleur family has a 70 per cent share), Ballande and Société Noumea Nickel, all continue to make substantial profits however. In 1984, one of the worst years for mining, Lafleur's group made a profit of CFP 182 million (A$1.3 million). Moreover new companies are still being formed, most significantly Melanesian Nickel, founded in April 1985, the principal shareholder being a prominent Melanesian bureaucrat and erstwhile politician, Franck Wahuze (Buenando 12 December 1985). All the remaining companies are now working easy to operate sites, close to the sea, and benefiting from the strong US dollar; none are investing their declining profits in modern machinery and although the old machinery keeps operating costs low it augurs badly for the future of this part of the nickel industry. As long as Japan continues to import nickel ore they should remain in operation but are no threat to the dominant position of the SLN.

For more than a century New Caledonia has had an economy in which mining has been consistently important and, for the last century, it has overwhelmingly dominated that economy. Despite its recent disappointments New Caledonia is the fourth largest nickel producer in the world, nickel has consistently represented more, usually much more, than 90 per cent of all exports and the SLN is the second largest nickel mining company in the world. For the whole of this century the industry has been dominated by French companies, with the Rothschild Bank controlling the bulk of these resources and, apart from the petits mineurs, it is now wholly controlled by the French state. Local interests have largely failed to exert any influence on the activities of this giant multinational. The admittedly scanty evidence on the operations of the SLN in New Caledonia demonstrates that local investment has been minimal, and wholly directed to the future profitability of the company, because of the inability of the territorial administration to achieve adequate bargaining power and so establish policies to control the operations of a French company. Yet without that 'foreign' investment there would have been no mining industry, with all its benefits and costs. For better or for worse, the trajectory of development would have been very different.
Agriculture

Agriculture plays a minor role in the commercial economy, far behind that of mining, industry, services and administration. Agricultural development is held back by, among other things, the low cost of imports and the high cost of agricultural labour, hence it supplies less than two-thirds of food requirements. The market can only be satisfied with a limited range of local goods, such as eggs, tomatoes and lettuce, and local staples such as yams and taros; even then seasonality of production and climatic uncertainties usually necessitate some imports and a third of all vegetables and fruits are imported into New Caledonia (Antheaume 1981). For cheese and wine, there is virtually total dependence on imports from France to the extent that days following the arrival of French air cargoes are peaks in the weekly Noumea shopping calendar. Even beef, the principal agricultural product, must still be imported. Since 1956 the proportion of the workforce engaged in agriculture has fallen from 50 per cent to about 20 per cent, a quite spectacular decline, producing proportionately one of the smallest agricultural work-forces in the South Pacific and by far the smallest in Melanesia.

War-time agriculture proved that New Caledonia could be essentially self-sufficient in food production, if cost was a negligible factor and modern machinery and technical expertise were available. The Caledonians have never forgotten that subsidies once made this possible, but the boom that the agricultural economy experienced in the war years could not be maintained. Major export crops such as cotton, tobacco and sugar had already been abandoned and the disappearance of the massive military market dramatically set back the colonists. European agriculture stagnated, declined and reverted almost entirely to cattle and, to a much lesser extent, coffee production. Many farms were on the verge of bankruptcy, as the sudden rise in labour costs had prevented them paying their stockmen, repairing fences and maintaining pastures. Moreover, after exposure to higher living standards during the war, many settlers, unwilling to return to an agricultural economy that was little more than a subsistence economy, began to abandon uneconomic holdings and move into town. The mining and commercial economy offered much more.

The decline of agriculture in the post-war years, the eventual boom in nickel mining and the growth of a more urban, bureaucratic economy accompanied other changes. Education saw a transformation in attitudes among young whites and Asians towards a preference for urban, white-collar employment. Rural-urban migration, initially of Europeans, but later of Asians and Melanesians, intensified agricultural decline, especially for labour-intensive crops in the predominantly European parts of the west coast. By the mid-1960s landlords found it hard to get tenant-farmers or labour and in places like Kone the area under coffee had dwindled substantially (Saussol 1967:296-7); many of
The tenant-farmers were Indonesians and, for them especially, the 'mirage of Noumea' (Saussol 1967:296-7) was a constant dream. The disappearance of the labour force had become the 'main stumbling block of Caledonian agriculture' (Roux 1977:28). Abandonment of coffee plantations was matched by ageing of trees, degradation of soils and falling production. For a time mechanization appeared a panacea for rural development problems but, in the end, it was cattle-ranching that again took a dominant hold among the Caldoches. Migration and the virtual demise of coffee growing marked the effective end of the petits cols. The nickel boom effectively sealed their fate and there are now far fewer small, European farmers.

The last illusions of achieving a prosperous rural colony were laid to rest; the historic dreams and ambitions of Feillet had long disintegrated and earlier disappointments were duplicated in the 1960s by the failure of the pelds-noirs (former French settlers from Algeria) of North Africa to become agriculturalists. The 'illusion of the fertility of New Caledonian soils' (Roux 1977:5) was finally demonstrated in detailed soil surveys which suggested that less than two per cent of New Caledonia, mainly in the valley bottoms, was good enough for cultivation, 11 per cent was appropriate for cattle raising and only 30 per cent good enough for forestry, and much of this was prone to erosion (Roux 1977:5). Currently only 15 per cent of the land of New Caledonia is under any form of agriculture (NC 18 July 1985). In an era where nickel mining, with its high wages, achieved an absolute, if ultimately temporary, domination of the productive economy, commercial agriculture was threatened with its very existence.

The agricultural economy is significantly divided between Melanesian producers, who are primarily involved in subsistence production and coffee and vegetable marketing, and non-Melanesian producers, who are principally involved in commercial production and market gardens closer to Noumea. The traditional subsistence economy of the Melanesian villages is similar to that of village economies elsewhere in Melanesia (Chapter 8). Though many European agriculturalists also produce some of their own food, their farms are more obviously commercial operations than those of Melanesians, and they supply the majority of marketed food. There are also however massive differences between the great cattle stations of the 'landed gentry' and the tiny holdings of the small settlers, and real Caldoches, which barely produce a living. If it is the large cattle stations that characterize the rural landscape of the west coast, it is the smaller farms of the Caldoches that are more numerous, more diversified and more like those of Melanesians, even to the extent of operating at a semi-subsistence level.

The focus of production in the European agricultural sector has moved towards cattle (although this industry too has experienced decline) and cereal production. Despite the slow
growth of the local market, and the recent resurgence of food crop production (as the recession bites more deeply), the agricultural economy has become narrower. The bush has long been 'the orphan of Caledonian economic expansion' (Roux 1977:55) and there has been a massive urban bias in government expenditure. Consequently there are real regional variations in agriculture; in 1983 only two per cent of households in Noumea and 21 per cent of those in the south had any agricultural land at all. On the west coast some 35 per cent of households had agricultural land, but in the predominantly Melanesian areas of the east and the Loyalty Islands the proportions reached 63 per cent and 73 per cent. Broadly, agriculture was of greater importance to families the further they were from Noumea, although those families were not the ones that earned the greatest incomes from agriculture. Indeed, of the 8615 households who were involved in agriculture, no more than 3258 (38 per cent) sold any of their produce (INSEE 1984b). Many more than half the households in New Caledonia are therefore concerned with producing food only for their own needs, most of these being Melanesian households.

The great European owned cattle stations are all on the west coast, especially between La Foa and Pouembout, and the commune of Bourail has a quarter of all the stations in New Caledonia. Ten west coast communes produce 90 per cent of all meat (Section Economique Rurale et Statistique 1983:35-7). Large stations of more than 1000 hectares take up just under half of the agricultural area. One of the largest is that at Ouaco, owned by the Lafleur family, which at one time had a herd of 20,000 cattle (Thompson and Adloff 1971:418) and those of Bailande are not much smaller, although the largest station of all is owned by a Melanesian cooperative on the west coast. Most stations however are between 200 and 600 hectares; these are the large family stations, especially around Bourail and Pouembout, where there is more intensive use of improved and irrigated pastures and where, through the bulldozing of niaouli trees, the landscape has progressively been converted into something close to an open prairie. The prairies are subdivided into particular grazing areas, known locally as 'runs'. Although there are Melanesian stockmen there are few Melanesian owned cattle and at least 90 per cent of the cattle stations are owned by European settler families. This is an extensive system with usually less than one animal per three hectares, a low density in a denuded landscape that rankles with the displaced Melanesian population.

The actual size of the cattle industry is a source of speculation. Although the most recent official statistics suggest that in 1984 there were around 121,000 cattle, divided among some 2100 stations (NC 18 July 1985), in 1981 there were considered to be only 80,000 head of cattle on no more than 700 stations (Section Economique Rurale et Statistique 1983:35-7). The true situation may well lie somewhere in between. Of the 700 cattle farmers in 1981 only 120 kept more than 50 head and almost half
had fewer than 10. The northern communes of Koumac, Poum and especially Ouegoa, a centre of very small farmers, are mostly characterized by these tiny, uneconomic stations where cattle must be combined with other activities. Some of the smallest cattle farmers, apparently without knowledge of even the size of their herd or their income and ignorant of modern agricultural methods, were for Roux no more than 'pseudo-grazers' (Roux 1977:26). Post-war tick infestations ended the era when such farmers could survive (Saussol 1981c). Pouembout is one area where the small farming tradition has remained strong virtually since the land was parcelled out in lots of a few hectares to nineteenth century European settlers. It was one of the last areas divided into small farms and allocated to convict settlement. Many of these were never consolidated and, until the nickel boom, the 'laborious, manual agricultural work remained very similar to that of the pioneers' (Itier and Saussol 1981). Subsequently the movement towards consolidation has resulted in the transition from a rigorously egalitarian allocation of land to a much greater inequality in landownership (Table 3). Not much more than a decade ago half the landholdings in the Pouembout area were of less than 10 hectares, scarcely adequate for the needs of many farmers. Around Hienghene too, although holdings were a little larger, the steep valley land was much more difficult to put into agricultural use. At the best of times such small landholdings produced a limited livelihood; when the nickel boom offered options elsewhere they were eagerly grasped.

After the boom many cattle stations were owned by absentee landlords; some had become merely second homes, scarcely integrated into the commercial economy and in the process of reverting to bush (Roux 1977:27). Around Ouegoa, in the mountains at the head of the Diahot river, the industry had collapsed to such an extent that wild cattle roamed freely (Roux 1977:44). In more accessible places, as small farmers abandoned their farms, they were bought up by the rich and by large commercial concerns: 'land ownership is becoming a luxury reserved for those who have succeeded in the Administration. It is a form of speculation that ignores current income and depends exclusively on rising land prices' (Doumenge 1966:373). When prices fall problems emerge: 'in conformity with French tradition, land is the most obvious display of wealth. A man's importance is not judged by what he produces, but by the extent of sterile, rocky, weed-studded land he has fenced in. Some large properties receive the weekly visit of their owner in a dust-covered Mercedes or Range-Rover' (Chaville 1979b:73). Consequently it is not only Melanesians who have a reputation for laziness. The sparsely populated lands of the west coast have long been occupied by herds of low quality beef cattle. As Melanesians have pointed out, in an island of 120,000 cattle, milk producers can be counted on the fingers of one hand 'because to produce milk the Caldoches must work' (Schneidermann 1984). Nevertheless, some 94 per cent of all agricultural land is pasture, or rough grazing (NC 18 July 1985)
Table 3  Landownership at Pouembout, 1972 and Hienghene, 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property areas (hectares)</th>
<th>Pouembout</th>
<th>Hienghene</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of properties</td>
<td>Total area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-350</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-200</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2313</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and 'weekend properties' are a base for fishing and hunting as much as for agriculture. Little wonder then that Melanesian land claims on these stations were becoming more numerous and even more widely recognized as being justified.

Since the mid-1970s serious attempts have been made to establish cereal production. Cereals are much the largest food import; the coastal plains south of Bourail have become the new agricultural heartland. Between Tontouta and Bouloupari there was a sixfold increase in the area under cereals between 1975 and 1978 (Antheaume 1981), an increase which has subsequently continued with the start of Opération Céréales in 1980 and which demonstrates that, even in difficult conditions, European agriculture has not everywhere stagnated. The Tamo-Tontouta area has become 'the granary of New Caledonia' (NC 16 March 1985). As in so many other parts of Melanesia attempts have also been made to establish rice, once grown successfully at Pouebo and, until the 1960s, in extensive irrigated fields at Saint Louis on the fringes of Noumea. The construction of a rice-processing factory at Saint Vincent in 1982 failed to stimulate even experimental production (Pophillat 1984:109-12), though by 1985 commercial rice farming had again begun at Mont Dore. Despite this slow movement towards self-sufficiency, between 1973 and 1982 the volume of food imports went from 36,700 tonnes to 43,950 tonnes (an increase of 16 per cent) while over the same decade the cost of those imports more than doubled.

Coffee and copra, the only two export crops of New Caledonia, generate an insignificant proportion of export revenue. Coffee (almost exclusively a product of the Grande Terre) and copra are now almost exclusively Melanesian economic activities. Copra has been the principal source of revenue within the Loyalty Islands since the late nineteenth century and, on difficult soils, is unlikely to be replaced by any other cash crop. Almost 90 per cent currently comes from the Loyalty Islands and much of the remainder is from Belep and the Isle of Pines, though there were earlier European plantations around Hienghene and Pouebo. Coffee was introduced into New Caledonia soon after the colony was founded; it took many decades to be successfully established, though before the end of the nineteenth century it was commanding premium prices on the French market, exceeded only by the prices paid for Mocha, Réunion and Guadeloupe coffees (Parsons 1945:19). Coffee was adopted by a number of tribes before the Second World War but despite efforts to create a price stabilization fund, develop better varieties and eliminate pests, production 'in this sceptical island now indifferent to so many aborted programs' (Antheaume 1981) has been poor. At the end of the 1950s, over half the European properties had coffee plantations but 'where possible, coffee plantations had been converted into grazing land' (Saussol 1981c). Those European coffee producers who survived into the 1970s were very small farmers; 40 per cent had less than two hectares, a wholly inadequate area for economic survival.
(Even at the turn of the century, when Feillet was encouraging colonization, it was considered that five hectares was the bare minimum for success.) These were the real poor white and métis farmers like the Mitrides of the Hienghene valley (Chapter 14), long dependent on the land but with the most insecure future.

Production of both coffee and copra declined dramatically between 1960 and 1976, as the rural labour force moved into the booming mining and service sectors. Since 1960 the proportion of the total crop grown by Europeans has declined, coffee exports collapsed from over 2000 tonnes in 1957 to 390 tonnes in 1976 and have not increased since then despite major attempts to revive the industry through Opération Café (Chapter 8). Local production has now dwindled to such an extent that African coffee beans have been imported since 1983 and mixed with the coffee marketed under New Caledonian brand names; in principle coffee is imported from Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu so that it can retain its label, Café Mélanésien (NC 17 January 1985). Almost all the remaining coffee is grown by Melanesians on the east coast, between Canala and Hienghene; virtually no coffee and no copra are now grown by Europeans. Copra exports fell from over 1000 tonnes to 435 tonnes in the same period but subsequently fluctuated between these levels until 1982 when a further decline necessitated annual imports from Vanuatu to keep the Noumea copra mill in production. A once prosperous cash crop economy has disintegrated.

The number of European and métis settlers still genuinely practising agriculture in the bush is now quite small. Even at the start of the 1960s, long before the boom, Le Borgne estimated that there were only a thousand European settler families (Le Borgne 1964:175). Since then the numbers have dwindled, especially on the east coast. As elsewhere in the world modern youths are taught to regard a future in agriculture as tantamount to failure. In 1982 out of 300 New Caledonian students in France only two were studying agriculture and every one of those who had ever graduated in agriculture, and returned, was employed by the administration, which offers an income and security that cannot be found in agriculture itself (Section Economique Rurale et Statistique 1983:12), especially when land questions are unresolved. Consequently the agricultural work-force is rapidly ageing; of 12,747 agriculturalists fully 8610 (68 per cent) were more than 50 years old in 1984. Moreover the younger workers characteristically had much the smallest land areas (NC 18 July 1985) though the older farmers had restricted their investments in agriculture (NC 14 June 1984). Scarcely surprisingly the Territorial Assembly has considered various financial strategies for ensuring a more rapid turnover of properties (NC 29 June 1984). There are no accurate statistics on the current number of European settlers and farmers; one recent estimate suggests that there were about 250 settler families (PIM September 1981:14) and another suggests about two thousand people (Islands Business December 1984: 17). Settler families being large, these estimates
tally. Guiart states that the number of purely agricultural settlers, since many now have wage incomes or are engaged in commerce, is no more than a hundred to two hundred families, scarcely more than a thousand people, the majority of whom are descendants of penal settlers or malabars, living around La Foa, Bourail, Pouembout and Ouegoa (Guiart 1982b:110; 1983a:236). The 1983 census recorded 204 European (or métis) men and 41 women who were agriculturalists and 227 male and 23 female cattle-ranchers, suggesting a total of almost 500 European and métis farming families, some of whom are graziers far larger than most of the small settlers. Since the previous 1976 census recorded 970 settlers, the scale of the continuing decline is readily apparent. More important there are also many part-time farmers, perhaps primarily employed elsewhere, in small towns, but also owning a small property and scratching a partial living from the thin soil. These too are small settlers who, even when employed in town, have their homes, roots and ideology firmly in the soil; their aspirations are to remain on their homes and farms.

Typical of the larger settlers is Jules Renard, a second-generation rancher, grandson of a bagnard and owner of a high quality herd of 482 Limousin and Charolais cattle on his ranch at Nakutakoin, 20 kilometres north of Noumea (Robie 1984a:17). Renard's farm has declined in size, as part of his land has also been redistributed to a neighbouring tribe (Garofalo 1985:33). He is a relatively successful rural settler, who does not fit the stereotype of the 'Caldoche cowboy'. These are found in usually more remote regions; the sort of family described more than a decade ago by George Woodcock at Moindou, where he found 'a row of decayed cottages inhabited by depressed-looking petits blancs [poor whites], as near as life has ever come to my mind's eye picture of the poor-white crossroad centres of Tennessee' (Woodcock 1976:207). These are the real Caldoches who can rarely conceive of a future outside their own humble agricultural existence, oriented to a few hectares of poor land and a few cattle, supplemented through employment (perhaps seasonally), hunting and fishing. These small farmers, many outside the wage and salary economy, are much like rural Melanesians; without guaranteed incomes, and beyond the range of family allowances or assistance in sickness or old age. For them too, agriculture is more a way of life than a commercial enterprise. Their conservatism is unsurprising; they are 'the most insular, without secondary education, the least capable of adaptation if forced into exile, the most violent in language and the Europeans who have the most to lose' (Guiart 1983a:236-7). Insecurity over land tenure is an extra imposition that explains out-migration more easily than it can explain the bitter stubbornness with which many small farmers have clung to their meagre patches of land. It is this stubbornness that provides one popular image of the Caldoches.
Conservatism and stubbornness are manifest in forceful opposition to independence, an opposition bound up in the search for security. A Front National (FN) supporter proclaimed, 'My house, my fields, my shop, my work, it's my life. No one will try to steal it from me. We have always lived in harmony with the Melanesians. My grandfather came to New Caledonia to seek gold in the mountains ... We are Caldoches. We are the people of this land' (Garofalo 1985:41). Such sentiments are echoed by Europeans throughout the length and breadth of the bush. The Caldoches are synonymous with the conservative forces in politics, and their future is as closely determined by contemporary political events as that of the Melanesians. Yet, paradoxically, recognized by the Front de Libération Nationale Kanake et Socialiste (FLNKS) as secondary 'victims of history' they would have a place in an independent Kanaky, though they cannot accept this.

The past decade has witnessed a series of proposals and plans directed to increase agricultural production and promote rural development but, in practice, the achievements have been minimal. Despite Opération Café and Opération Céréales, measures to revitalize copra production and improve pastures, and extensive and diverse financial assistance to rural areas, the only major impact on agriculture in the post-war years was the nickel boom. Far from generating an increased demand that could be supplied from the bush, it actually led to a rural exodus, a dramatic slump in production and increased imports of goods previously produced locally. Prior to the boom the commercial agricultural economy (in 1965, for example) contributed over 10 per cent of the gross national product (GNP); by 1985 it had fallen close to two per cent. Yet even before the boom had contributed to further collapse, agriculture occupied 'such a minor position in the Grande Terre's economy that it is often forgotten that farming was the basis for European colonization there ... yet the early illusion that white men, working with their hands, could make New Caledonia into a small-scale Australia dies hard, and even today it has not been wholly abandoned' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:373). For many Caldoches the dream lives on. In terms of its economic value to New Caledonia agriculture is of trivial importance; its social significance, especially when Melanesian subsistence food production (excluded from GNP calculations) is considered, is great and wide-ranging, from the conservatism and recurrent dreams of Caldoches to the optimism of Melanesians re-colonizing their own land. Before the boom 'any hope for the improvement of New Caledonia's agriculture seems to depend on the Melanesian element of the population' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:384). For white Caledonians it was 'unlikely that enough changes could be made in existing conditions for agriculture ever to become competitive with mining in terms of financial returns' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:392). High wages and distant markets have merely emphasized this and even the size and affluence of the Noumea market have not stimulated agriculture.
The nickel boom has continued to offer better economic options than agriculture; a fraction of the land has reverted to Melanesian tenure and political uncertainty threatens the land that remains to settlers. Cattle ranching has been hampered for years by the conservatism of small farmers (most now old) and their incapacity and unwillingness to adopt new techniques, invest in the development of their properties and even maintain pastures and fences. Land claims, migration and more direct opposition to European cattle ranching, through the killing and stealing of cattle and the destruction of fences, have each contributed to the decline of the smaller cattle stations. Most Melanesians have done nothing to minimize such fears and the prospects of more successful cattle ranching, and improved meat production, continue to decline. The two basic elements of the economy, nickel and cattle, are at best static, though the small farmers have suffered most. Agriculture is as far now as it has ever been from recognizing its potential; in the hands of the remaining settlers, the dreams of Fèillet and the visions of Guyon can never become a reality. Irrevocably ownership of land and the agricultural economy is shifting into Melanesian hands.

Forestry

Forestry is poorly developed; although forests occupy some 15 per cent of the land, the same amount of land that is under agriculture; deforestation has been widespread in accessible areas. In the 1920s and 1930s timber was exported; there was a sawmill on the south coast, at Prony, and even a 30 kilometre railway to transport the timber (Firth 1944:481). But it was an extremely destructive exploitation so that, after the war, there was no more than a brief flirtation by an Australian company with matchmaking and, until the 1970s, merely indiscriminate felling. Since then there has been a more organized development to the extent that in 1980 New Caledonia produced 36 per cent of its needs and even exported timber (Institut d’Emission d’Outre-Mer 1981:34). In the last six years a belated reforestation has been carried out in a number of areas, but not without strong and violent opposition (Chapter 8). Plans to re-establish a sandalwood trade from the Loyalty Islands and the Isle of Pines, in response to renewed demands for perfumes in France and Asia, have also been largely frustrated, although 350 tonnes of sandalwood were exported, all from the Isle of Pines, in 1984 (NC 9 January 1985; cf. Douheret 1982). The forestry industry remains below its economic potential but more responsive to Melanesian land and environmental concerns.

Reforestation began on the barren Plaine des Lacs in the 1960s but was a major technical failure. Subsequent attempts to plant either Caribbean pine or gum trees have been no more successful. The Japanese firm Mitsubishi Paper Mills Limited planted 1200 hectares of pines on the Tango plateau, above Kone
(Antheaume 1981), and further reforestation was carried out on the Isle of Pines. The potential of these experiments would not have been realized for several years, and the activities of other Japanese companies in the South Pacific region suggest that there would have been minimal benefits to local landowners and none to ecology. However in 1983 the pine plantation on the Isle of Pines was burnt down, and there have been no new plantings since then. At Tango, all operations ended after 1983 because of land claims in the area. More violent still were events at Koinde, a village near La Foa. In January 1983, disputes over the pollution of a river by sawmilling led to Melanesian demands for compensation, the closure of the mill and the seizure of mill equipment. In disputes over attempts to reclaim the equipment two gendarmes were killed (Chapter 13). Since then the forestry industry of the Grande Terre has become virtually extinct though there are real prospects of a revival of the sandalwood industry. The only subsequent reforestation has been in areas ravaged by mining, and is unlikely to be of any commercial significance; almost every sawmill has closed and there was no reforestation in 1985.

A significant amount of small-scale reforestation has been carried out with the financial assistance of Fonds d'Aide pour le Développement des Iles et de l'Intérieur (FADIL) among small Melanesian family groups, often no more than five or six people planting trees on areas of less than 10 hectares a year. Like most FADIL operations (such as Opération Café) this was concentrated on the east coast, especially around Poindimie, and also Ouegoa, areas where alternative economic opportunities were very limited. However in almost every case planting fell off after the first year, partly because of radical independence sentiments in opposition to financial dependence on administrative largess, but all because of the low and long-term income generated by forestry (Kohler 1984:146) and the necessity for the income earned to be distributed in a communal manner, beyond those who had land or worked on the project (Kohler 1984:148). Thus small-scale forestry development fell prey to two virtually universal constraints on development projects in Melanesia: the need for rapid returns on investments of time, money and land and the necessity for this to be distributed widely and equitably in accordance with traditional custom. The past economy of New Caledonia, once dominated by the sandalwood trade, now bears no resemblance to the present economy.

Fisheries

Despite the considerable resources of the lagoons and seas around New Caledonia the development of a fishing industry, much like forestry, has always been a major disappointment for a colony where bêche-de-mer was once a thriving export. Commercial fisheries have remained at a fairly low level, although 55 tonnes were still exported in 1984 (NC 3 August 1985), despite expansion
in the past decade of oyster and shrimp projects close to Noumea. Trochus shells have been exported since the start of the century; New Caledonia is one of the largest producers of mother-of-pearl shell in the Pacific and Ouenghi (Bay of Saint Vincent) is one of the very few places in the South Pacific where aquaculture appears to be reasonably successful (cf. INSEE 1984a:31-4; NC 18 July 1985). In the Loyalty Islands and the north of the Grande Terre especially, fishing is an important component of the economy and crabs and other marine products are marketed in Noumea. The total annual catch is about 5000 tonnes of which only 650 tonnes is caught from fishing boats, rather than by individual fishermen (Institut d'Emission d'Outre-Mer 1981:32); most fishermen, operating in the lagoons, fish for their own consumption rather than for a local or international market. The fact that there are so many part-time fishermen has however ensured that the quantity of fish caught each year is greater than the amount of meat produced (Antheaume 1981). Professional fishermen, almost all Europeans, are based in Noumea (Cecil 1983). In recent years a number of small rural Melanesian fishing groups have begun organized commercial marketing despite European opposition, but by the end of 1984 each of these had disintegrated. One at Goro collapsed through internal discord; a second, at Ouen Island, ended after a shipwreck and a drowning and a third, at Oundjo, closed following independence pressures. The future of larger-scale artisanal fisheries is thus in doubt.

New Caledonia has not yet managed to develop a deep-sea fishing industry capable of extracting real benefit from the 200-mile exclusive maritime zone that was established in 1978. Locally based industrial fishing only began in 1981 with the establishment of a pole-and-line fishery, for skipjack tuna, by the Transpêche Company. Catches between 1981 and 1983 were inadequate to support commercial operations, despite territorial financial assistance, and the company collapsed. A new company, Polypêche, established longline tuna fishing operations in November 1983 in a joint venture with Japanese interests, aiming at the quality sashimi market and with its own base in Thio (Farman 1985). Despite excellent production figures of around 1.5 tonnes a day, massive losses at the Thio base led to the company going into liquidation in December 1984 and the base itself was violently destroyed towards the end of 1984. Yet another attempt was made to establish a commercial longline fishing operation in 1985 with the incorporation of a new company, Calédonie Kaiun, with 88 per cent of the capital from Japan and the remainder contributed by Caledonians of Japanese origin (NC 16 March 1985). Since the declaration of the 200-mile zone only Japanese longliners have been licensed to fish, although there has also been exploratory fishing by American purse-seiners tied to the massive Starkist corporation. As in the smaller states of the South Pacific the commercial significance of fisheries resources is in the licensing of coastal waters, rather than in the establishment of a domestic fishing industry. Massive
competition, protected markets, high New Caledonian wages (compared with those in Taiwan fishing fleets), the failure of fishing ventures in similar situations, such as Fiji, and the history of failure in New Caledonia all suggest that a local industrial fishing industry is most unlikely to be established. The abundance of fish, especially tuna, is in sharp contrast with the minimal significance of commercial fishing.

Tourism

Until late 1984, tourism was not only New Caledonia's second major industry, after nickel, but was steadily increasing its significance. Indeed for the previous two years it had been the only growth sector in the economy. Yet until the collapse of nickel there was no interest in tourism and the local industry, such as it was, was widely criticized for 'high prices, bad manners, unhygienic accommodation, the lack of communication and pollution' (Dornoy 1984:140-1). After the boom it was a different story; jumbo jets brought a massive increase in tourism especially from Australia, commerce grew, the number of tourists tripled in five years and by the mid-1970s there was a definite feeling that a third boom had commenced. New tourism promotion, especially in Japan (after the start of direct air services in 1974), where New Caledonia was widely advertised as 'the nearest island to paradise', and better transport again doubled tourist numbers by the end of the decade. For once, a boom appeared to have been consolidated but, despite the euphoria, from 1979 growth slowed. No new hotels of international quality were there to attract a different clientele and Australians, still the main source of tourists, were being drawn by the rival attractions of Fiji and Bali. Only the success of the Club Méditerranée, opened in the old Château Royale hotel in 1980, managed to disguise the problems. Construction of the more prestigious Le Surf hotel, with Japanese interests and the capital of Jacques Lafleur, and the movement of the casino there, scarcely encouraged growth although extensive promotion made Japan in 1983 the principal single source of tourists. An international marathon in the streets of Noumea, run for the first time in 1983, and Japanese marriages in the town hall, played their part in what was still a growth industry and one which had made New Caledonia the third most important destination for tourists in the South Pacific after Fiji and Tahiti. In a decade, tourist numbers had grown from around 30,000 in 1975 to 92,000 in 1984, a peak destined not to be passed in the following year.

If tourism contributed to economic growth, and especially to the provision of employment, it also had its limitations. Tourism is almost wholly confined to Noumea and almost all the domestic revenue generated by tourism remains in the capital. The vast majority of tourists have never seen more of the country than the 50 kilometre drive from the Tontouta airport; what they see is a
largely European environment, in keeping with promotion of New Caledonia as a part of France in the 'South Seas'. More than two-thirds of hotel rooms and all the major hotels are in Noumea and there have been few efforts to incorporate bush hotels, and especially the smaller and more traditional Melanesian lodges (gites), into the tourist itinerary. Smaller hotels, apart from those on the Isle of Pines, have remained largely dependent on either commercial travellers, bureaucrats or visits from Noumea residents. Where more expensive Noumea hotels are usually at least two-thirds filled, those of the bush rarely fill a third of their rooms. A major blow to attempts to develop rural tourism was the destruction by arson of the Relais d'Ouvea (in the Loyalty Islands) in 1983, which further discouraged developers from looking beyond Noumea. This was the last in a series of struggles by Melanesians against hotels owned by outside interests in the bush; these disputes, often based on land issues, have seen the closure of two modern hotels, the Relais de Kanumera, on the Isle of Pines, and the Turtle Club (Ile Ouen). On the Isle of Pines local Melanesians have been just as opposed to French 'tourist merchants' as they were to Americans or Japanese, on the grounds that all merely offered false promises of new riches but only alienated their land:

How did we gain from tourism?... Where is the money that we were promised [from Kanumera]? Strangers have pocketed the millions that tourists have brought to our island. And, as if that wasn't enough, they have tried to impose Club Med on us. We would be invaded and submerged without the least real benefit (Kohler 1984:98).

Now tourism to the Isle of Pines is organized around Melanesian owned gites; in a small part of New Caledonia there is local ownership, and local gain, from the tourist industry. Otherwise tourism in New Caledonia is characterized by unequal benefits and uneven development.

In the tourist literature Melanesians are reduced to the exotic background rather than participants in the industry. New Caledonia, in the best known glossy publication, is transformed into an exotic spot where men and women, 'in gay long dresses' (De Camaret 1975:21), have forgotten their traditional rivalries, inhabit a world where 'virtually everything they need is at hand' (De Camaret 1975:96) and easy earnings 'suffice to purchase the few things which are not available for the taking' (De Camaret 1975:104). Hence there are many occasions for sport, feasts and dances; 'at Lifou, every occasion is a pretext for great celebration' (op cit:101). In this tranquil and idyllic environment the Mare people 'have retained all of their traditional charm and hospitality' (op cit:92) while 'the spontaneous hospitality and courtesy of these peaceful tribespeople, who still maintain their traditional customs and unsophisticated way of life, make Lifou a charming place for
tourists to visit' (op cit:94). At Ouvea 'this perfect harmony seems to invite, even enforce, a peaceful way of life ... [and] the simple native huts, bathed by the warm tropic sun, are ideally suited to the slow pace of the day to day life of the inhabitants' (op cit:108-10). Its 'climate of eternal springtime' (op cit:118) has contributed to making New Caledonia 'a privileged island' (ibid) where Melanesians have a simple yet happy rural life. If this travesty of reality were no more than an incentive for overseas tourism, it might be less offensive. It is however much more than that; it underlies the basis of a society where the indigenous occupants, actually translated as 'the Indians' (De Camaret 1975:8) in the English version of de Camaret's text, are assumed and expected to play and enjoy a peripheral role.

If tourism scarcely benefits the bush, there must also be speculation on the extent to which the profits earned by the tourist industry benefit New Caledonia; most hotels are just one cog in an international chain, with profits repatriated to France or elsewhere, passengers travel in international airlines (and the French airline UTA has a major share in the tourist industry), with packages booked elsewhere, consuming food and drinks that are largely imported. In this New Caledonia is little different from any other part of the South Pacific where tourism exists. Yet if it only retains a small proportion of the profits of tourism the contribution to employment has certainly been substantial. Expansion of tourism outside Noumea and the Isle of Pines, a prospect which is currently unlikely, may one day result in a more self-reliant tourist industry. Relative success in conventional tourism prompted an international consortium to attempt to establish a multi-million dollar resort complex, similar to that of Pacific Harbour (Fiji), at Tiare, an isolated coastal picnic spot between Noumea and the Tontouta international airport. It was intended to include the largest hotel (280 rooms) in New Caledonía, over 400 tourist flats and villas, six restaurants, a casino, golf course and marina; although construction began in 1984, the venture ended disastrously within a year, a victim of inadequate finance and political uncertainty.

Of all industries tourism has been the most dramatically affected, and almost destroyed, by political unrest. From November 1984 there has been no tourism outside Noumea and the Isle of Pines; three hotels have been destroyed and others on the Grande Terre have been filled with either gendarmes or CRS (Compagnies républicaines de sécurité, metropolitan riot police), a situation which (until mid-1985) at least enabled the hotels to remain in business. In Noumea too, especially from January onwards, tourism essentially ended as the New Zealand and Australian governments advised residents not to travel there and even cruise liners stopped visiting Noumea and the Isle of Pines for a few months; only a fraction of the Japanese tourists remained. Ancillary travel services had become almost non-existent and the trade of restaurants, bars, discos, shops and the
casino had slumped catastrophically (a slump accentuated by the 7:00 pm (and later 11:00 pm) to dawn curfew begun in January 1985). By mid-1985 efforts to revive the tourist industry were underway. The hotels of Noumea were no longer full of riot police, advertising for the empty hotel rooms began in the Australian press in July and cruise ships had in May returned to Noumea and the Isle of Pines. Though every rural hotel had been destroyed or closed, French government subsidies, of 35 per cent of the wages of hotel and restaurant staff, were expected to contribute to recovery. Whether the image of New Caledonia, further dented by the Greenpeace furore, will allow tourism to again reach earlier levels remains to be seen. In the meantime many hotels and other services have closed forever.

Manufacturing, commerce, trade and public finance

Like most countries of its population size New Caledonia has few industries and, apart from nickel-smelting and minor agricultural processing, most of these are simple import-substitution industries (mainly food and drink) or service industries. Manufactured products include soap, cement and bottles but local production of beer, even with tariff protection, accounts for only 15 per cent of the local market. Secondary industries employ about 3000 people, and almost all are in the suburbs of Noumea. High wages, and the dominance of the mining industry, allied to the 'prestige of metropolitan and Anglo-Saxon brands among the public' (Faure 1981) have all hampered industrial development and a more diverse economy. Almost all manufactured goods are imported.

For commerce it has been a completely different story. Through diversification into transport and other activities, the business houses that had thrived during the war maintained their growth in the post-war years. Commerce grew again in the wake of the boom; over the period 1967 to 1970 the real output of agriculture rose by a mere two per cent per year while household incomes rose by 30 per cent per year. Not surprisingly food imports especially grew dramatically. In these circumstances the relatively small number of merchants were able to charge 'what the market would bear' and marked up large profits on imported goods. Benefiting from a strong monopoly position local merchants, especially Etablissements Ballande and Maison Barrau, made good profits; the nickel boom had provided a 'most lucrative existence for the small local merchant class' (Macrae 1974:38). The commercial sector has maintained its power in subsequent years, now contributing more than a third of GDP. There are almost 7500 economic enterprises but 87 per cent of them have fewer than five workers; more than half of all these are stores, mainly 'corner stores', not all of which open during regular hours. The commercial economy is still dominated by massive trading companies like Ballande, the oldest of all, which celebrated a century in
New Caledonia in 1983. Ballande is also the most diversified company in New Caledonia, having at one time or another been involved in virtually every island economic activity, now including mining, cattle ranching, coffee manufacturing, shipping (*La Chalandage*), sawmilling, metal working, wine bottling and clothing manufacture. Other large companies are also diversified and, with interlocking shareholdings, the important commercial sector is dominated by a relatively small number of individuals. Many like the late Roger Laroque, the Mayor of Noumea and chairman of *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République* (RPCR), a major shareholder in Ballande and other companies, were as prominent in politics as in business.

The pattern of trade is absolutely typical of a small primary producer dependent on imports of almost all commercial goods, notably food and machinery. At one time New Caledonia produced such export commodities as sugar and rum, niaouli oil, cotton, shells and tinned meat, but in this century these have all disappeared. Between the wars the export of minerals (primarily nickel) grew from 43 per cent of all exports in 1920 to 80 per cent in 1937 and, in the post-war years, this expansion continued until around 1960 when New Caledonia had become virtually wholly dominated by mineral exports. Even before the boom nickel exports had reached 97 per cent of all exports and in 1975 represented 99 per cent of the total, a situation of some economic risk, but one that rarely provoked concern despite New Caledonia's relatively small contribution to world nickel production. Even at the end of a decade of decline the mining industry produced exports in 1984 valued at CFP 29,621 million out of total exports of CFP 33,098 million (A$265 million). Processed ore in 1983 represented only 7.4 per cent of the weight of exports but was worth 62.9 per cent of the value, an indication of the value lost to New Caledonia from the inability to process ores locally. For the first time for many years the contribution of the mining industry to total exports in the 1980s actually fell below 90 per cent, being 89 per cent in 1984, with agricultural products and timber accounting for six per cent of all exports. The increased proportion of agricultural exports is as much a result of the fall in nickel prices as a result of any real diversification in the economy.

As the value of nickel exports failed to increase significantly through the 1970s and 1980s, the value of imports rose steadily, contributing to a worsening trade imbalance, an imbalance partly created by the high wages generated by the boom. As late as 1975 there was some equivalence between imports (CFP 27 million) and exports (CFP 25.5 million) but by 1984 this equality had long since disappeared; a considerable trade deficit existed between exports (CFP 33.1 million) which, in real terms, had declined and imports (CFP 49.6 million), mainly oil, machinery and foods, which had consistently grown. Food and alcohol comprise a quarter of all imports and the largest single item is wine. Most of the minerals exported from New Caledonia go to France (which
takes 59 per cent of all exports) and Japan (23 per cent); the only place in the Pacific region which takes more than one per cent of New Caledonia's exports is Wallis and Futuna (1.3 per cent). New Caledonia thus has a trade surplus with France and Japan but deficits with Australia and the United States, who jointly provide 29 per cent of imports. In its trade imbalance the economy is rather like that of many other South Pacific states for which Australia is much the most important trading partner.

New Caledonia's dependence on external financial assistance and overseas orientation of many of the traders operating there also make it similar to other small South Pacific countries. This was apparent in the immediate post-war years when high production costs and a shortage of consumer goods, combined with large amounts of money left over from the war-time boom, stimulated inflation and led to a sharp rise in prices; some members in the Territorial Assembly were critical of the local administration for failing to enforce price controls and enabling 'certain merchants to make scandalous profits' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:425-6). Opposition to the grip of these traders on the island economy and demands that they re-invest their earnings locally won the first electoral victories for Maurice Lenormand and the UC in the early 1950s. Yet despite electoral opposition profits continued to be transferred to France and traders continued to dominate both the local economy and the Territorial Assembly. Distance from France has however reduced French ability to control the export economy, and trade with the United States and Australia, but not attempts by the Assembly to force the mining industry to devote more of its profits to local development (Thompson and Adloff 1971:467). One way or another there has always been substantial financial leakage from the New Caledonian economy.

With New Caledonia in the franc zone and the same banks operating in Paris and Noumea, the extent to which income generated in New Caledonia has filtered overseas can never be known. But certainly there is a broad consensus that profits, especially from the nickel industry, have gone elsewhere (Woodcock 1976:191). The real wealth of Ballande, Pentecost, Lafleur, and other companies and individuals, has for a long time been sheltered in Australia (Guillebaud 1980:125) and Jacques Lafleur alone is reported to have invested CFP 350 million (A$2.8 million) in a chain of petrol stations in France (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:88). Large companies and small European income-earners have used exactly the same tactics, exporting capital and purchasing properties in Australia (in Sydney or on the Gold Coast), New Zealand, Tahiti and Monaco and there has also been a flight of capital through Vila in Vanuatu (Guiart 1983a:234-5). In the increasing uncertainties of the 1980s the 'flight of capital' has substantially accelerated though it 'is not only political but also a function of the poor performance of the Caledonian economy' (Guiart 1983a:275). There is no doubt that much of the income generated in New Caledonia has been repatriated to France, or
diverted to Australia, in savings and investments and that this sum is more than equal to French expenditure in the territory.

The changing structure of employment from primary production to the service sector has paralleled a movement towards dependence on French financial assistance, with no real prospect of achieving self-sufficiency beyond a few areas of food production. The only recent growth sector of the economy, tourism, is largely dependent on the external global economy (although the problems of late 1984 demonstrated that local events could exert a powerful negative influence) with much of the infrastructure externally owned. Much the same is true of commerce. Even more important is the massive French national control of public finance, including the money supply and the guidelines for public investment. Foreign investments up to 20 per cent are automatically allowed, those up to 49 per cent are subject to local approval and those over 49 per cent are subject to approval in Paris. Only in the still-born fishing industry have investments of over 50 per cent hitherto been permitted.

By far the most important elements of the budget of New Caledonia are direct contributions and grants from France; in 1984 the total territorial revenue amounted to CFP 21,549 million (A$185 million), of which CFP 6527 million (30 per cent) was a direct payment from France. For 1985 this direct contribution was expected to be CFP 8630 million (29 per cent) out of a total of CFP 29,765 million. This is only the bare bones of more widespread support, into a number of special funds such as Office de Développement de l'Intérieur et des Îles (ODIL), which may take direct payments close to CFP 10,000 million. Direct budgetary assistance also finances all territorial development programs, including public works, health and primary education, although it has been estimated that two-thirds of this direct assistance is used for the salaries of bureaucrats, including police and the military (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:85). Within New Caledonia income is generated by direct taxes, on income and capital gains, and indirect taxation on imports and exports. The belated introduction of income taxes in 1982 substantially increased the proportion of income generated locally though the low level of taxation has reduced its impact. Perhaps even more important, in financial terms, than any other source of income, but more difficult to assess, is indirect French expenditure in New Caledonia. Thus the French national budget finances health, education and the police force, while every commune is funded by the Fonds de Fonctionnement des Communes in the same way that all French municipalities are funded. Consequently education and health are both free. Although it can be argued that France has an oversupply of teachers and bureaucrats, and their deployment to New Caledonia reduces unemployment, there is no question that these funds could be spent elsewhere, either in France or in other Départements d'outre-mer and Territoires d'outre-mer (DOM-TOMs), French overseas departments and territories. Estimates suggest

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that this indirect French expenditure may be more than CFP 10,000 million, and thus more than the direct contributions (L. Peeters, pers. comm. 1985). By any standards, both directly and indirectly, France makes an enormous financial contribution to the administration of New Caledonia, more than half the overall budget, and also to the operations of the SLN, a contribution that an independent state could never obtain elsewhere. Lack of financial autonomy implies lack of political autonomy'.

Employment

The structure of employment and unemployment reflects the composition and fluctuations of the economy, and especially the transition away from primary production. As late as 1956 agriculture accounted for half of the work-force (Table 4) and before the nickel boom it still provided more than a third of all employment (Table 5), but by 1983 it accounted for less than a quarter of employment and no more than about five per cent of the wage labour force (Table 6). Mining, which accounted for more than one-tenth of all employment at the time of the boom, had fallen to only two per cent in 1983 and was still falling. Manufacturing too lost workers. By contrast the two major components of the service sector, commerce and the public service, had gone from employing little more than 31 per cent of the work-force in 1969 to rather more than half of it some 14 years later. The changing structure of the wage labour force alone reveals the massive expansion of the public service in the past decade. Even the crude employment statistics dramatically reveal the shift away from a productive economy to one that, through its service component, has become much more externally dependent.

Though the nickel boom gave a massive boost to the commerce of New Caledonia it was in the administrative sector that there were the most spectacular gains. The bureaucracy doubled in size after 1970. The various branches of the administration employed 10,000 people by 1982, a fifth of all those in the wage labour force, but contributing virtually half the wages and salaries of New Caledonia (INSEE 1984a:10). Not only is this an extraordinary proportion of the wage labour force, but in the past decade wages in this sector have been growing faster than in any sector, and far beyond the level that can be supported by the economy of New Caledonia itself. Consequently French public finance has gone from 47 per cent of the administration's total resources in 1977 to 56 per cent in 1982 (INSEE 1984a:10). Despite its considerable resources of minerals, and even its agricultural and fisheries potential and present production, New Caledonia has become a state propped up from outside. In this it is little different from other French DOM-TOMs, including French Polynesia, or the smaller, and most dependent, states of the South Pacific, such as Niue, American Samoa and Guam.
Table 4 Agricultural workforce, 1956-83

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Europeans and mixed race</th>
<th>Melanesian</th>
<th>Polynesians and Ni-Vanuatu</th>
<th>Vietnamese and Indonesians</th>
<th>Total agricultural work-force</th>
<th>Proportion of total work-force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>1,274</td>
<td>9,446</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>11,235</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1,280</td>
<td>9,179</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>11,130</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>1,153</td>
<td>11,605</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>13,010</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>11,979</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>13,169</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>8,648</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>9,670</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The agricultural work-force in 1976 and 1983 was taken as those people classified in the census as agriculteurs, éleveurs or ouvriers agricoles. This last category includes a small number of forestry workers (22) and a small but unknown number of fishermen, but the inclusion of these gives the 1983 figures greater comparability with those of earlier years. There was some under-enumeration of Melanesians in 1983.

Table 5  Employment by economic sector, 1969-83

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>1969</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1976</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1983</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, fishing, forestry</td>
<td>13,357</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>13,564</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>9,888</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mines and extractive industries</td>
<td>3,552</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>2,110</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction and public works</td>
<td>3,777</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>4,475</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>2,725</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and electricity</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing (inc. smelting)</td>
<td>3,745</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>5,469</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>4,519</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and communication</td>
<td>1,942</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2,632</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2,659</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce, banking, real estate</td>
<td>4,524</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>6,458</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>11,416</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public service</td>
<td>7,817</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>11,338</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>12,901</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39,185</td>
<td></td>
<td>46,689</td>
<td></td>
<td>44,842</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: In 1983 employment in mining was included under manufacturing. The overall fall in employment between 1976 and 1983 is partly explained by under-enumeration of Melanesians in the 1983 Census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and fishing</td>
<td>1,465</td>
<td>1,609</td>
<td>2,289</td>
<td>1,324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction and public works</td>
<td>2,576</td>
<td>3,193</td>
<td>3,453</td>
<td>2,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>4,677</td>
<td>4,503</td>
<td>4,470</td>
<td>4,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mines</td>
<td>1,578</td>
<td>1,601</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>1,153</td>
<td>1,256</td>
<td>2,172</td>
<td>1,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>4,476</td>
<td>4,524</td>
<td>5,454</td>
<td>5,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks, real estate, etc.</td>
<td>1,897</td>
<td>2,523</td>
<td>2,244</td>
<td>2,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public service</td>
<td>4,782</td>
<td>7,155</td>
<td>5,310</td>
<td>8,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3,622</td>
<td>3,910</td>
<td>5,308</td>
<td>3,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26,797</strong></td>
<td><strong>30,910</strong></td>
<td><strong>32,222</strong></td>
<td><strong>31,422</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:**
The largest ethnic group in the active population in the 1983 census was European, with 20,354 (45 per cent) workers out of a total of 44,842 while Melanesians with 16,345 workers represented 35 per cent of the total labour force. The largest remaining ethnic group in the work-force were Wallisians and Futunans with 2423 workers constituting only five per cent of the total work-force. When the ethnic proportions of the paid labour force are analysed separately there are considerable differences between the two main groups. No comparable information on this was collected in 1983 but in 1976 the Melanesian component of the wage labour force was only 28 per cent, compared with the European component of 46 per cent and the Wallisian and French Polynesian components of seven per cent each. The professional component of the work-force is particularly dominated by Europeans (INSEE 1976). However the Melanesian proportion of the wage labour force has grown since the war, particularly during the nickel boom, and it is probable that Melanesians now represent about a third of the wage labour force, though mainly in unskilled and poorly paid sectors.

In 1952 only 540 Melanesians were employed in the mining camps but four years later they constituted a fifth of New Caledonia's wage earners (Thompson and Adloff 1971:443); in 1969 as the boom got underway Melanesians actually constituted 30 per cent of the wage labour force (Thompson and Adloff 1971:465) but their participation in the wage labour force has failed to increase since then. In 1973 some 65 per cent of employed Melanesians were working as either house servants or labourers while only two out of 860 executives were Melanesians; two years later the number of executives had grown to 1148 and the number of Melanesian executives to 26 (Tjibaou and Missotte 1978:17). This pattern was even truer in the public service where, at least in 1972, only 501 out of 4700 employees were Melanesian but almost a third of these were monitors, the lowest possible level in the education service, a grade created for the exclusive employment of Melanesians (Doumenge 1982:395). Melanesians are in lower-paid, lower-status jobs both relative to Europeans and also to migrants from other French territories (including Vanuatu); both Europeans and French Polynesians moved consistently up the job scale between 1962 and 1970 but Melanesians did not (Macrae 1974:46-7), a situation which has scarcely changed. In 1976 few Melanesians were employed in the private sector (relative to Wallisians and other migrant groups); they remained the smallest group of salaried workers and formed less than one per cent of the employer class (Ward 1982:17-18). Towards the end of the 1970s it was argued that there were no Melanesian doctors, lawyers, economists or engineers, with only seven Melanesian university graduates and one secondary school teacher (Gorodey 1978:69). Of the 860 high-level and 650 middle-level positions throughout the formal sector in New Caledonia, only two and seven respectively were occupied by Melanesians (Huetz de Lemps 1981:68). There was evidence that this was slowly changing. By 1981 there was one Melanesian
doctor, one architect, and one journalist (Kohler and Pillon 1982b); progress is slow and skilled Melanesians remain conspicuous by their absence.¹

Recent census data in a number of key categories emphasize that these kinds of inequalities have been maintained. Of the 177 managers of businesses with more than 70 workers, no more than four were Melanesian and 156 European. In the liberal professions (lawyers, doctors, architects etc.) not a single Melanesian was recorded in a total of 246, although Vietnamese, Indonesians, Tahitians and Wallisians were all represented; similarly only 12 out of 504 lecturers and secondary school teachers were Melanesians. In the professional categories Melanesians are best represented in the general teaching service, where they make up 25 per cent of the work-force, and in the highest level of the public service they took up 59 (nine per cent) of the top jobs (INSEE 1984b:185). Only in the public service have Melanesians made any inroads on the higher levels of the modern sector.

Tentative recent attempts have been made to encourage greater Melanesian participation in the modern sector, almost entirely through accelerated promotion in the bureaucracy, through a widely supported Promotion Mélanésienne. Circumscribed in its actions and with little funds its contribution was limited (Ward 1982:48-9) although, since the start of the 1980s, more Melanesians have been employed, especially in Noumea. In contrast to the independent states of Melanesia, where there have been specific attempts to achieve a localization of the work-force (through the replacement of expatriate labour), there has been no 'localization' policy in New Caledonia since no statutes legally differentiate Melanesians from other races, all of whom are French citizens. Apart from very obvious quantitative differences in participation in the wage labour force there are also clear qualitative differences: 'Europeans are mainly in positions of responsibility, Melanesians carry out the most basic tasks; such is the product of a century of colonial history' (Doumenge 1982:382). Although the composition of the work-force is changing these changes are scarcely marked by any significant social mobility of Melanesians.

Explanations for the limited participation of Melanesians are numerous; they include a long history of job and racial discrimination, less adequate education and a lack of training, geographical location away from Noumea or other employment centres, the costs and anomy of urban life and, in part for these reasons, a preference for rural, agricultural life. Yet Tjibaou has pointed out that a lack of interest in vocational training is not solely due to either unemployment or to a fondness for village

¹The sole Melanesian doctor, who went on to obtain an academic doctorate, married a metropolitan Frenchwoman and lives and works in France (NC 20 March 1985), a pattern of emigration not unusual for other skilled Melanesians elsewhere in the Pacific.
life but to the reactions and attitudes of owners of small businesses 'who, a priori and systematically, relegate Melanesians to the status of unskilled labourer. Temporary work is his province' (Tjibaou and Missotte 1978:18). In almost every way Melanesians are caught between a European and a Melanesian world; educated in a foreign language the young naturally aspire to the material rewards of a European world yet the unequal results of education and uneven access to prestigious or well-paid employment quickly blunt the hopes and enthusiasm of all but a few (Pillon 1985b). In a sense the young 'stand at the crossroads of two opposed trends' (Kohler, Pillon and Wacquant 1984:28): one of social differentiation, through their uneven integration into the commercial economy, and one of homogeneity, through their acceptance of Melanesian nationalism and coutume and hence the more communal and cooperative structures of rural socio-economic life. Though Melanesians have participated in every sector of the European capitalist economy, even if in a limited or temporary manner, their identity remains associated with a rural life-style and a specifically Melanesian economy. Melanesian employment in New Caledonia thus contrasts with that in independent Melanesian states where a pre-independence situation, similar to that in New Caledonia, has largely given way to one where only some of the most skilled jobs remain in European hands.

The relative deprivation of the bulk of the Melanesian population is obvious yet it is extremely important to note that 'for more than half a century there has been in Noumea a "white" proletariat, a rare situation in the tropics' (Doumenge 1982:406) and, in the South Pacific, virtually non-existent outside New Caledonia. Of the 1983 European labour force, at least 1173 (six per cent) were officially unskilled labourers and many others had minimal skills. Nowhere else in Melanesia is it possible to find European waiters, garbage collectors or street cleaners, a situation that constantly amazes Pacific islanders visiting New Caledonia for the first time. Some are employed at the minimum wage level, which in mid-1984 was CFP 330 (A$2.80) per hour, hence unskilled workers usually earned weekly incomes of CFP 13,000 and upwards. This white proletariat, the petits blancs, invariably long resident in New Caledonia, often without rural ties, and most prone to unemployment, are necessarily strong competitors with Melanesians for jobs, and constitute one more explanation for limited Melanesian participation in the lowest rungs of the modern economy. Most are wholly dependent on the continuation of the present economic system, with a subsidized service sector, have rejected attempts to be unionized by radical unions such as Union des Syndicats des Travailleurs Kanaks et Exploités (USTKE), the Union of Kanak and Exploited Workers, and see no future for themselves in an independent Kanaky.

Although the decline in the nickel industry over the past decade has thrown many workers into unemployment, the social costs have been cushioned by the ability of many Melanesians to return
Table 7 Unemployment, 1976, 1981 and 1983

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1976</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>1983</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total work-force</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noumea</td>
<td>22,558</td>
<td>1,696</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belep</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bouloupari</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourail</td>
<td>1,059</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canala</td>
<td>1,539</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumbea</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farino</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hienghene</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houilou</td>
<td>1,353</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaala-Gomen</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kone</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kourmac</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Foam</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifou</td>
<td>3,572</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mare</td>
<td>1,633</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moindou</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mont Dore</td>
<td>3,493</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ouegna</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ouvéa</td>
<td>1,348</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paitsa</td>
<td>1,101</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pialata</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointizé</td>
<td>1,082</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ponenhouen</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pouebo</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pouembout</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poya</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarraona</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thio</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touho</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voh</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yate,</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooma</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50,469</td>
<td>3,780</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In 1976 Poom was included with Belep.

to rural areas, and by the availability of unemployment benefits, a rare phenomenon in the Pacific islands. The 1976 census recorded 7.5 per cent (3780) of the labour force as unemployed (that is, seeking employment), of whom 62 per cent were in the greater Noumea area (which includes Mont Dore, Dumbea and Paita), and 45 per cent were in Noumea itself (Table 7). A substantial proportion of the remainder were in declining mining towns such as Thio. The rates of unemployment by ethnic group are very similar to the overall distribution of population with the sole exception of French Polynesians who constitute five per cent of the population and eight per cent of the unemployed. Potentially high Melanesian unemployment rates have been minimized by the movement of Melanesians back to the rural areas, ending their search for employment.

A further study of the unemployment situation in 1981 (Clair et 1981) revealed that the number of unemployed had increased to 7383, of whom less than half (2806) were in Noumea. Although the ethnicity of the unemployed was not recorded, 58 per cent were born in New Caledonia and only 12 per cent in Wallis and Futuna or French Polynesia, suggesting that the proportion of Melanesians unemployed was greater than five years earlier. However, those hitherto employed or partially employed in the traditional economy have become more likely to register as unemployed because of the introduction of unemployment benefits. By 1983 the unemployment rate had reached 10 per cent and fully 50 per cent of the unemployed were Melanesians compared with 26 per cent who were Europeans (NC 30 April 1985). Unemployment has certainly grown in the present decade and there has been a worsening of the situation for youths, many of whom are qualified but unable to obtain a first job. It has been calculated that it is necessary to create between 1500 and 2500 jobs per year for new entrants into the labour force, a level that is far from being achieved. In the middle of 1985 unemployment was as high as it had ever been, accentuated by the problems of the previous months, the arrival of new school-leavers on the job market and the continued structural problems of the economy. Political and economic problems had become intertwined.

All employment statistics inevitably emphasize the differences in quantity and quality of employment between Noumea and la brousse, differences established a century ago, accelerated by the nickel boom, continued in subsequent years, as tourism and the public service grew, and re-emphasized in the turmoil after November 1984. In 1983 some 60 per cent of all wage and salary employment was in Noumea and between the end of 1983 and the end of 1984 this wage labour force increased by 3.2 per cent while that of the bush fell by 6.8 per cent (Direction Territoriale de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques 1985:34). Almost all the better paid and most prestigious jobs are in Noumea. Not surprisingly 79 per cent of managers of businesses with more than ten people were in Noumea, compared with only five per cent on the
east coast. Likewise 85 per cent of lecturers and secondary school teachers were in Noumea. It is readily apparent that the professions dominated by Europeans are those most concentrated in the capital;

the closed racial power structure is the basic condition for the reproduction of the Caledonian socio-economic system, since it enables the conservation intact of a situation of virtually full European employment in Noumea, the prerogative of Europeans for almost a century, and the maintenance of political ties with France whose financial support guarantees an artificial quality of life for Europeans, and thus the survival of the tertiary economy of the town (Wacquant 1985b:2).

The overall decline in rural employment and European tenure of the best jobs in Noumea demonstrate the very severe problems of uneven and unequal development in New Caledonia.

Incomes and welfare

There are enormous differences between European and Melanesian living standards in New Caledonia. In 1965 it was noted by Les Comptes Economiques that half the population, the Melanesians, earned at the most a quarter of aggregate household income, but that this was reasonable since, when converted to a per capita figure, it put Melanesians at the top of the per capita income table for 'developing countries' (cf. Macrae 1974:43). Others have been less impressed by the logic of this argument and have observed maintained and increasing disparities between Melanesian and European incomes. As Macrae consequently observed: 'this separation of the population into two different groups, with different standards applied, despite the fact that some members of each group do exactly the same job, reflects a serious form of discrimination on the part of the official bureaucracy' (Macrae 1974:43). It is becoming harder to obtain some kinds of statistics on the different ethnic groups, more because of the widespread official recognition that such data draw attention to grave inequities than because of any concern over discrimination.

In post-war years one of the first detailed studies of income levels recorded Melanesian incomes in three reserves near Pouembout, Houailou and Ponerihouen; although there were substantial variations in incomes in the one year (1954), according to wage incomes and the area under coffee, most households had a cash income of less than CFP 1000 (A$9) per month from coffee. Men could earn up to CFP 350 (A$3) per day working in the mines hence these agricultural incomes were sometimes supplemented. Even including the estimated value of subsistence production, such incomes were between ten to fifty times less than those of urban Europeans (Guiart 1981) and five to twenty times
less than rural Europeans in the same area (Anova-Ataba 1984:134-5). The most ambitious and hard-working rural Melanesians could rarely earn as much as an unskilled labourer with the public works department (Rocheteau 1968:64-5). The nickel boom resulted in a dramatic increase in wages and salaries, and a sharp fall in the significance of agricultural production for income generation. Between 1970 and 1972 annual Melanesian rural incomes ranged from CFP 27,500 (A$250) near Hienghene in 1970 to CFP 60,000 near Canala in 1972; in Hienghene agriculture contributed 22 per cent of the income but around Canala it contributed no more than 11 per cent and, in other places, was less than 10 per cent, with wage incomes averaging three-quarters of all incomes (Doumenge 1975a:185-91). By then a mere eight weeks of wage employment would generate as much as a whole year’s coffee production.

There is limited information on both recent Melanesian rural incomes, and on the composition of those incomes. A detailed study of the 328 tribes of New Caledonia (237 of which were on the Grande Terre) found that in 1976 some 11.5 per cent of males aged over fourteen were receiving wages or salaries mainly from employment on public works with the administration or on nearby mine sites. In at least ten tribes there was not a single wage earner whereas in a few tribes, mainly close to towns, more than 50 per cent of adult men were employed (Coulon 1982:17). Not only were a small but significant proportion of Melanesians employed but welfare payments and the remittances of wage-earners elsewhere made a welcome addition to the wages of local workers. Thus the incomes of rural Melanesians came, in the mid-1970s as it does a decade later, from a variety of sources, of which agricultural production is now only one small part.

In 1981, a decade after the boom, the average annual household income of Melanesians was CFP 894,000 (A$7039) compared with that of Europeans of CFP 2,271,000 (A$17,881) and Wallisians of CFP 1,600,000 (A$12,598). This distinction was much less striking in Noumea where the average European income was CFP 2,443,000 and the average Melanesian income was CFP 1,240,000. When non-monetary production is included in income statistics the disparities are reduced (Table 8). In the period 1969 to 1981 average Melanesian household cash incomes increased by 32 per cent and Wallisian incomes by 20 per cent, compared with European increases of 18.5 per cent (NC 10 December 1982), although because of the existing disparities, there are now greater income inequalities than there were before the boom.
Table 8 Household incomes, 1980-81 ('000s CFP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Europeans</th>
<th>Melanesians</th>
<th>Wallisians</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>2433</td>
<td>1240</td>
<td>1596</td>
<td>1622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1625</td>
<td>1137</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>1776</td>
<td>1373</td>
<td>1545</td>
<td>1761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanesian tribes</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 'Urban' includes only Noumea, Mont Dore, Dumbea and Paita.
b. 'Mine' includes Kouaoua, Poro, Nepoui and Thio.
c. Pillon uses 'Melanesian localities', here translated as 'Melanesian tribes', rather than the Secteur traditionnel of the original. This survey included non-monetary production, estimated at just over 20 per cent of total production, in Melanesian tribes.


Variations in household size further emphasize the disparity between European and Melanesian incomes, to the extent that individual European incomes in 1981 were just four times those of Melanesians. However, comparing incomes in a similar environment (such as the mines) shows that the variation between income levels is relatively small, as limited access to the high incomes of commerce and bureaucracy, rather than any wage discrimination, primarily results in these ethnic income variations. Even so in all sectors of the economy, Melanesians do earn lower incomes; workers in reforestation of the Tango plateau received in 1979 an annual wage income of CFP 260,000, but Melanesians averaged CFP 195,000 and Wallisians CFP 418,000 (Kohler 1984:48).

Prior to the introduction of income tax at the start of 1982, local revenue was principally generated through taxes on imports and exports. Wages below CFP 200,000 (A$1600) per month are effectively not taxed; above this level taxes start at 10 per cent for the first CFP 200,000 and increase beyond that according to a sliding scale. This extraordinarily low income tax level, alongside various fringe benefits, especially in the bureaucracy (Doutrelant 1985c) and government, remains, as always, one incentive for French migration to New Caledonia though, in October

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2 Dick Ukeiwe, as President of the Territorial Assembly, was receiving tax-free allowances of CFP 230,000 (A$2000) a month in addition to a salary of around CFP 1,000,000 (A$8850 a month, in 1985.
1985, despite objections from the new Congress, the scale of direct taxation was significantly increased. Indirect taxation, through taxes on consumer goods, has consequently been extremely high and has thus disadvantaged the poorer sections of the population, primarily the Melanesians (Dornoy 1984:135). Income differences therefore reflect broad differences in the consumption patterns and life-styles of different groups.

As might be expected from the scale of income disparities there is a wide variation in access to services between ethnic groups and between Noumea and elsewhere. These variations apply as much to services supplied by the administration as they do to the purchase of other goods. For example, although three-quarters of all households have piped water, this proportion is heavily biased by the situation in Noumea, where 98 per cent of households have piped water, compared with the Loyalty Islands, where only a one-quarter of houses have piped water. On remote islands like Ouvea and Belep not one household has piped water (INSEE 1984b:24, 124). In Noumea 93 per cent of homes have internal toilets, compared with only eight per cent for the Loyalty Islands (INSEE 1984b:29, 129). Similar proportions relate to sewerage, and these patterns of distribution have been slow to change; in Poindimie, on the east coast,

although Melanesians were 72.8 per cent of the population, the white-dominated municipality directed funds towards western luxuries such as a swimming pool, whereas tribal paths were regularly impassable due to floods. Some villages have no running water and electricity and Melanesians must carry bags of coffee for kilometres (Dornoy 1984:51).

while in Noumea, parking meters line the busy streets of the shopping centre. Every lift in the country is in Noumea; 53 of the 69 houses with swimming pools are in Noumea or Mont Dore and only three such houses are on the east coast or in the islands (INSEE 1984b:124). Though such variations reflect life-style preferences they also reflect both territorial expenditure decisions and real income variations.

Household goods are even more unevenly distributed; 92 per cent of Noumea households have a refrigerator, but only 10 per cent of Loyalty Island households have one and the proportion is even less in the more remote primarily Melanesian communes such as Belep (eight per cent), Pouebo (seven per cent) and Hienghene (nine per cent). The same kinds of proportions apply to cars; in Noumea 74 per cent of households have cars compared with 25 per cent in the Loyalty Islands, 18 per cent at Hienghene and one lone car on the island of Belep. Similar patterns recur for televisions, washing machines and all kinds of household conveniences (INSEE 1984b:30-1, 130). While it is possible to find colour television aerials attached to traditional thatched
houses, it is just as likely that such homes will lack toilets or water supplies. The areas that are most remote from Noumea consistently record the lowest levels of ownership, nowhere more so than Belep and Ouvea in the islands, and Hienghene and Pouebo on the Grande Terre. And yet, even by the mid-1970s, more than 18 per cent of households in the tribes had vehicles (two per cent having more than one) and more than 11 per cent had refrigerators, since there has been an electricity supply to some tribes from around 1970 (Doumenge 1982:254; Coulon 1982:17). This level of access to consumer goods, and the extent of service provision in rural New Caledonia, is vastly in excess of even the more affluent parts of rural Melanesia outside New Caledonia. Moreover it is only in some inland and island areas, and on parts of the northeast coast of the Grande Terre, that the houses, styles of dress and way of life bear much more than a passing resemblance to other parts of Melanesia.

By the mid-1980s more than 80 per cent of Melanesians from the Grande Terre were living in 'the bush', scattered through more than 300 tribes, some remote even from roads, let alone possessing many modern goods or access to services. Inaccessibility, discrimination and uncertainty all limited Melanesian access to the material world and nowhere is this more apparent or more crucial than in education. Secondary schools were only opened to Melanesians in 1958 (Tjibaou and Missotte 1978:22), nearly eight years after the first secondary school opened in Noumea, and it was not until about 1961 that the first Melanesian passed the baccalauréat (the French high school leaving examination). Around 1962 the first Melanesian gained a university degree and in 1965 there were six Melanesian scholarship-holders studying in France (Thompson and Adloff 1971:501). Though numbers slowly increased, in 1974, of 118 students from New Caledonia in tertiary education in France only ten were Melanesians (Roux 1974:200) and only a handful had degrees. In 1976 some 16 per cent of the Melanesian population (aged over 14) living in tribes were illiterate (Coulon 1982:17) but the proportion varied considerably from place to place; in Ouahate tribe (Voh) no less than 58 per cent of the adult population were illiterate. Closer to Noumea the situation was better. Between 1974 and 1981 the high school drop-out rate was so great that only two per cent of all Melanesian school children took the baccalauréat and only 0.7 per cent (some 15 students in seven years) actually passed. By contrast some 22 per cent of European children reached this level and 17 per cent passed (Dardelin 1984:18-19). Other measures of education record the same situation.

Access to education has been quite different for Europeans, Melanesians, and Wallisians and Futunans. For the whole of New Caledonia the proportion of the population that has never been to school (although many of these are still too young) varies from 11 per cent for Europeans, to 23 per cent for Melanesians and 25 per cent for Wallisians. (Allowing for different demographic
structures marginally reduces these disparities.) As always such ethnic differences are reflected regionally, where 15 per cent of the Noumea population had never been to school compared with 21 per cent for the country as a whole. For secondary education the disparities are much greater; 43 per cent of all Europeans had received some secondary education, compared with 22 per cent of Wallisians and only 15 per cent of Melanesians. The further one moves through the education system the greater the disparities become; although seven per cent of Europeans, almost all in Noumea, had had a university education neither Melanesians, with 89 former students, nor Wallisians, with only 11 former students, had enough graduates to reach one per cent of their respective populations. Indeed fully 3764 (90 per cent) of those 4160 who had left university, or some other form of tertiary education, were Europeans (INSEE 1984b:87,179). Moreover Kohler and Wacquant record that in 1983 there were no more than 46 Melanesian university graduates (1985:1676) suggesting that half the Melanesians who began university never finished. For Melanesians however educational success has actually been greatest in the outer islands, especially Lifou, where most Melanesian teachers are based, and the Isle of Pines (Dardelin 1984:113; Pillon 1985b) both islands being almost entirely Melanesian environments.

Education in New Caledonia has hitherto followed the scarcely challenged proposition that it would be oriented along European lines, founded on a basis of individual technical knowledge and administered through the French language, often with metropolitan teachers. Success in this system would enable economic and social mobility in the modern world. However, in practice, success has contributed more to the breakdown of Melanesian society than to success in the European world; as an old Melanesian from Netchaot recorded:

The young have schools now but they have forgotten Kanak culture. These youths are just like the balls of bulls, swinging between their legs. To the old people they say that they have the education and customs of Europeans; with the whites, they say that they have Kanak culture. But they know nothing of Europeans and they know nothing in the tribe (Kohler and Wacquant 1985:1654).

Even so schools are seen by young Melanesians largely as 'instruments of exclusion' (Kohler, Pillon and Wacquant 1984:12). In part fuelled by discontent over Melanesian 'failures' in this education system, and in part stimulated by a desire to have a more appropriate education system, emphasizing Melanesian values and languages, the educational system has increasingly been subjected to criticism. More overtly political criticism has followed in pursuit of Melanesian cultural claims (reven dispensation culturelle) and the desire to maintain Kanak identity, though the vision is as much moral and cultural as purely political. 'Education - the content of curricula, staffing etc - is, along
with land, the most important focus of Kanak protest and pressure, leading to boycotts, sit-ins and other forms of challenge to the authorities' (Ward 1982:49). Indeed education and land are two central areas where European and Melanesian values intersect and conflict, hence in the resurgence of Melanesian nationalism at the end of the 1970s the idea of Kanak schools (Ecoles Populaires Kanaks) was more widely supported and, in 1985, a small number of Kanak schools were established on the east coast. The educational system has thus clearly demarcated Melanesians as second-class citizens and the much vaunted virtues of the French educational system have failed to contribute to social and economic mobility.

If education is not merely a basic need but, for Melanesians in New Caledonia, a symbol and a means of access to an alien world, then there are other basic needs, such as health, where similar if less entrenched inequalities exist. Just as in education, health services are maintained in Noumea at metropolitan French levels and although in rural areas standards are more like those of other Pacific countries there are rapid transfers to urban hospitals. Specialized treatment can necessitate referral to Australia and the emergency transfer of patients (évacuations sanitaires) is a customary feature of air services between Noumea and Sydney and a symbol of France's determination to ensure a high level of service. The health status of New Caledonia is much higher than that of neighbouring, though more tropical, Melanesian countries and the structure of disease is more like that of temperate metropolitan countries, as the main causes of death have become such 'modern' problems as cardio-vascular diseases and traumatic injuries (including alcoholism), rather than leprosy, which once plagued Melanesian and European alike. Nevertheless there are vast differences in the health status of Melanesians and Europeans, in part a function of urban bias in the provision of services and the cost of those services. Mortality rates are quite different between ethnic groups. In 1980 some 66 out of 99 infant deaths were Melanesian, mainly in the rural areas and mainly of respiratory diseases, compared with 12 deaths of wallisian infants and seven of Europeans (Corail 7 May 1982). Although the overall New Caledonian infant mortality rate of 25.2 (1979) may well be one of the lowest in the South Pacific, though little different from that of Fiji (29.0 in 1978), there are great disparities between Melanesian and European rates. Between 1963 and 1968 Melanesian age-specific death rates were consistently double those of Europeans and the infant mortality rate was more than twice as high (Macrae 1974:47-8). The most recent data show that the Melanesian infant mortality rate of 40 compares extremely poorly with the European rate of eight, contributing to a situation where Melanesian life expectancy is 59 compared with 72.5 for Europeans.

In two of the most fundamental elements of development, education and health, there are disparities between Noumea and rural areas, but even more massive disparities between European
and Melanesian levels (with other ethnic groups in between). These welfare differences are in part a function of the massive income differences between the two groups and in part a contributor towards them. Although Melanesian income, health and education levels are all increasing, the disparities are continuing to widen with respect to Europeans, so that although in each case levels are generally higher than in most other parts of Melanesia, there remains a real experience of deprivation. In the global context 'they might even be seen as privileged, but on the scale of the Territory the great majority are simply of no account' (Doumenge 1982:235). The consolidation of the capitalist system, especially during the nickel boom, has emphasized and solidified the contrasts between Europeans and Melanesians and this relative deprivation is a source of bitterness and contention. On all available social and economic indicators disparities were and still are considerable; radicalization through labour migration has increased the perceptions of these differences and the resentment of them.

Development

Unlike the majority of French colonies before the war, New Caledonia had a long-term plan for economic development that has actually been carried out in part. This twenty-year plan, drawn up in 1925 by a committee under Governor Guyon, emphasized infrastructural development to increase the productivity of remote white settlers but lasted for less than a decade; the whole concept of planning was abandoned until after the war. In 1946 the FIDES (Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Social) was created and a new plan again emphasized infrastructure, but for social and mining development rather than agriculture. A second plan, drafted in 1953, gave greater emphasis to agricultural development, in line with the general reorientation of all overseas plans to increase the productivity of individual territories, but still favoured mining development (Thompson and Adloff 1971:479-82). Inevitably the rural areas, and especially the Melanesian population, fell behind the steadily growing prosperity of the capital. Even before the nickel boom 'all the dynamism of the island was concentrated in Noumea' (Saussol 1967:305) and the conclusion of a decade ago, that 'the prospect that New Caledonia will become "Noumea et le désert Calédonien" is perhaps more threatening now than ever before' (Brookfield 1972:105), has been effectively validated. Noumea is the most industrialized city in the South Pacific, solely because of the presence of the nickel works and is, in most respects, a modern French city with a variety of amenities and social services that emphasize the difference between Noumea and every other part of New Caledonia. The French malaise is replicated on a smaller scale in its colony. Noumea is the only major city, being many times larger than the next largest town, Bourail, and virtually monopolizes many national activities, such as shipping,
manu fac turing, tourism and commerce. Modern cultural activities are also concentrated in Noumea and the growing dominance of Noumea in New Caledonia is perhaps the most important phenomenon of post-war economic and social change in the country.

A series of territorial plans has provided no more than loose guidelines for development. The last of the ten-year plans, the Dijoud Plan, was launched in 1979 (for 1980-90) providing broad outlines for the growth of the nickel industry, other parts of the economy and cultural and social activities, the achievement of which was dependent on New Caledonia remaining a French territory. It was an ‘extraordinary document, a mixture of subtle and not-so-subtle blackmail couched in the worst kind of French politico-official rhetoric, promising everything to everybody, yet at the same time threatening economic reprisals if the promises are not greeted with enthusiasm’ (Spencer 1985:24). The plan included proposals for restructuring and diversifying the economy, with an emphasis on coffee growing, a new nickel plant, tourism, fishing and all the infrastructure that goes with economic development. Land would be increasingly returned to Melanesians and education would include a greater local component. The plan was the first to recognize the unsatisfactory situation of Melanesians in New Caledonia and to aim at reducing the gap (Ward 1980:195-6). As Ward records, Dijoud deserved credit for being ‘the first French minister ever to openly acknowledge that the position of many Melanesians is one of humiliation and despair’ (Ward 1982:38), despite the paternalism of the plan where Melanesians were ‘to live happily as Melanesians, to live happily as Frenchmen’ (Dijoud 1979:124). Current political developments and pressures on France for substantial reforms emphasize the transient nature of long-term planning in the present political climate; however some of the reforms incorporated in the Dijoud Plan (such as some land resumption and the creation of a Melanesian Cultural Institute) have been achieved, at least in part. After lengthy discussions in Noumea in 1983 the production of the first three-year plan for New Caledonia was finalized. In the agricultural sector self-reliance in meat and vegetables was regarded as an immediate priority (with self-reliance in timber, coffee, fruits, cereals, poultry and goats as medium-term objectives). Diversification of the economy was again stressed and a related theme was that of a greater dependence on local resources, especially in the area of energy. The second major aim was that of achieving greater decentralization of economic activities (including service activities) from Noumea to generate employment in a wider area; decentralization was expected to be based on a combination of agricultural and tourist development, with the establishment of regional centres at Koumac, Bourail, Poindimie and We (Lifou), pious aims which have not been translated into practice. Here as in France, ‘planning suffers from the usual French chasm between theory and achievement’ (Ardagh 1982:129); poles and axes exist only in theory and development objectives have never been able to escape from the
assumption that simply achieving economic growth would meet the needs of the whole population.

Emphasis on the growth of the economy, and especially the nickel industry in the 1970s, created an imbalance in economic development and disinvestment in the agricultural sector and, only recently, have steps been taken to redress these. Inequalities in income distribution and welfare are more acute because they are most clearly distinguished between Europeans and Melanesians in terms of landownership (on the Grande Terre), education, prestigious modern sector employment and the material rewards of the consumer society. There have been no redistributive mechanisms: there were no income taxes until 1982, the social security system was appropriate to a purely European life-style (cf. Macrae 1974) and the indirect tax system has been regressive in its impact. Though Macrae suggested in 1974 that solutions to these inequalities might be resolved by increased investment in agriculture, specifically by the creation of market-oriented tribal cooperatives and the deliberate creation of a class of modern Melanesian farmers, it now seems more probable that these issues will eventually be resolved primarily by political rather than economic means.

Although the Dijoud Plan recognized specific Melanesian development problems it was an exceptional occurrence. Earlier plans had examined development problems without reference to race and through this, and the emphasis on mining development, had effectively ensured the continued marginalization of the Melanesian population. Even the agricultural economy, in which Melanesians constitute more than 80 per cent of the work-force, is still primarily characterized by meat production, which remains primarily a European activity (and Melanesians have a typically marginal role as stockmen) whereas the elements of the rural economy that are characterized by primarily Melanesian production, coffee and copra, are slowly declining. The whole economy is typified by continuous European control of the key elements, minimal movement of Melanesians into these areas and the maintenance of a characteristically 'dual economy', with many Melanesians only peripheral to the commercial economy, residing on what is left of their own land in the reservations. Economically, socially and geographically Melanesians are largely apart from the mainstream of the modern economy; inequalities in every arena emphasize this marginality.

Nickel mining is now going through one of its worst depressions in two decades, a crisis made worse because a bust has followed a boom, in which there was virtually full employment at high wages. Chromium, and perhaps cobalt, alongside nickel, still offer hope for the future of the mining industry in New Caledonia. The depression in nickel is more than paralleled by the depression in the principal component of the agricultural sector, cattle ranching; domestic beef production fell steadily from 1979 to
1983, even before the climate of uncertainty intensified to produce a further downturn in 1984. Yet in the Melanesian sector of the agricultural economy the situation is little different; only absolute necessity for rural incomes ensures that commercial production continues. In difficult transport conditions on the east coast the current prospects are poor. Forestry and fisheries, at different scales, have also experienced severe problems. Almost all these rural development activities have been frustrated by land issues. More extensive land claims have added a new dimension to the difficulties of rural development. The third element in the economy, tourism, the great hope of the past decade as a replacement for nickel, has come to an almost complete standstill. All the major sectors of the economy, whether in terms of production, employment (except in the bureaucracy) or income-earning opportunities, are simultaneously in a difficult situation so that New Caledonia is experiencing perhaps its worst economic crisis ever, to the extent that the French government set up in 1985 a Comité d'Aide au Redémarrage des Entreprises (CARE) with widespread powers and finance to re-establish or assist businesses that were experiencing severe problems. In a number of cases, such problems (apart from tourism) would have been little different without political friction. Political issues have merely emphasized what has become an increasingly artificial and dependent economy, tied to France and isolated from the rest of the South Pacific.
Chapter 8

A Melanesian economy?

In a colonised country the concept of separate development is a fraud: an imposture and nothing more. In the colonial context any account of development must be incorporated into a perspective on the future of Kanaky. If not it's a waste of time, simply 'new-look capitalism'. What is currently important throughout the Kanak region is not a plan for the integration of Kanaks into the colonial economy; on the contrary it is the establishment of basic economic units for the construction of Kanak socialist independence. ... The land of our ancestors begins to speak again, after 130 years of silence. Independence comes from the land; independence is our land (Anon 1985b:9).

The distinctions between rural Melanesian life-styles and the urban multi-ethnic realm of Noumea cannot be explained simply by economic organization, where capitalist relations shape urban life and custom prevails in rural life. Rural Melanesians are inevitably incorporated into the island economy through wages, taxes, pensions, medical assistance, education and a variety of legal and institutional means; they have been for much of the present century. The nature and extent of this incorporation, and changing relations with the world economy, affects the whole of life and is the source of political debate and nationalist struggles. Though in every sphere there had been a greater degree of rationalization and secularization, Melanesian rural life especially has retained a distinctiveness, much more like that of other parts of Melanesia than the artificial economy of Noumea.

There is no longer a traditional Melanesian economy; the broadly self-reliant economies of pre-contact times have long given way to dependent monetized systems where commerce, even if limited in extent, plays an important role in providing key necessities. The Indigénat served to draw Melanesians into a 'modern' society where money and material consumption challenged customary social ties; as the cash economy was stimulated in the reservations, wants became necessities and capitalist relations became more important. Yet customary social ties remain strong; traditional exchanges of yams, mats and other goods are essential to the ceremonies that mark all the key transitions in life, from
birth to death. Though money may play only a small part, some exchange relationships, such as bride-price, are substantially monetized, though money incorporated into coutume is quite different from its commercial form (Guiart 1985b:2132-3). Social life is defined by relations between extended households and lineages in which even the dead play a part, and households possess considerable autonomy in terms of their economic activities. Supernatural sanctions influence rural life and govern relations to the land through the lineage. The most urbanized Melanesians can never escape the constraints of the rural social environment even if, in the urban workplace, they are men and women seemingly dominated by the values and rewards of a European life-style. The quantitative monetary economy, and imitations of dress, accent and manners (Memmi 1965:13), cannot wholly disguise the retention of a qualitatively different Melanesian life-world. There are elements of a 'dual economy' where traditional social values dominate Melanesian rural life and where Noumea exemplifies a modern commercial economy with little place for custom. The two elements of the economy are inter-related though one dominates and shapes the other; most Melanesians have experience of urban life and wage labour and nowhere in New Caledonia are there villages where money plays no role.

The nickel boom was a fatal blow to rural Melanesian economic life, as much for food crops as for coffee and copra, and even the economic difficulties of the 1980s have not enabled a revival. In the light of modern wage levels labour inputs into agriculture have been devalued and even artificially supported coffee prices remain less attractive than the combination of remittances and welfare payments. Cattle and the traditional food crop system have retained a greater vitality, and marketed vegetable production has more recently been incorporated. Here the frustrations of low incomes are offset by the social significance of root crops in exchanges and the prestige of cattle ranching. Changing economic circumstances are intimately connected to pressures for land, demands for political change and fluctuations in the world economy. These changes pose challenges and alternatives to those, on the one hand, who see the need for a more capitalist form of Melanesian rural economy, where cash cropping can be revived to supplement the incomes and remittances of those in the predominantly wage economy, and those, on the other hand, who favour a withdrawal from the capitalist system, dominated by French interests, to a more self-reliant economy, shaped by Melanesian values that would be more corporate and cooperative than competitive and capitalist. The choice and maintenance of different strategies have ensured a great diversity in Melanesian rural life.
Food crops and yam cycles

The evolution and structure of the traditional subsistence economy are similar to that of village economies elsewhere in Melanesia, although the extent of cash crop production is often less substantial. Development followed the necessity for cash incomes and the desire for greater independence on Melanesian land. Yams and taro are the basis of the agricultural system although the intensive systems of the past, 'the apogee of technical elaboration' (Brookfield with Hart 1971:115), have given way to a more extensive and diversified agricultural system and a greater dependence on purchased food, especially where land is inadequate for local needs. In some reservations land was always particularly poor and in others, even before the war, the population density was so high that attempts to develop agriculture were restricted by population pressure on limited resources (Guiart 1981). Even so rural Melanesians had established a viable economy in most parts of New Caledonia, with agriculture a combination of coffee or copra and food crops. Cattle have more recently been introduced into many reservations but market gardening is widely handicapped by steep slopes and the inaccessibility of the only real market in Noumea. Consequently market garden produce and fish are more regularly brought by air from the Loyalty Islands tying these more distant islands more closely to the commercial economy than much of the Grande Terre.

The subsistence agricultural system has changed following European contact. Yams remain the basic root crop and their symbolism has been largely unchanged by more than a century of Christianity and modern education; through them the complex ties to the soil remain crucial for social life: 'food crop cultivation remains absolutely divided: there are yams and the rest' (Doumenge 1981b). Yams are still of fundamental nutritional importance and the yam cycle is the calendar cycle. Years are measured by yam harvests and harvesting and planting are ceremonial occasions. Even so the decline in the available labour force has led to the introduction of less labour-demanding crops such as cassava and sweet potatoes; foods without soul or spirit. Fallow times have everywhere been reduced with land and labour shortages and, throughout New Caledonia, food gardens were declining in size and significance at the end of the 1970s (Doumenge 1982:275) although, in the last few years, economic difficulties have stimulated some revival. In some respects the contemporary Melanesian agricultural economy is no more than a 'pale replica' (Doumenge 1982:86) of pre-contact systems.

Yams rarely cover less than 40 per cent of garden areas and usually cover much more than half the area. Taro, by contrast, an equally labour-intensive crop, now rarely covers more than 10 per cent of the agricultural area (Doumenge 1982:289-99). Inevitably long hours are spent on yam cultivation and Pillon found that in an east coast village, as recently as 1982, with the broadest
definition of economic activity, yams alone took up more than half (54 per cent) of work time, compared with no more than 18 per cent of work time being spent on coffee growing (Kohler and Pillon 1983b:29-33) though this was the only real source of income within the village. Subsistence activities are invariably carried out first, using intensive techniques, and coffee plantations only tended when time remains (Kohler and Pillon 1983a; cf. Guiart 1985b:2129). The widespread and continued significance of the more reliable and necessary subsistence agricultural system is rarely more apparent than in this division of labour.

Coffee trees, planted by people who are now old, have become a part of the landscape and even a link between the living and the dead; no longer are they merely a European introduction, they have become part of a more traditional environment. One constraint to the modernization of coffee cultivation is that old coffee trees may not be cut and destroyed because they have been planted with the sweat of the old. New land must be found for new trees (Kohler and Pillon 1982a:43-8). Simultaneously coffee trees are both symbols of conservatism, linking the living to the dead and people to the land, and symbols of change, where a plant of great commercial importance has, in only half a century, become part of an established order. Coffee growing has influenced subsistence agriculture; it encouraged a more fixed pattern of land use and upset the strict customs concerned with yam and taro cultivation. But, more important, in the early post-war years, 'tempted by the profits made from their cash crops and disappointed by the production from their gardens, certain villages continue to extend their coffee plantations to the point of neglecting their subsistence crops completely' (Barraud 1955:135). In this minor coffee boom, associated with free migration, Melanesians acquired more individual wealth and, for the first time, owned their own shops, though as elsewhere in Melanesia, the depredations of family members gaining free access to goods ensured that they were often short-lived. They did however entrench Melanesian participation in the commercial economy. Food crops slowly lost some of their importance and have been replaced by rice, flour, soft drinks and tinned foods, a transition widespread in the South Pacific. During the east coast blockades at the end of 1984 there was an extensive return to the consumption of garden foods, a withdrawal accepted by the old but hated by children, grown accustomed to a softer, sweeter diet. The indépendantiste party LKS, have argued that this new food dependency has political implications; 'the introduction of rice, tinned beef casseroles etc... has overturned Kanak society because these products have been introduced to create dependence as part of a politics of cultural assimilation led by the west' (LKS 1984). For all that, one journalist recently found Kanak militants at a roadblock near Thio 'lunching on baguettes (long loaves of bread) and tinned pate de foie gras' (McDonald 1985:16). In this dietary transformation is the most visible evidence of the encroachment of the consumer society, yet to go beyond this and query 'is there a single
Melanesian who has never been in debt to the grocer, the car dealer or the television salesman?' or to state that 'on Lifou custom has degenerated in the face of a higher bid' (Anon 1976:43) is largely nonsense. Although it is probable that in most areas Melanesians could still achieve an adequate subsistence economy, based on root crop production and supplemented by fishing and hunting (Roux 1977:23), it is just as certain that few if any would wish to withdraw so far from the monetary economy as to be without such foods as rice, tinned fish, sugar, tea, and alcohol.

The transition from production to consumption is partly explained by the arduous and boring nature of agricultural work. Agricultural work is neither easy nor characterized by long periods of leisure, a situation sometimes reflected in the seasonality of work. Again, in Mare, where the natural environment is particularly difficult, the word for summer (Gucahaw) also signifies 'the hungry time' (Anon 1976:40), a situation quite remote from the 'subsistence affluence' once thought to characterize Melanesian agricultural systems. Although collective work, with traditional rewards of yams, continues to influence rural life, not only in agriculture but in house construction and the whole range of social activities and responsibilities, it has slowly given way to cash payments for more individualized labour. The blame for this movement away from coutume is attached to the young; 'the kids want bread and butter; how can I give a taro to a shopkeeper in exchange for butter?' (Kohler and Pillon 1982a:79). In New Caledonia, as in other parts of the South Pacific, collective agricultural labour has become rarer and the rewards of labour are monetary. With this trend comes the slow but inevitable decline of the solidarity of historic communities; less often is the clan or the tribe the basis of social and economic activity. The extension of capitalist relations of production into Melanesian environments has necessarily influenced social relations; thus the widespread transformation of extended families towards nuclear families, apparent throughout the South Pacific, has also occurred in New Caledonia (Doumenge 1982:192). Nuclear families have increasingly become units of both production and consumption, and have further declined in size with wage-labour outside the village (Kohler and Pillon 1983b:54-69). At every level cooperative activities have slowly given way to individualism.

Cash crops and cattle

Only cocoa of the three classic cash crops of the South Pacific - cocoa, coffee and copra - has never been grown in New Caledonia, where the climate is too cool for success. Coconuts, present long before European contact, enabled copra to be the first real Melanesian commercial success, but copra production declined steadily after the war. For most of the present century coffee, actually pioneered by Melanesian producers (Guwart
Coffee production on Melanesian reservations reached its peak around 1955, although in more remote tribes, plantations continued to expand. Expansion slowed first in the south, closer to Noumea and the mining towns, where there were markets for labour and vegetables. After 1960 there were no new plantations around Canala (Doumenge 1975a); further north, around Hienghene, it was reported that in 1965 every bit of available land had been put under coffee though, in this 'last active bastion of coffee cultivation', there were still some new plantings until around 1970 (Saussol 1979a:348). The nickel boom precipitated a rapid decline in the south and the centre as coffee-growing withdrew northwards. Almost all (more than 90 per cent) of Melanesian coffee production comes from the east coast and in 1976 fully 62 per cent of coffee came from the four communes between Hienghene and Ponerihouen (Roux 1977:58). There is little incentive to maintain small plantations and, at best, coffee is often harvested only from half-abandoned plantations. The decline is striking since coffee for many years not only represented almost the sole means for many Melanesians to obtain cash, but was the only important source of income from Melanesian land, a situation of symbolic rather than merely economic importance.

The end of the nickel boom, and the return of many Melanesians to their reserves, suggested that renewed attempts at rural development might be successful. In an attempt to diversify the economy, and create more rural income-earning opportunities, the territorial administration launched in 1978 Opération Café to revive the flagging coffee industry. It aimed at getting 2000 new hectares planted (two-thirds on the east coast) in ten years, all of new high yielding varieties, to reach a production level of around 3000 tonnes (more than six times the existing production) by 1990. Although the operation was aimed at economic development in those Melanesian areas severely affected by the recession an even more basic concern was 'to help dam the oncoming tide of Melanesian nationalism' (Kohler and Pillon 1983a:2). By the end of 1983, halfway through the program, only 334 new hectares had been planted and the program had effectively ground to a halt. Indeed the start actually coincided with a decline in coffee production so that coffee exports, despite their high quality, were negligible by 1982. However the recent recession has stimulated new interest in coffee; there were reports of bumper crops and production in 1985 and the revival of abandoned coffee.
plantations closer to Noumea. In 1983 Canala produced more coffee than any other commune, as alternative sources of income dried up.

The average age of Melanesian coffee planters is now more than 40 and from a normal sized holding of around 0.25 hectares, even with substantial labour inputs, no more than a monthly CFP 5000 (A$40) can be earned, scarcely an attractive income compared with what had been expected and promised (INSEE 1984a:22). Although recent official figures suggest that the mean coffee holding is around 0.5 hectares, in practice the official figures disguise many traditional subdivisions and extreme fragmentation of plots (Roux 1977:41; Guiart 1985b:2132; Pillon 1985a). Incomes from such tiny holdings are small, even when coffee prices are high and, by contrast with incomes from wage labour, coffee is seen as no more than a last resort in times of recession. In a context where agricultural incomes are often viewed unfavourably, and where the apparently superior incomes and conditions of wage labour are readily apparent, few Melanesians are anything other than reluctant to invest land, labour and income in the rural sector. In a dual economy, where the income-earning potential of the two sectors is so different, it makes little sense for most Melanesians (and métis and Europeans alike) to invest time and effort in the rural sector, for other than social reasons. For many Melanesians, though social reasons are important, the 'fast money' of wages has become preferable to the 'slow money' of cash cropping.

Copra production remains important, especially in Ouvea (where two-thirds is produced), but has never generated large incomes, although the versatility of the coconut ensures its continuity. Beyond copra and coffee there have been few Melanesian attempts at cash crop cultivation. Nevertheless perhaps as much as 20 per cent of all food produced by Melanesians entered the market system in the 1970s; most of this came from the Loyalty Islands, initially largely from Lifou where the cooperative SOCAL had its own shop in Noumea (Antehaume 1981). More recently food has come from the more traditional island of Mare where life has been less transformed towards a European consumption pattern. Mare farmers exported 10 to 15 tonnes of food per week to Noumea in 1983, mainly yams and sweet potatoes (ODIL 1984:43). On the Grande Terre, only around Canala, where citrus fruits are grown, and Pouebo (where pwango bananas are in great demand), are there successful alternatives to coffee production by Melanesians (Kohler and Pillon 1982a:32). For all its problems nothing else is profitable. The roadside stalls that proliferated along the east coast of the Grande Terre until the end of 1984 were laden as much with shells and handicrafts as agricultural produce, a measure both of the limited commercialization of Melanesian agriculture and the dominance of coffee in Melanesian commerce.
Much of the land regained by Melanesians has been used for cattle grazing, nowhere more so than around Houailou where land areas are reasonably large (e.g. Anon 1985b). Melanesians have also established cattle projects in the Loyalty Islands, which has an advantage over the Grande Terre in being free from cattle tick. The use of land for extensive grazing enables more difficult decisions on the division of land between clans or individuals to be avoided to a much greater extent than would be possible with more permanent cultivation though, for many Melanesians, cattle owned by other Melanesians are just as threatening as those of European colonists. On balance, cattle ranching holds much more interest than agriculture. At the start of the 1980s about a thousand Melanesian households were involved in raising around 12,000 head of cattle. Just as elsewhere in Melanesia, despite the enthusiasm that has often accompanied early initiatives, cattle husbandry has tended to be a visible symbol of modernity rather than a real source of income and has remained peripheral, in almost every sense, to Melanesian life.

On many reservations land pressures are considerable and still increasing as populations grow by natural increase and return migration; there is considerable reluctance to plant coffee where land for food crops may become scarce and land inequalities generated and entrenched by permanent tree crops. Such situations provoke strong feelings on the scarcity of Melanesian land and while they contribute to more numerous land claims (cf. Kohler and Pillon 1982a:74-5), they have not precluded some Melanesian individual ownership (Chapter 9). An imposed peace has prevented redistribution of land after local warfare and, through reservations, stabilized land tenure. As elsewhere in Melanesia the young find access to land for cash cropping difficult and earlier coffee plantations have effectively frozen most of the good agricultural land in the reservations thus accentuating considerable inequalities in landownership between clans and between individuals (Doumenge 1982:305-8). In some areas where planting has been continuous, fallow times have dwindled or disappeared so that land has become sterile, a situation emphasized by the natural poverty of many soils. To produce both food and income the need for land has increased and pressures for land have intensified, to meet real needs and political ends. Disputes over land have thus also increased and commercialization of agriculture has become more difficult.

Attitudes to the commercial economy

Melanesian attitudes to economic development are varied and two separate approaches are in broad opposition. Those who value the land and traditions particularly highly place a strong emphasis on conservation of the environment and, through that, retention of customs and old, well-tried social values. In most parts of New Caledonia, just as in most other parts of Melanesia,
they are in a majority. On the other hand there are those who recognize that New Caledonia is irrevocably moving into a modern world, who recognize some of the virtues of a monetized economy, and who are willing to accept some of the risks of disruptions, and the dissolution of custom, that new economic enterprises make inevitable. Their minority status is in part a result of the strong Melanesian attachment to the land. But few Melanesians absolutely reject the consumer society and although traditional views may dominate, modern practices tend to prevail.

Because Melanesians now own so little of the land of New Caledonia, disputes over tenure are, and will continue to be, greater than anywhere else in Melanesia. In all areas there have been strong claims for more land and widespread fears that development projects, especially reforestation, will permanently alienate land essential to the needs of an expanding population. At the same time there have been clear demands, most obvious in the tourist sector, for Melanesian ownership or majority share in the development and operation of local resources and economic activities. These conservationary barriers to new forms of entrepreneurship have prevented many modern economic developments outside the Noumea area. The land is the only resource unequivocally owned by Melanesians and attitudes to the retention, expansion, exploitation and alienation of land underlie economic and political development.

Attitudes to coffee cultivation are ambivalent. On the one hand it can be seen as a means of income generation and hence economic development which, because of its heavy demand for labour, can also result in the retention of traditional cooperative work groups on corporate plantations, an approach which offers some continuity between 'traditional socialism' and a more modern variant (Kohler and Pillon 1982a:164). Coffee is also seen as having replaced (and still replacing) a more crucial food production system, having introduced commercial relations to production, and having led to inequality between individuals and groups and, in each of these ways, establishing the downfall of the traditional economy by marginalizing the Melanesian people, a situation that might be attributed to coffee's colonial origins (cf. Joseph 1977:126-7). Consequently to achieve a transformation of the organization of coffee production, where the profitability rests with wider groups of Melanesians (even at the mercy of the global economy), necessitates a substantial restructuring that would be beyond the scope of even an independent Kanaky. In these circumstances coffee cultivation is viewed with suspicion by some, with hope by others, with frustration by those with inadequate land and with a degree of inevitability by all those who have contemplated strategies of rural development.

Melanesian attitudes to economic development, and its relationship to ownership of the land and its resources, are well illustrated in the case of forestry. Plans for reforestation,
even if bringing employment to remote rural areas, have been seen merely as attempts by the administration to prevent both land claims and the relocation of the population of the reserves onto nearby ancestral lands; old memories die hard and are quickly and easily relived. As one Melanesian from Netchaot (above Kone) observed, 'it is simply to prevent us returning to our land that the administration has discovered the pine tree, and wishes to take the land through the forest and encircle the reservation with trees (Kohler, 1984:16)'. A land claim for part of the Netchaot area was rejected not long before reforestation began; that forestry there should eventually fail because of intensified land claims (Chapter 7) seems no more than poetic justice.

In its turn the pine, seen virtually as an alien agent of the administration, has been denounced as a wholly useless tree, unlike the native niaouli, with its many traditional uses, which has been systematically destroyed in the forestry program. A diversity of species in a balanced ecological system has disappeared. Attitudes to the change in trees is symptomatic of attitudes to wider ecological changes:

Europeans have already ravaged our country with mines which bring us Kanaks nothing. Will they do the same with the pine, in the places where there are no minerals? The rubbish from the mine tracks and excavations already fills our streams and kills the fish and prawns; even our gardens are covered with sterile waste... But the Europeans don't want to listen to Kanaks, because they think they are merely animals, but who knows better than they the land of their ancestors, their country? We have been defeated so often. Who can tell the damage the pines will cause? We should not listen to the words of mere birds of passage, since their promises mean nothing. Didn't they tell us that snails were good to eat and would bring us money, but now where's the person who introduced the snail? It's we, the poor Kanaks, who can no longer grow and eat our yams because of snails, and who don't have the resources to get rid of them. Europeans can always get their food by boat or plane (Kohler 1984:19).

As on the Grande Terre the same feelings were expressed on the Isle of Pines (Kunie): concern over the loss of older native trees, with their variety of uses, uncertainty over the ecological effects of the pines (and fears that it might be like the lantana scrub, imported to the Isle of Pines and now rampant everywhere) and anxiety over any innovation imposed from outside (Kohler 1984:102-4, 112-14). The pine forest has become 'a means of technological domination, in the hands of a system that destroys land and with it the ecological system inherited from the ancestors... These views remain strong and demonstrate the deep and widespread resistance in the Melanesian world to a system seen as serving an expropriatory colonial power' (Kohler 1984:65). The
Monotonous pine forest is a powerful metaphor for colonialism itself. For all the ecological consciousness of the elders who have seen the destruction wrought by nickel mining, the young do not always share their sentiments. With their need for money to purchase rice and tinned foods, they have different values from the old, but values which may themselves be transient. Opposition to forestry exists despite the much valued income in areas far from other income-earning opportunities and where the mining recession has been severe, despite even the widespread feeling that eventually the forests will belong to the Melanesians themselves. Above all, Melanesians wish to remain masters in their own land, 'to conserve the basic structures and values of their traditional world' (Kohler 1984:123). Control of the economy is meaningless without control of the land. Deprived of the opportunity to reclaim their land, either for social or economic reasons, many Melanesians naturally feel that they are forever reduced to being mere hired labourers on their own land. Since reforestation has mainly taken place on cattle pastures where Melanesians were gradually establishing larger cattle herds (Kohler 1984:17), such fears are understandable. Others however, more pragmatically, have seen reforestation as a means of making their land a source of wealth and, in the meantime, sought employment there as a local source of income (Kohler 1984:20-1, 37). The significance of land is ever present.

For many Melanesians employment outside the reservation is not real work; it is in some respects, a game, a time of diversity, and diversion, a means of gaining experience, of testing oneself in an alien, modern world, but not on one's land where life begins and ends. Wage employment is not seen in the perspective of a career, but is reduced to a succession of more or less temporary jobs (Kohler and Pillon 1982b:21). For many, wage labour is only short term; workers in Noumea normally maintain their coffee and may even let it be harvested freely, simply to keep the plantation in operation. Work in the mines, the stores or forestry plantations is often hard, boring and repetitive; in extremes, such as on the Tango plateau, 'we are forced to work here like prison labour, in the heat or beneath the rain, on precipitous slopes. No white man would ever undertake what we endure' (Kohler 1984:22). More often the Melanesian experiences only the most oppressive features of work, whereas 'in the village the Melanesian has a place, a name. He is somebody in time and space. In the European society he is merely a labourer' (Tjibaou and Missotte 1978:19). In the reservations work is always seasonal and the demands of planting and harvesting times, and their associated rituals and exchanges, have only slightly diminished in a century of colonization. Few of those who worked in the mines, or in town, sought to work for more than a few months. Absenteeism in the mines, at Doniambo or at the Tango forestry plantation, has always been widespread, giving Melanesians a reputation for being work-shy and lazy, when, for most, wage employment is merely marginal to the most important
task of ensuring a subsistence livelihood at home. Having witnessed booms and depressions in the monetary economy, the security of the subsistence economy offers an immediate and clear future. The harmonious vision of order that Tjibaou offers of rural life corresponds to a reality where urban employment involves insecurity, frustration and discrimination.

To outsiders especially, life on the reservations was boring; for Roux, it was 'monotonous and often simply vegetative' and, worse, concealed 'hidden tensions' (1974:301). Similarly, commenting on the shift to mine employment during the nickel boom, Doumenge put it somewhat bluntly for the Canala region, 'to work outside the tribe is undubitably more profitable for a man at the height of his powers than to vegetate in agricultural work' (1975a:171). For another outsider, 'the beauty of the countryside, the serenity of peaceful villages cannot blot out the long monotony of the days, boredom and the tensions that affect family ties. Moreover social life was run by the old men' (Sausso 1979a:397). Young men responded by becoming more individualist, seeking the freedom, the variety and the wages that were available elsewhere, and to some extent avoiding conflict between generations, by seeking work elsewhere. The principal motive for obtaining cash incomes, and often the sole intention of migrants, was to build a modern, permanent house but this usually developed into a desire for a car, motorcycle, transistor radio or indeed any gadget that would make those who remained in the tribe 'die of envy' (Doumenge 1975a:171). The massive extent of return (circular migration) to villages throughout Melanesia demonstrates that the monotony and social tensions of the reservations are only a small part of the story. Melanesians return to their tribes because it is only there that they can obtain respectability and fulfilment in 'the centre of gravity of life' (Doumenge 1982:357), rather than because agricultural or other development opportunities exist. The reservations thus function as labour reserves, supplying the dominant capitalist economy in boom times and providing the basis of subsistence when the bust follows, a pattern of 'dual dependency' (Connell and Curtain 1982:467-70) that is widespread in Melanesia.

Few Melanesians ever totally leave their reservations though there are now many effectively permanent urban residents (Chapter 10), most return with the spirit of youth tempered by the difficulties of achieving success in a different environment. The tribe is the 'means of identification' (Sausso 1979a:399) even for those who rarely return there, such as the 'new student and political élites', now succeeding the more traditional rural leaders, for whom the reservation, besides being the home of their closest kin, has become 'the symbol of Kanak identity' (Sausso 1979a:399). Even for those Melanesians most tied to the urban professional world, and most integrated into European social environments, the reservation may still remain the model of a traditional society that guarantees social order and justice,
adapted to its natural environment. This vision of an ideal society, even a 'paradise lost' that is more an image from Rousseau than an approximation to reality, nevertheless provides a means 'of escaping from an alienating society' (Roux 1974:304) that combines colonial, industrial and urban worlds. If it would be wrong to say that many Melanesians are not at home in the European economic and social world of Noumea it would be equally wrong to say that many Melanesians have rejected their rural roots; those who maintain them least may idealize them the most.

Just as most Melanesians return regularly, and eventually with finality, to the tribe, so the income that they earn is equally destined to return and support the tribe. As in so many other areas of Melanesia there is a strong belief that income should not be used either to achieve individual ends through investment, commercial development, or for mere conspicuous consumption, but that it should be widely distributed, in a traditional manner, for the good of all. Inevitably young men resent the demands of their elders and their families and much income is used for purchasing vehicles, constructing new homes and buying radios and cassette players. What is surprising is how much is saved, sent or taken back to the tribes to give to the family or to use for customary obligations, such as death and marriage payments. The remittances, described by Doumenge (1982:375) as 'manna', represented a high proportion of migrant incomes (sometimes more than half) and a very high proportion of all income obtained in most rural communes, constituting between 70 per cent and 90 per cent of all income received there. The rest was principally from coffee sales and family allowances; in the Loyalty Islands, and especially Lifou, agricultural sales rarely represented 10 per cent of all incomes and on Belep and the Isle of Pines there was no agricultural income in some years. The significance of remittances, and therefore the dependence on them, is apparent and although they have declined substantially since the heady days of the nickel boom, they remain in excess of the remittances of most wage and salary earners elsewhere in Melanesia (Connell 1985b). There can be no more striking example of the commitment of young wage-earners to their families and their tribes, even as social insurance, after a century of colonization.

The egalitarian ethic in Melanesian development pervades the use of money, even money earned in distant Noumea (Kohler 1984:36). Within the tribe there is assumed to be an equal opportunity to earn money; outside the tribe inequality in access to income demands care in its redistribution. Money earned close to the tribe, in small-scale forestry operations for example, is regarded as being quite unlike money earned in town but, as the income of the family, clan or the tribe, 'it immediately flows between kin and through traditional exchange networks. This money then is not an influence on the destruction of the traditional pre-capitalist social economy' (Kohler 1984:137). Away from the urban economy money is not a mere medium of exchange but plays a
continuing, and much more important, role in maintaining traditional social organization.

The priority attached to social organization and traditional values (coutume) is visibly apparent in the extensive ceremonial activities that accompany periods of celebration (such as marriages) or mourning, periods that may last for two or three weeks, drawing participants away from productive activities (however vital these might seem to the outsider) in order to consolidate social ties. Unlike many other Melanesian societies where status and prestige are often gained partly through success in the business world of cash cropping and trading, status in the Melanesian society of New Caledonia is in part ascribed, that is it is inherited from a father of chiefly status, or is achieved through individual ability in the realms of social and political leadership (in earlier times through warfare) and hence personality. Economic achievements may contribute to status but they do not define it; 'production is a support but not the means of consolidation of prestige or social relations' (Kohler and Pillon 1983b:110). In every area of economic life in the rural areas of New Caledonia coutume retains more validity, if not necessarily being more important, than the dictates of capitalism.

Modernizing the Melanesian economy

In the post-war years there were no concerted attempts to stimulate rural development in New Caledonia, let alone the more active participation of the Melanesian population, until the 1980s. In some cases Melanesian participation in the cash economy was actively hindered. Guiart records how large fields of corn were produced in Lifou and sold to successful Melanesian chicken farmers in the suburbs of Noumea until legislation prevented poultry farms in urban areas and Europeans set up battery farms, 'reducing the island producers to poverty' (Guiart 1984b:15). Financial assistance went to the kinds of European farmers, 'subsidy hunters', who were incapable of imagining let alone establishing a system of obtaining local inputs, preferring instead to import all that they needed.

The end of the nickel boom necessitated greater diversification of the economy and agricultural development; the need for greater self-sufficiency in food production ensured that some attention would be directed towards extracting an agricultural surplus from Melanesians. In this context Loïc Wacquant has argued that rural development plans were merely disguised forms of unemployment benefit that 'had become necessary to keep Melanesians in the agricultural sector to protect Noumea from an influx of unemployed' (Wacquant 1985b:2). Not surprisingly, and especially where urban interests dominated rural policies, the task of regeneration the economy that had run down in the boom years proved difficult. After the boom many were
acutely conscious that withdrawal into the low income agricultural sector in many respects constituted a failure. High urban wages had offered the promise of a better, more secure future away from the sweat and toil of agricultural labour for variable and uncertain prices and markets. Effectively for the first time wage labour had become recognized as in some respects superior to the semi-subsistence security of the reservations while the children, through the European-based educational system if not through their parents, had been taught to aspire to something apparently better than agriculture. As Tjibaou recorded, 'we have set new horizons: school, business, industry, banks, mines; we have sought our place and the faces of the young have hardened' (Tjibaou and Missotte 1978:16). For all the antipathy to the alien environment, the end of the boom meant a loss of choice, the inability to circulate between home and workplace, to earn substantial incomes and the material possessions that added to rural life. Even some positive attitudes to the reservations were borne out of the frustration of unemployment rather than the real choice of a more satisfying life-style.

To assist in development outside Noumea FADIL was set up in 1975 with a range of activities principally aimed at encouraging the establishment or growth of small or medium-sized economic projects and activities, by providing loans and subsidies for equipment (such as farm machinery or small boats) and loans to all sectors of the economy. Between 1976 and 1981 some 573 projects were supported and 30 per cent of FADIL funds were directed towards agricultural projects, mainly small schemes, such as cattle projects on clan land (Ulveling 1982:68-74). Group and community schemes were preferred to individual ones, with traditional leaders consulted before projects began. Priority was given to Melanesian projects thus provoking the opposition of big monopolies such as Ballande (Dornoy 1984:145). FADIL had limited success for a number of reasons; financial assistance was discontinuous and administrative support to advise, study and monitor projects had been inadequate. In some areas there was a lack of motivation towards particular forms of economic development, resulting from such factors as inaccessibility (and high transport costs), lack of knowledge of the operations of the market economy (which primarily exists around Noumea) and a limited desire for some of the consumer goods that profits might bring. Managerial inadequacies have hampered progress on some cattle schemes and fishing projects (which have had a 70 per cent failure rate) since those with the greatest skills and entrepreneurial abilities have often migrated to Noumea. A shortage of land deters the establishment of agricultural development schemes and, finally, a situation where the ever-present possibility of new mineral development exists has discouraged investment in agricultural activities. FADIL was criticized for other reasons too; some independence leaders, such as Nidoish Naisseline, argued that it was aiming at creating a Melanesian bourgeoisie 'that would exploit its brothers' and they
were adamant that such projects financed by France only served 'to
erode the Kanak personality' (cf. Dornoy 1984:145). In a sense
the lack of success of FADIL negated this criticism.

After a few years of activity FADIL was phased out in favour
of a new ODIL, with greater funds than FADIL. ODIL's objectives
were wide-ranging and, while maintaining the previous focus on
agricultural, fisheries and forestry development, did not exclude
mining development. Traditional leaders were appointed to the
Council and ODIL was directed by Rock Wamytan, a Melanesian who
had previously been with FADIL; since its Administrative Secretary
was Marie-Claude Wetta, the wife of Tjibou, its organization was
increasingly one that might be expected to be sympathetic to
Melanesian aspirations. In 1983, its first transitional year,
fully 40 per cent of ODIL financial assistance went into the
service industry (and another four per cent into tourism) but a
further 40 per cent went into agricultural developments, of which
the majority were cattle project improvement schemes. An
additional eight per cent of funds supported tree crop projects,
mainly under a new Opération Fruits, and six per cent of funds
went into fisheries projects, broadly the same kind of allocation
pattern that FADIL achieved. However the regional distribution of
assistance reveals that 39 per cent of all financial assistance
went to the south compared with 30 per cent to the east, 26 per
cent to the west and only five per cent to the Loyalty Islands,
the principal Melanesian area (ODIL 1984:22-3). This
concentration of development project finance in or close to the
capital, and the limited proportion of funds that have gone into
obviously rural projects, is exactly the same structure achieved
by most development banks in the South Pacific, a result both of
rural projects often being very small but also of treating each
project on its merits rather than through its potential
contribution to a wider scheme of development. ODIL broadly
maintained the same operational structure as FADIL and has come no
closer to meeting Melanesian needs.

By 1984, its second year of operation, politics was such
that ODIL had no opportunity to improve on its past record.
Indeed long before that, development had become highly
politicized. Melanesians 'like peasants the world over are
sceptical of the development proposals of urban folk' (Guiart
1984b:16). Nothing can be conceived as 'a free good, from a
disinterested planner' (Doumenge 1982:436), and development
projects and programs, however well-motivated, are often viewed as
'a survival of the colonial age' (Doumenge 1982:437). Opération
Café has also necessarily taken on political connotations; like
reforestation it is seen as an administrative attempt to
incorporate Melanesians more systematically into the commercial
economy, to maintain 'Melanesians in their tribes, on the margins
of the future productive sectors of the economy, so that they give
up their political goals for the sake of a few minor gains, which
trap them on the fringes of the dominant consumer society...
integrated into the capitalist system at the very lowest level' (Kohler 1984:138). Opposition to the activities of FADIL, *Opération Café* or reforestation, was not merely technical, but was also about the operation and structure of the rural economy and, above all, about the ownership of land and the future direction of the Melanesian political economy. These were far from universal attitudes even among indépendantistes, as the more socialist *Parti de Libération Kanake* (PALIKA) railed against ODIL which continued its work of undermining the activities of rural indépendantistes, encouraged by UC and LKS, by starting projects of any kind: rural hotels, small fishing industries, grazing and agricultural activities. People use all their energies for development: LKS with its cooperatives, construction company and restaurant in the Vallée du Tir (Noumea)... and no one is concerned with getting rid of French colonization. They act as if everything is being achieved in advance when, in fact, they are becoming more integrated into the system, further away from independence (*Kanak* 89, 12 November 1983:2).

However, among most Kanaks, there is at least as much pride in successful Melanesian capitalistic development strategies. Where conflicting interests are not at stake, benefits favour a wider group (at least an extended family), and land tenure is not a critical issue, Melanesian economic development has often been successful.

Agricultural activities are not activities that can be separated from other aspects of existence, as in the European world, where land has an economic rather than a social significance. Attempts to transform structures of cash-cropping are therefore successful only if related to Melanesian social organization and the primacy of food crop production; more intensive inputs of labour, as high yielding coffee trees require, disrupts the maintenance of social relations and is unlikely to succeed (Pillon 1985a). ODIL usually only supports Melanesian projects that are organized on a cooperative basis; otherwise the failure rate has been too high. Commenting on the lack of success of *Opération Café*, Kohler and Pillon noted that 'the Melanesians and the Agricultural Service speak a different language although using the same words, and also keep on following divergent if not contradictory strategies to attain their quite different aims' (Kohler and Pillon 1983a:9). Melanesian societies are not based on the accumulation of capital or the manipulation of the economy, but on maintaining ties within and between clans and chiefdoms (Pillon 1985a); in most areas of economic activity, such as coffee planting, chiefs tend to be the innovators, only later followed by others (Kohler and Pillon 1983a:4). The continued significance of chiefs as innovators seems more important in New Caledonia than in many other parts of Melanesia where, in many spheres of economic activity in rural areas, young men with modern education and
entrepreneurial skills have increasingly taken the initiative. In New Caledonia old virtues have retained an extraordinary vigour.

Not only do yam cycles mark the passage of time in the Melanesian societies of New Caledonia but they form the basis for a different rhythm and pattern of life. Social relations prevail over economic relations; yam production (for food and exchange) is vastly more important than coffee production (for cash). Moreover, unlike a number of other parts of the South Pacific, the young are not taught to despise agriculture and seek bureaucratic employment; from early childhood children are given patches of land to cultivate and any man 'without a yam garden would be an outcast' (Doumenge 1982:292). In Melanesian social systems it remains true that 'strategies of accumulation are not allowed in the economic realm; only social and symbolic capital can be competitively sought after' (Wacquant 1985a:280). Moreover 'in traditional Kanak society, the accumulation of land and its products plays no decisive role in the acquisition or consolidation of a high status and/or a degree of political power... The relation to the material world emphasizes exchange at the expense of production' (Bensa and Rivierre 1982:111; cf. Tjibauou 1976). Despite the blandishments of the material world, Melanesians of the Grande Terre have rejected participation in the capitalist system, whether through wage or salary labour or cash cropping, to a greater extent than in the vast majority of Melanesian environments outside New Caledonia where opportunities have often been fewer. In part this is a result of the alienating, and largely alien, work environment, where rejection of the regular hours of work demanded by the modern colonial economy was an important element in the rejection of that society. Despite this overt rejection enough Melanesians are employed to generate significant cash incomes within the tribes, and a quarter of all Melanesians are in Noumea; allied to coffee incomes, this has enabled levels of consumption of 'modern' goods, such as food and clothes, and access to welfare services often much superior to those of other parts of Melanesia. By most conceivable standards Melanesians are still grossly underprivileged relative to Europeans. One corollary of limited participation in the cash economy is that land, as a basis of life and work, has much greater value than elsewhere. A second result is that traditional forms of social organization, despite experiencing similar changes to those elsewhere, have retained a greater vitality, especially on the Grande Terre. It is clearly not demands for superior material welfare that have fuelled nationalist sentiments and actions. These stem primarily from the land, problems of identity arising from cultural conflict and a loss of power.

An uncertain future?

The impossibility of summarizing Melanesian attitudes to economic development is not merely that attitudes are often
unstated, unrecorded, and misunderstood or even that there are a range of attitudes to the role of particular components of the contemporary economy. Attitudes are often ambivalent with fluctuations in sentiment, and participation, ensuring that there can be no consensus on the role of agriculture, commerce and industry in a future society, and hence what sort of future society there should be. The past too is open to as many interpretations.

A decade ago, editing a slim volume of studies by Melanesians of their own situation, Jean-Louis Barbançon concluded that Leenhardt's and Guiart's accounts of Melanesian societies were merely accounts of past times. Since then Melanesians 'have experienced the impact of the industrial world, the movement into a consumer society, the destruction of traditional values, ideas of individualism, in a word: acculturation. We have often looked around for the Melanesian of [Leenhardt's] Do Kamo but we cannot recognize him' (Barbançon 1976:8). In the same volume Jean-Claude Roux stresses that Melanesian societies are in the process of transition from agricultural societies to the modern world, where what he describes as 'fugitives of the Neolithic' face new challenges (Roux 1976:13). Pejorative cliché though this may be, there is no argument that Melanesian economies are in a constant state of flux. Even those Melanesians, writing there, who agreed that change had occurred and were themselves closely involved in that transition, stressed traditional values:

the reserve is too important in his understanding to be defined in a few words... the reserve is the last part of the world that colonization left him, thanks to which the Melanesian can still exist... the permanent renewal given by the land allows Melanesians to be recognized and identified. In the land he finds confirmation of his immortality. [The natural landscape] is the irrefutable confirmation that a vital past is still alive (Anon 1976:15).

This indeed is the language of Leenhardt's Do Kamo: a real and vivid past that everywhere shapes and informs the actions of the present-day, even if men and women may move away from their reserves, earn money and escape the sometimes oppressive structures of coutume.

Similar contradictions characterize accounts of Melanesian livelihood. The Dijoud Plan pointed to the contrast between Noumea, with its control of all services, and the rest of New Caledonia, 'the bush where every action of daily life presents problems' (Dijoud 1979:178) and where most Melanesians live. Yet, without much more than the bare elements of a modern economy, Melanesian perspectives may differ: "For the "expatriate" Melanesian the return to the tribe is not only an opportunity to "breathe again" but it is the means of knowing that he really exists. Outside his home environment, outside his "ecological
niche" he knows that he is nothing' (Doumenge 1982:260). Yet this is too simplistic. Many Melanesians, operating within the capitalist economy outside the reservations, serve as models for an alternative future and, until very recently, such statements as that of Saussol that 'the land problem in New Caledonia is one of integrating the Melanesian people into the monetised and industrial society which is today a monopoly of Europeans' (1971:242-3) were widely accepted by Melanesians and European alike. In this perspective the young increasingly regarded the land as a commodity and the old as repositories of traditional rules that had little significance in the modern world. Melanesian society was just at the point of transition 'from a society based on a political-religious order to one of economic classes' (Doumenge 1982:448), though in the past there was always individualism and societies were always socially differentiated. As Melanesians have increasingly become incorporated into the capitalist economy, so their dependent and peripheral position, emphasized in the aftermath of the nickel boom, has led to the genesis of opposition to seemingly inexorable and inevitable change. In the past decade the first real Melanesian opposition to capitalism has emerged and is beginning to be crystallized both in new forms of organization and more radical challenges to the structure of domination.

Melanesian society is not monolithic. Despite the similarity of pre-colonial Melanesian societies, very different post-contact histories have influenced attitudes to the contemporary world and generated socio-economic inequalities, already apparent in pre-war years (Chapter 6). Most people still live their lives locally; their consciousness is formed in a distinct geographical space. At any one time different areas are changing in contrasting ways; different struggles are being fought out and different problems faced, but throughout New Caledonia Melanesian society to some extent controls the economy. Simultaneously limited rural income-earning opportunities ensure a heavy dependence on the French state. For the future some prefer to emphasize more individual initiative through the participation of Melanesians in capitalist enterprises (whether cash cropping or modern industry) rejecting the reservations as a disincentive to 'all individual initiative' (Saussol 1979a:456). Others have chosen, by contrast, to emphasize a more gradual evolution in which the reservations, the basis of security on Melanesian land, are expanded; in this view, in the words of Tjibaou, the reservations are 'the only means of ensuring the survival of Melanesian culture and the adaptation of Melanesian society to the modern economy' (Saussol 1979a:458). It is this perspective that is both the viewpoint broadly supported by the UC and is the potential direction of a more independent Kanaky economy (Chapter 16), an evolutionary rather than revolutionary direction for societies involved in two quite different worlds. With or without independence there is an ambivalence in the direction of future Melanesian economic development, whether rural or urban,
capitalist or cooperative, based on agriculture or the industrial, commercial and bureaucratic economy. Responses are likely to continue to be as diverse as the available opportunities, and the Melanesian economy will remain dependent upon and dominated by a wider global economy.
Chapter 9

Land and liberty

If, then, the acquisition of territory did so much harm to the Romans at a time when their conduct was conspicuous for prudence and virtue, what effect will it have upon states whose conduct is very far removed from this (Machiavelli The Discourses).

If Melanesian society and economy remained peripheral to, and dependent upon, a primarily European and urban socio-economic system they certainly did not remain unchanged. The changes that had been set in motion in the inter-war years, especially population increase, continued and became more rapid in the greater freedom of the post-war era. The basis of the whole Melanesian economy and society is organized around the significance of land, and no account of recent history, contemporary society and particularly politics can exclude this crucial fact. On the eve of the Second World War, Melanesian reservations occupied about 126,000 hectares compared with the area rented or granted to white (and some Asian) settlers of about 560,000 hectares (Thompson and Adloff 1971:379), the latter figure being subject to some dispute. The situation was increasingly impossible for Melanesian livelihood. In the post-war years pressure for land mounted, and land reform eventually became a central part of the program of the first predominantly Melanesian political party, the UC. Restoration of the whole or part of the Melanesian land heritage became a consistent source of dispute in post-war years.

The repeal of the Indigénat after the Second World War removed restrictions on Melanesian movement; in less than a year about a third of all Melanesians had travelled outside their reservations to visit fellow clansmen or their ancestral lands (Deschamps and Guiart 1957:116). Visiting these lands fuelled the demand for their restitution. Within a decade between 1000 and 1500 Melanesians had also gone to Noumea, where they lived under such deplorable conditions that they were reported to be spreading diseases freely; in large part migration was necessitated by the lack of land on the reservations for the growing population (Thompson and Adloff 1971:284) though urban wages were increasingly attractive. The visible evidence of Melanesian destitution and the necessity for rural land were now daily in
front of the administration. From 1952 onwards the administration was forced to recognize growing population pressure on the reservations and finally grant reluctant extensions; in the next eight years only 15,000 hectares were granted (Thompson and Adloff 1971:380), a total that was wholly inappropriate to Melanesian population growth and aspirations and made no difference to economic development.

While Melanesian demands grew, increasing European landownership continued, mainly in the pastoral areas of the west coast, the high valley basins above these plains and in the steep valleys of the east coast. The area of European properties grew from 318,700 hectares in 1952 to 396,580 hectares in 1978 (Saussol 1981c) and Europeans continued to purchase rural land until well into the 1970s. In the Amoa valley, a few kilometres north of Poindimie, European landownership reached its greatest extent as late as 1978. Only then did land redistribution begin to reduce the European area, finally forcing back the 'last pioneer frontier' (Saussol 1983b) and drawing to an end the final phase in the expansion of settler colonialism.

It was not until 1955 that the first proper enquiry was carried out on land matters; the Sorin report revealed (Table 9) that more than half the 'properties' in New Caledonia were less than 25 hectares in extent and some 81 per cent of all the properties were 'small properties' of less than 100 hectares, covering no more than 14 per cent of the settled area. Most dramatically revealed, in these statistics on landownership, is the extent of landownership among a very small number of families. The Sorin report itself 'denounced the extreme liberality with which, at least until 1908, the State laid claim to vast areas of land (and) the obsession of Caledonians, from the first hours of colonization, for extensive cattle ranching like that of the Australian squatters' (Brou 1975:256) and pointed to the growing concentration of land in the hands of the largest owners (like Ballande which had 15,000 hectares and Société Ouaco with 32,600 hectares) as small landowners fell into debt, became bankrupt and were forced to give up their land to their creditors, the larger owners. The mass of small landowners then, as now, were poor. With less than 25 hectares of land of limited fertility, there was little scope for profitable cultivation; a few head of cattle, a small plantation of coffee, a few hens, pigs and a vegetable garden had to be supplemented by deer hunting and wage labour to make ends meet. When ends did not meet, the properties had to be sold and their owners moved into town. The Sorin report, kept confidential for many years, noted:

On these tiny fragmented properties life has become more and more difficult and it is unfortunate that these peasants, extreme individualists, do not wish to understand that it is in their interests to combine together. They live
parsimoniously and miserably: a situation that is a disgrace in this century (Brou 1975:257).

Such was the life of the majority of the European and métis population of the bush. As late as the 1950s perhaps 30 to 40 percent were illiterate (a partial result of regular absences from school in the coffee harvesting season) and few had any contact with the world beyond the bush: 'Their only means of expression, their only link with the outside world is the right to vote, and often, in response, they vote for the "hard line", for those who best seem to stand for "Caledonians"' (Brou 1975:257). The difficult conditions of the bush had reduced a variety of settlers - the old penal settlers, free colonists, Arabs, Nordistes, idealists and practical farmers - to the same poverty and the same political response. As the Sorin report concluded: 'it was inevitable that, sooner or later, the serious imbalance in landownership would result in animosity, even open hostility' (Saussol 1979a:355-7). Those who were frustrated by these land issues, European and Melanesian alike, became the central core of the UC, the first real political party.

Table 9 European landownership, 1955 and 1976

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land area (hectares)</th>
<th>1955</th>
<th>1976</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of owners</td>
<td>Total area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-25</td>
<td>1,296</td>
<td>13,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-100</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>29,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-500</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>67,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-2000</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>69,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-5000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>61,954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 5000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>95,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,295</td>
<td>95,625</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Even over small areas there were, and still are, massive variations in the amount of land owned and cultivated, and what made the situation worse for many Melanesians was that their lack of land was most severe in areas closest to European centres, whether on the west coast, around Koumac, or on the east coast, around Poindimie (Saussol 1979a:358). The effect of land shortage on Melanesians, largely unable to obtain land outside the reservations, was to increase the number and severity of land
disputes within tribes, as some groups, usually the traditional owners, attempted to expel others and take over their land. As the Melanesian population grew in the 1960s and there were few new prospects for employment elsewhere, the situation continued to worsen. Because of the difficult terrain of most reserves the land problem was even more acute than it appeared from official statistics of population density since the best land had long been used. Even so, to some extent, 'the land problem is not paramount economically [but] it has become so psychologically. The memory of confinement, maintained by oral tradition, remains alive in the hearts of the tribes who have neither forgotten nor renounced their former boundaries' (Saussol 1971:237-8). This consciousness of history has never been lost and informs all debate about future economic and political development. Even if those memories had not been strong, or genealogies and oral history lacking, it was quite apparent that by the 1960s there was a continued need for additional land, irrespective of historic claims.

The return to the old country

In Saussol's felicitous phrase, some 'return to the old country' was almost inevitable following new population pressures on limited resources, growing Melanesian expectations of the benefits of modern development, nurtured by political rights and the extension of primary and secondary education, all of which contributed to the emergence of political pressures, initially through the UC (Chapter 11). Before the 1960s there had been minor expansion of the reserves in areas of population pressure (Saussol 1979a:366-70), but between 1957 and 1970 some 108 separate extensions, totalling 25,000 hectares, were made to the reservations, mainly in the mountainous areas of the northern chain, where the steeply sloping land was of little economic value. Consequently the concessions that were being made to Melanesian pressures were forced to satisfy social and psychological ends rather than economic needs. Nonetheless, the reservation area expanded by more than 10 per cent, still less than the rate of population growth, and left just under half (about 47 per cent) of the population with no more than nine per cent of the land. At the start of the 1970s Saussol argued that 'the land question is now the major problem of rural New Caledonia hence the urgent need to cope with it before open confrontation on this issue causes irreparable harm' (1971:238). Enlargement of reserves provided a start and prompted tribes to make extensive claims on land, but many political representatives, including those of the UC who were concerned with urban issues, relegated the land issue to a minor role. At least the nickel boom diverted attention away from rural problems.

If the scale of land transfers was slight their political significance was greater. Those Melanesians who had access to the land were generally grateful for such rare examples of
administrative generosity; chiefs welcomed their new proprietorship of rights in the land, thereby enhancing their authority. For most Europeans the location and scale of land transfers was such that their economic supremacy was never threatened, but the large number of small transfers enabled them to believe that not only were these transfers 'a just corrective to the excesses of cantonnement' but that they were now free of any guilt over the historic policies that produced inequalities (Saussol 1979a:378). For them an appropriate balance appeared to have been restored. In reality, because the expansion of reservations did not even keep pace with population growth, there was no prospect of any significant expansion of cash cropping there, and hence of greater Melanesian participation in the commercial economy.

Although the overall economic impact of the expansion of the reservations was limited, in some cases, where population densities were lower, there were real opportunities for change. Many Melanesians had long wanted their own cattle herds and, before the war, there were cattle on some reservations. A major result of more land being available, and in many areas a reason for land claims, was for Melanesians to become involved in extensive cattle ranching, the Melanesian-owned herds grew from 4000 to 11,300 in the two decades from 1950 to 1970 (Saussol 1979a:389). Now, especially around La Foa, Poya and Pouembout, there are several successful Melanesian cattle farmers, and there are continued demands for increased participation in the cattle industry.

Virtually all land restored to Melanesians has been either restored to tribes or to Melanesian cooperatives. However a parallel trend has been the slow emergence of individual Melanesian landowners through the purchase of land. Individual ownership is not a totally new phenomenon. After the First World War, there was a move to give land to Melanesians who had fought in Europe, partly on the grounds that only individual landownership would lead to real commercial development (Saussol 1979a:407-8), but bitterness increased when few actually received land. Between the wars it was also permissible for Melanesians to obtain land in exactly the same manner as Europeans, but this was largely theoretical because a lack of money and credit prevented purchases. Perhaps the only Melanesian who actually owned private land was a chief, who had purchased 25 hectares through an intermediary of Maurice Leenhartd (Saussol 1979a:431). Although almost nothing came of these early moves they were an indication that the reservations were already beginning to be seen by some Melanesians as an anachronism; cash cropping and social change emphasized these views. A number of prominent traditional leaders bought land in the 1950s and 1960s and from the 1970s onwards were able to obtain credit for more extensive purchases. Although one such property covered 218 hectares a continued lack of capital ensured that individuals owned only a tiny fragment of Melanesian
land (Saussol 1979a:436; Doumenge 1982:323). From the eve of the Second World War Melanesians also rented land though again, compared with the massive areas rented by Europeans, such areas were extremely tiny and, from 1960 onwards, Melanesians were also able to obtain 25 hectares of land as 'children of the country', a right that had been available to Europeans since 1916 and was strongly attacked in the Sorin report as solely related to the needs of one category of citizens (Saussol 1979a:440). In various ways therefore a few Melanesians were becoming owners or tenants of land and the larger incomes of the nickel boom years considerably accelerated this progression; the properties taken over by Melanesians were becoming much larger. The difference between the massive size of settlers' farms and the small extent of Melanesian land was beginning to be very slowly reduced as, in just one exceptional part of Melanesia, some Melanesians became individual landowners.

Purchase of land by individual Melanesians has given rise to a small privileged group of landowners. In 1981 some 162 Melanesians were tenants or owners of 15,750 hectares of land compared with 962 Europeans controlling 86,620 hectares (Saussol 1983a:279). Many such Melanesians were young men, already in the urban wage labour force, who saw the ownership of even a tiny property as a means of individual betterment. Essentially for the first time a small but significant group of individual Melanesians separated themselves from the confines of the tribal reservations and from collective land tenure, emphasizing another phase in 'the passage of the old pre-industrial agricultural system to the hopes and risks of the market economy' (Saussol 1983a:279). Most Melanesians were already dependent on the market economy and individual landownership, though important, concerned only a small number of younger men. Almost all were bureaucrats who lived and worked in a European environment and saw the land as a place to make a secondary living through cattle ranching, and a place for a second home or a retirement home. These then were an incipient Melanesian 'urban middle class' who saw land as a means of individual profit and security and not as a source of tradition with a variety of cultural attributes. For Saussol the individualization of Melanesian land tenure is both an inevitable signal of the 'disappearance of traditional culture and integration into the European model' and, even on a limited scale, 'the best means of overcoming underdevelopment and creating an élite that can competently defend the interests of all Melanesians' (Saussol 1979a:449). Others, mainly Melanesians, viewed the rise of individualism and economic dependence and the decline of collective identity and security quite differently.

At the same time that individual Melanesians were increasing their purchases of land, the rate of returning land to Melanesians again fell off. After 1970 the easily obtained pieces of land had been given back, Europeans were becoming more resentful of further claims on land (some of which had remained idle long after a
successful claim had been made) but, most important, the nickel boom had quickly shifted the whole focus of the economy even more firmly into nickel mining. Where once employment in the mines had been viewed as a temporary means of earning cash for those young who cared to experience this environment, the great increases in job opportunities and wages seemed to offer a real prospect of long-term gains. The dream was short lived.

**Acceleration of tension**

The end of the nickel boom in the early 1970s meant the return of many Melanesians to the reserves, renewed pressures and renewed claims on land which again brought land issues to the fore. The previous situation of a gradual transition in landownership, with reservations expanding and some individual Melanesian ownership, was called into question by the fears of white settlers that the process of transfer would accelerate far beyond the control of marginal land or land where settlers were happy to sell up and leave, to put pressure on large and viable farms where the owners had no intention of leaving. From the mid-1970s onwards the earliest rumours of land reforms resulted in 'defence committees' being set up by European settlers in the threatened areas, so dramatizing the conflict. Increased demands for land, the growing link between land claims and wider political demands, and more strenuous opposition from some settlers, all contributed to heightened tension. Real friction also intensified; cattle were speared or stolen and fences broken, as the slow process of consultation, litigation and bureaucratic regulation became translated into direct action.

Though Melanesian demands for land were increasing they were still largely limited to areas that they had occupied in the relatively recent past, where old cemeteries and remnants of gardens were still visible, generally in the river valleys of the east coast. The conservative administration, under no pressure from a similarly conservative and uninterested government in France, made minimal attempts to buy out settlers on any real scale and so provide a steady transition in land tenure. Demands for land were regarded as neither 'economic' nor 'psychological' but as 'political', stimulated by the UC chasing votes rather than by real need. In many cases, where the administration did attempt to purchase land, settlers placed such high and unrealistic prices on their land, that the purchasers were frustrated (Ward 1982:27-8). In 1977 young activists from the new pro-independence parties, PALIKA and the *Union Progressiste Mélanesienne* (UPM), weary of inaction, launched a campaign to occupy and recover land; young Melanesians and European settlers (*broussards*) were both armed with shotguns and each claimed that there had been gunfire, but there were no casualties, and the gendarmerie and riot police (*gardes mobiles*) checked the PALIKA campaign in a series of east coast towns: Balade, Touho, Poindimie, Ponerihouen and Thio (Ward
However, as the UPM leader, André Gopea, argued during these campaigns: 'we are leaving now since the riot police are here. Tomorrow they will still be here but one day they must leave and we will still be here' (NC 24 November 1984). Insecurity and temperatures were mounting, divisions were becoming entrenched and a minority of Melanesians were increasingly willing to bypass the slow and ineffective processes of administrative change.

Debates over land in the Territorial Assembly in 1978 demonstrated the range of opinion over land, and the virtually impossible task of reconciling conflicting interests. These debates followed the preparation of a report on land issues, that reviewed UC and UPM demands for land, but argued the need to proceed with 'great prudence' and to establish a more commercial Melanesian peasantry rather than extend the reservations (Ward 1982:28-9). Leaders of the UC, such as Tjibauo and Machoro, argued that any discussion of land was a discussion of political issues, that Melanesians had lost their land and needed more in which to practise their traditional life-style, and that priority should be given to the land needs of those clans living on reservations as 'strangers'; finally they argued that land issues were so important that they could only properly be understood and acted upon by Melanesians. Prominent Europeans within the UC, such as François Burck and Maurice Lenormand, argued against the transfer of land as smallholdings, that might fail and merely be accumulated into large properties, and in support of a more traditional communal subsistence agriculture that would be the best way of enabling Melanesians to achieve adequate independence and dignity. Members of the right wing and centre parties, some of whom took the view that land allocations had nothing to do with politics and that there should be no special consideration for any race in New Caledonia, denounced attempts to deny landownership to individual Melanesians (Ward 1982:29-34). Land issues became further politicized and the views of political parties became more polarized; the principal result was that any redistribution of land became extremely contentious and hence more difficult to achieve.

Conservative opposition to Melanesian land claims combined two features. There was opposition to transfers of land unless there were clear indications that there was real Melanesian need for that land; that is, as one RPCR member of the Territorial Assembly stated, where 'objective inquiry showed it to be necessary' (Ward 1982:38) so that land would be allocated according to use and not ethnicity. Melanesian historic claims to legitimate ownership were thus denied. This was combined with a demand that when land was transferred (rather than 'returned') to Melanesians it should not be given to tribes, to increase the size of the reservations where, it was claimed, work and development were 'made impotent by a feudal system' (Ward 1982:38), but to individuals. The extent to which this constituted any real
Table 10 Land distribution, 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hectares</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public (domaine) land:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>territory</td>
<td>941,732</td>
<td>1,101,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>9,372</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leased</td>
<td>150,606</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private property (except towns)</td>
<td>386,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisional grants</td>
<td>57,596</td>
<td>443,796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserves:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grande Terre</td>
<td>167,659</td>
<td>376,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The islands</td>
<td>209,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,922,165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: A. Ward, Land and Politics in New Caledonia, Political and Social Change Monograph No. 2, A.N.U., Canberra, 1982:33 (based on the UC journal L'Avenir Calédonien 15 May 1980). Ward estimated that about 10,000 hectares of the land distributed as provisional grants (concessions provisoires) was held by Melanesians, and about 50,000 of the leased domaine land was rented by Melanesians.

interest in modern agricultural development being achieved on Melanesian land must be set against the possibility that individual Melanesian landowners were likely, as some had already done, to abandon any radical political interests and become established supporters of the existing conservative regime.

By this time, for all the increase in conflict and demands for land, the actual area of Melanesian reserves had only increased to around 162,500 hectares on the Grande Terre, an expansion of around 29 per cent since the war (Table 10). However, from 1979 to 1982, purchases of land for Melanesian use added 36,153 hectares and cancellations of leases covered another 7776 hectares (INSEE 1984a:19; Saussol 1983a:281), a real escalation in the process of transferring land and one that resulted in grave concern among settlers. Most land claims involved not the large cattle stations stretching out over the savannas of the west coast, but mainly tiny patches of land occupied by small peasant farmers in the alluvial valleys, especially on the east coast (Saussol 1971:242), some of whose livelihood was at stake. Disputes have involved not the rich estate-owners, who have largely survived unscathed, but the poor
white and métis population whose dependence on the land is often as great as that of the Melanesians and who lack alternative options.

Despite increased land redistribution there was considerable frustration at what was nevertheless perceived as the very slow pace of transfer, relative to the vigour and extent of claims. Continuing Melanesian population increase meant that the ratio of hectares per head on the reserves had actually fallen from 7.6 in 1912 to 4.8 in 1969 (Ward 1982:10) at a time when cash cropping was permanently tying up large areas of the best land. Discontent was expressed in a greater number of land occupations, often initially symbolic and involving the construction of a traditional Melanesian house (case) to demonstrate the land claim, a technique used even in Ataï's day. This provoked increasing irritation among European settlers who were strongly supported by a 'conservative Noumean oligarchy' (Saussol 1983a:282). A west coast Land Claims Committee was set up in 1980 and made a series of claims around Voh, Kone and Poya, writing to and demanding land from settlers, building cases and redistributing 6000 hectares in three years (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:161-2). Land claims were at last firmly established on the political agenda of the main independence party, the UC, whose party conference in November 1981 bluntly concluded that, 'landownership is totally that of the indigenous people, the Melanesian people' (Saussol 1983a:282), a universal claim that left no room for doubt that pressure on land would continue, and that the transfer of land should be along traditional lines 'by the re-establishment of the traditional rights of clans' (Saussol 1983a:282) who would rent that land to settlers or to urban councils. The extensions of tenure over the whole of the Grande Terre would thus automatically lead to the disappearance of 'reservations' from the vocabulary and, with that, the disappearance of the 'tribe' (Saussol 1983a:282). These were the demands that confronted the territorial administration when the Front Indépendantiste (FI) gained effective control in June 1982.

The establishment of a more liberal Territorial Assembly, in which the UC was the most important party, resulted in some of these propositions becoming laws; a new land office was created and by the end of 1984 a further 45,000 hectares had been redistributed to Melanesians (Saussol 1985a:1622), more than the 10,000 hectares per year that had hitherto been the target. What was much more important was that, for the first time, the new law recognized the customary and historic rights of Melanesians to all the land of New Caledonia. The recognition of Melanesian customary rights assumed that Melanesian land claims would not normally lead to the actual occupation of land but that there would be proper legal ties between Melanesian owners and European occupiers that would recognize Melanesian ownership but would safeguard the rights of the existing users. To carry out the new program a Land Office of New Caledonia (Office foncier de la
Nouvelle-Calédonie) was set up with two objectives: first, to define those regions where customary rights were valid and to acquire land there to redistribute to collective Melanesian groups, or recognize individual (current) owners who would pay rent to those groups with traditional rights over that land and, second, to encourage rural development by means which might include the purchase of land and assistance in the establishment of cooperative groups. The office began its operations in February 1983 and in two years, until the end of 1984, acquired 35,000 hectares of land for redistribution, some in almost every commune of the Grande Terre. Despite attempts to acquire east coast land much came from the poor west coast grazing lands, especially around Pouembout (Map 10), though still leaving a vast stretch of private land from Poya to Noumea.

Inevitably Melanesian demands for land have varied and continue to vary. The strongest claims demand the return of all lands; since 'ancestral land is the basis of the Melanesian
personality, every lineage must be re-established where it was at the time of European contact' (Doumenge 1982:441), implying a situation where every European colonist would have to leave the Grande Terre. In practice few Kanaks seriously espouse such views though many dwell nostalgically on a past when all the land was owned by Melanesians. For such Melanesians land claims represent beliefs not only that land is the only true resource but, above all, that it is still possible to recreate the pre-European landscape, the 'paradise lost', of the old Melanesians who, more than half a century later, remain traumatized by the impact of reservations (Doumenge 1975a:197). A more moderate, and widely held view, recognizes the reality of European farming and settlement, demands only the restoration of land that is currently needed (a necessarily vague area) but also demands the restitution of sovereignty over all land to Melanesians (with the tacit assumption that land not currently required would be leased to the present users). In pursuit of this claim, there have been demands for title over the land on which Noumea is based; a group of seven clans, representatives of whom lived in the nearby tribes of Saint Louis and Conception and at Ile Ouen, claimed all the land from Dumbea, through Noumea and Mont Dore, to the south coast. They argued that the achievement of this legitimate claim would enable the wiping out of bullying and injustice, the theft of land and the forced removal that our fathers have been subjected to. It will also replace the old chiefdom of Mont Dore (whose descendants now live at Saint Louis and Yate) in appropriate authority over the land and resources of its historic region. We are conscious that part of this area is occupied by a large number of foreigners that colonization has brought to our soil. Many are workers or Pacific Islanders who, like us, are not responsible for French colonial policy. We are ready to allow them a place but, above all, justice must be done... this claim is not symbolic, we need our land and we will not cease to declaim our grievances until we regain satisfaction (NC 11 September 1982).

In this case their claims were ridiculed, denounced or merely ignored by Europeans though smaller, rural claims could not so easily be ignored. In practice many Melanesians respect the older colonists who have worked hard for a living, opposing principally those who have exploited Melanesians or own unused or under-used land on the fringes of reserves. Those Melanesians making the strongest claims on land are from coastal tribes, where the reserves have been smaller and hence urban migration greatest (Doumenge 1982:444). More extensive land claims coincide with the end of the boom years, the increased need for grazing land and a demand for land as an insurance against an uncertain economic future. Consequently Melanesian land claims have generally been made most strongly in the places where there are very real needs.
Land disputes

'A man who is forced to flee his ancestral land is really an orphan' (Doumenge 1975a:206). Land disputes between Melanesians are no less important or violent than those between Melanesians and Europeans. Underlying many disputes are conflicts between the historic owners of land and those Melanesians forced onto that land when the reservations were created. Other disputes have followed problems in dividing new land, as reservations have been extended. Tribes resettled onto the land of established societies have rarely achieved access to good quality land comparable to that of their hosts, and these disparities have resulted in land claims and disputes, where the average area of land in a locality might otherwise appear more than adequate. Tribes forced to live together have sometimes, where possible, left their 'new' locations and moved onto their old land or land where their claim could be more firmly established (e.g. NC 24 May 1982). By contrast other disputes over land stem from real difficulties in the current notion of ownership, arising from conflicts between rival claimants to areas of land whose boundaries are uncertain and which may have been the subject of historic warfare with disputed results. More general disputes have been accentuated by coffee growing, contention over use of the more limited remaining land and over the inheritance of coffee-covered land.

A critical problem for land tenure is the change from annual rights of use (for food crops) to long-term rights (for cash crops), which becomes a slow slide towards individual ownership. As the planters and owners of the earliest coffee trees die these problems of tenure are becoming severe; should their coffee trees and the land be inherited by their sons or should it revert to the clan? In many cases, such new problems become conflicts, which may be accentuated by other kinds of friction: political clashes, social problems, or disputes over access tochieftaincy. These, in turn, are influenced by return migration of wage-earners, declining real incomes in tribes and conflicts between generations, a difference between traditional values (coutume) and modernity (e.g. Kohler and Pillon 1982a:85-90; Doumenge 1982:445). These conflicts, familiar elsewhere in Melanesia, both threaten stability and order in rural societies and reduce the prospects of successful land claims or more capitalist forms of rural development.

The significance of land has inevitably resulted in exactly the same practices and problems found elsewhere in Melanesia. For example, there has been strategic planting of coffee plantations, construction of houses and even the planting of pines and kaori trees, to establish or create and claim new 'land rights' that will secure land (Kohler and Pillon 1982a:90-2). Such pressures on land have been accentuated by more extensive cattle grazing in the reserves, occupying large areas of land and becoming a major source of conflict (Doumenge 1982:446) as it has also done in the
highlands of Papua New Guinea. Disputes have been most severe on Belep and on the east coast as, for example, at Yate where land shortages resulted in violent confrontations between the neighbouring Unia and Waho tribes (NC 22 March 1982) though these may have been provoked and manipulated by conservative politicians (Guiart 1983a:226-7). Everywhere in Melanesia the same kinds of pressures have produced friction.

Redistribution of land caused problems of tenure; in some cases many families claimed the same piece of land and such disputes were often not ironed out for several years, during which time the land could not be used, giving Europeans 'scandalous proof of the lack of need to expand the reserves' (Saussol 1979a:389). Although Melanesians generally used the new land (Guiart 1983a:228-32), decisions over its use were often long-delayed, especially after the intensification of claims in the 1970s with frequent demands for land before decisions had been made over its eventual use, a situation which caused conflicts between the indépendantiste parties (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:160) and frustrations for the new land office (Le Monde 17 December 1984). Many colonists however have been happy to sell off their land for redistribution, and bank their new incomes in Noumea, especially where much of their land was unused. Absentee owners, including Ballande and Société Ouaco, owned much vacant land (Guiart 1983a:234-5) and other European agricultural activities, such as cereal cultivation, would not be undertaken without heavy subsidies.

Land was sometimes distributed to individual Melanesians who also occasionally purchased land from Europeans. Even where land was allocated according to traditional principles, as in the Tchamba valley (Saussol 1971:240-1), chiefs and other influential individuals often managed to secure unusually large claims, although the distribution of land was normally reasonably equitable (Saussol 1979a:392-4). Without written law and with flexible principles of tenure Melanesian land remains the object of increased manipulation, as many individuals seek to shape 'traditional rules' to their own advantage. These kinds of problems created other kinds of friction; the small but active left wing independence party PALIKA was opposed to the re-establishment of traditional tenure on regained land, or the establishment of individual titles, arguing that this simply divided Kanaks and hindered any transition to a more socialist form of collective ownership and operation (Saussol 1983a:282; Kohler and Pillon 1982a:93). More widely, the creation of reservations and the allocation of fixed areas of land to tribes created a European order that neither corresponded to traditional systems of tenure nor resulted in an equitable distribution (cf. Ward 1982:59). With increased demands for land the 'European' tenure system has become a problem. Such national problems were matched at a local level; land repurchased in the Houailou valley could not be immediately given back to the local Nessakouya tribe
since there was a conflict whether the land should be an extension of the local reservation (which was the view of the UC) or individual lots (the view of the right wing party, the RPCR) while one local Melanesian leader was critical of the control exercised over reservation land by a small number of powerful individuals to the consequent frustration of the young (Ward 1982:27-8). These disagreements on a small-scale, or on a national level, attended the majority of land transfers, with the result that right wing and centre party politicians became even more reluctant to vote funds to buy land at speculative prices for it to simply produce disputes and remain unused (Ward 1982:32). Disputes over land tenure were real enough to easily provoke this reaction but their significance was a function both of coming to terms with long-term land use and the sheer demand for the limited amounts of land available to Melanesians. Problems of land tenure complicate all rural development issues but, as elsewhere in Melanesia, reflect real needs for land.

Land and life

Pressures for more extensive land and land rights have met a response that reflects the political currents running through New Caledonia. For more than half a century there has been a widespread recognition of both the justice of general Melanesian claims and the necessity for making some positive response to them. Before the war there were the first cautious expansions of reservations. After the war Melanesians became citizens and pressures on land increased; redistribution accelerated, facilitated by the movement of many European settlers into Noumea and, rather later, by the nickel boom that accelerated this process and seemed to reduce the value of land. The end of the boom, the return migration of Melanesians to the reservations and the revaluation of land by settlers and Melanesians alike, brought more serious conflicts over land (including more conflicts between Melanesians themselves) and, for the first time, real opposition to further claims. This pattern of claim, opposition and conflict is the essence of the wider political struggle.

Between the war and the end of the 1970s the area of Melanesian reserves had gone from around 126,000 hectares to 162,000 hectares, an increase which reflected other gains in the political and economic arenas. However at the same time claims had been established to a further 120,000 hectares (Saussol 1979a:458) and few of these have yet been met. Ultimately the extent to which the inability of Melanesians to control more than a fraction of the land reflected a similar inability to control the political and economic structure of New Caledonia. Frustration over this inability was reflected in the sweeping demands made by the UC in 1981 which, significantly, were exactly those made by the more radical PALIKA five years earlier. As
political demands have become more radical and all-embracing so too have land claims.

As land claims accelerated, reaction to them increased from settlers who faced dispossession and who had no wish to become tenants of Melanesians; as one Caildoche farmer's wife effectively commented: 'Never, I might as well drop my pants immediately' (Le Monde 18 June 1982). However evidence of earlier redistributions suggests that, as in the Tchamba valley in the 1960s, Melanesians generously recognized the needs of older settler families (Ward 1982:59). Nonetheless most such settlers claim that France owes them support for their 'honest sweat, economic rationality and modernism' against a retrograde native tradition (Guiart 1982b) and are fearful of the more tense political environment. There has always been conservative opposition to what Dijoud regarded as Melanesian 'land-grabbing' when he stressed that land 'would only be granted to those who could prove their need and demonstrate their capacity to use the land productively' (PIM August 1979:38). This has been a recurrent theme and the right wing have never swerved from their belief that

This French territory is demographically empty. There is a place for everyone. It is economically wealthy and ethnically in equilibrium. No group dominates any other... Existing land problems are few. They can be reduced to a simple technical question of the carrying capacity of more than 60,000 hectares (Martínez 1985a:xiv).

Though there were always patches on unused land that might demonstrate this proposition, the failure to make any concessions to moral or historic arguments, or even speed up 'legitimate' transfers, inevitably exacerbated tension. Those who went further to argue biblically that 'the land belongs to those who work it' (NC 28 September 1984) added further insult to injury. Despite restitution of Melanesian land vast inequalities in landownership still remain. As recently as 1984 some 85 per cent of agricultural land was operated by only five per cent of the agricultural work-force, and, although about 600 rural properties were larger than 100 hectares, more than 9000 were less than two hectares (NC 18 July 1985).

Every element of development hinges of colonial conquests of the best agricultural land and the displacement of Melanesians to more remote, fragmented and less valuable land. Even where land has been lost for more than a century, Melanesian society remains 'written on the ground' (Leenhardt 1947/1979) and mountains, streams and rocks bind the ancestors and the living together into an inseparable whole; 'the land claims that are expressed today are only the first cry for a much greater claim to equality' (Saussol 1979a:462). Land issues pervade every aspect of life and land is both symbol and substance in the struggle for independence.
Chapter 10

The politics of population

Noumea, white and rich, your masks are not sacred, not reserved for joyous events, your blackness is not that of burnt nut oil, your light glitters, your excitement cheers only the eyes (Tjibaou and Missotte 1978:12).

The nickel boom was the single most important event in post-war economic development but the population migration that accompanied the boom had a longer and more dramatic impact on history. Migration 'determined the future of the population of the territory' (Doumenge 1981a) and, in so doing, continued to assist in determining its political future; free migration was supplemented by sponsored migration designed to ensure that New Caledonia remained a French territory. The ethnic diversity of the population, and its continually changing composition and location in the post-war years, is much the most crucial characteristic of society in New Caledonia. No other country in the South Pacific has experienced such significant international migration and hence such ethnic diversity; 'all activities of any scale and even the occupation of land, however dispersed and exceptional, are tied to the politics of immigration' (Robequain 1949:41). Nowhere is population composition and distribution so critical for every facet of life.

At the start of 1983 New Caledonia had a recorded population of over 145,000, now more than 150,000, making it one of the larger states within the South Pacific. The large land area has given it an overall population density of less than eight persons per square kilometre, the lowest in the South Pacific region after Papua New Guinea; excluding Noumea the overall population density is no more than 4.5 persons per square kilometre. Although a few thinly-populated communes, mainly on the west coast, have densities of little more than one person per square kilometre in some Melanesian reservations the density is more than 80 per square kilometre. These variations and related economic inequalities have significance for economic development.

For the only time in the recent colonial history of New Caledonia the Melanesian population became a majority in their own land in the early 1950s. The demographic revival that had continued since the 1920s ensured that by 1956 they represented 51
Table 11  Population by ethnic group, 1956-83

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1969</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1976</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1983</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Annual rate of increase 1976-83</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>25,160</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41,268</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>50,757</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>53,974</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoneseans</td>
<td>2,889</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,809</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5,111</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5,319</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanesians</td>
<td>34,969</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>46,200</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>55,598</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>61,870</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>3,445</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,943</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,381</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ni-Vanuatu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallisians and Futunans</td>
<td>1,227</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6,219</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9,571</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12,174</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Polynesians</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,367</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6,391</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5,570</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,607</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,812</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,868</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68,486</td>
<td></td>
<td>100,579</td>
<td></td>
<td>133,233</td>
<td></td>
<td>145,368</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. French Polynesians may include a small number of other Polynesians.
2. 'Others' includes mainly francophone West Indians and Africans, Chinese, Fijians and Japanese. In 1956, when this number was very small, it was included with Europeans.
3. The métis population have been enumerated with Europeans.
5. The independence movement imposed a partial boycott of the 1983 census, which resulted in under-enumeration both in Noumea and some rural communes. Various compensatory statistical procedures were used to ensure that the 1983 population total was approximately accurate (INSEE 1984b:3) but the number of both rural Melanesians and the population of Noumea is likely to be somewhat lower than the real figure by an indeterminate amount. It has been recently suggested that the enumerated Melanesian population of 61,870 is likely to be about 65,900 (Rallu 1985).

per cent of the total population (Table 11) and the proportion was still increasing. This majority cannot have lasted long since the relatively rapid natural increase of the European population ensured Melanesian minority status even before the nickel boom and the massive immigration which comprehensively ended this brief period of numerical superiority. The rapid growth of Noumea in the late 1960s and the boom years of the early 1970s resulted both in substantial rural-urban migration and also immigration from France, and from a wide range of present or former French colonies. By 1976 the slowly-growing Melanesian population had become no more than 42 per cent of the population, the lowest recorded proportion in the post-war years. Even the end of the boom, the departure of some of the new immigrants and a greater Melanesian population growth rate only enabled Melanesians to reach just 44 per cent of the total population by 1983.

The Melanesian population growth rate has steadily accelerated since the war, so that, in a single generation (from 1947 to 1976), the Melanesian population of communes like Yate, Paita, Poya and the Isle of Pines doubled from natural increase. Between 1947 and 1956 the total Melanesian population grew at an annual rate of 1.6 per cent; between 1956 and 1966 it grew at two per cent and between 1967 and 1976 reached 2.5 per cent (Doumenge 1982:155-9). This may well have been the most rapid period of Melanesian population growth since the 1983 census records an annual growth of no more than 1.6 per cent or only a little more than that for New Caledonia as a whole (1.25 per cent). Although under-enumeration suggests that the growth rate is unlikely to have been much less than two per cent, even that would represent a declining growth rate. There are then indications that the Melanesian population growth rate may be slowing, although it is still much greater than the European growth rate (0.9 per cent), so that in the unlikely situation of present growth rates continuing it would not be until well into the next century, some time in the 2030s decade, that Melanesians once again became a majority in New Caledonia. By then non-demographic factors are much more likely to have influenced population change.

The population of New Caledonia is youthful; 50 per cent are aged less than 20 years and the mortality rate (6.3 per thousand in 1982) is low and falling. The birth rate has been more or less stable, around 26 per 1000 for several years, being 26.6 in 1982, but is significantly different for each ethnic group. In 1981 the Melanesian birth rate was 33.6, the Wallisian and Futunan birth rate 35.8 and the European birth rate 18.4. This has resulted in household sizes also being quite different; in 1983 the average Wallisian household size was 7.3, Melanesian households had 5.2 members and European households only 3.3. The different structure (Figure 3) and size of the various ethnic groups is crucial to future population change. The Europeans have the characteristically ageing structure of European populations the world over although the fertility of this still partly-migrant

...
left their home islands), as by the rapid population growth rate. Melanesians, with an intermediate and more balanced population structure, are increasing less rapidly than Wallisians but much more quickly than Europeans, despite a mortality rate that is substantially greater than that of other ethnic groups. Although it has been estimated that one-third of all households use modern family planning techniques, virtually all of these were European; very few Melanesians use these techniques and attempts to increase their use have been unsuccessful. Wallisians and Futunans, a wholly Catholic population, also do not use modern family planning techniques and the annual growth rate of the Wallisian and Futunan population of New Caledonia, despite some return migration, was 3.5 per cent between 1976 and 1983, an exceptionally fast growth rate. Natural increase is only one element in population change and in New Caledonia migration is much the most critical element, as it has been for over a century.

Migration to New Caledonia

The extent to which New Caledonia is still characterized by migration is readily apparent (Table 12); a quarter of the population were born outside New Caledonia which (with the unusual and extreme exception of Nauru) has the highest proportion of its population born overseas of any state in the South Pacific. Even so almost two-thirds of Europeans and rather more than half of the Wallisians and Futunans were born in New Caledonia and, in the case of Polynesians especially, these proportions are growing rapidly. In 1963 only 27 per cent of Wallisians and 18 per cent of French Polynesians had been born in New Caledonia but now more than half the Polynesian population were born there. For the European population there was however a substantial fall, after the migration of the boom years, since in the 1950s the percentage of locally born Europeans was over 80 per cent (McTaggart 1963:118). Since the end of the boom the proportion has again increased steadily and now represents a very substantial and significant core of locally-born Europeans. More than 33,000 Europeans have been born in New Caledonia; exactly a third of these were born outside Noumea, some in every commune in New Caledonia, giving many exceptionally strong local ties, above all those who are fourth or fifth generation settlers. The fact that so many of the non-Melanesian population were actually born in New Caledonia has added an extra dimension to the already complex population structure.

Of the present migrant population of New Caledonia a high proportion came in the boom years. Based on data from the mid-1970s Dornoy has stated that, even after some had returned, more than 24 per cent of all those born outside New Caledonia arrived in the single year 1970/71 (Dornoy 1984:52). The present census data reveal that 45 per cent of the population arrived between 1960 and 1975, but also that 14 per cent arrived before that and
Table 12  Population born in New Caledonia by ethnic group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>1976 (%)</th>
<th>1983 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melanesian</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>81.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>61.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallisian and Futunan</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Polynesian</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ni-Vanuatu</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


have therefore been in New Caledonia for at least a quarter of a century. However some 8085 people, 24 per cent of all migrants, arrived extremely recently, in little more than two years between 1981 and 1983; of these, three-quarters were from France (or perhaps from overseas departments) and most of the others were from Wallis and Futuna, Vanuatu, Vietnam or the francophone states of Africa, especially Algeria (INSEE 1984b: 171). This apparent leap in the number of migrants has little to do with the migration of settlers but is essentially the movement of military personnel, gendarmes, teachers, nurses and others, on tours of duty in this distant territory, without commitment to New Caledonia but with full civil rights, including those of voting and hence assisting in determining the future of New Caledonia. Prominent among these European migrants are the military, whose numbers have grown since the boom (and the start of nuclear testing in French Polynesia) with the growing French emphasis on the necessity of maintaining a substantial military presence in the South Pacific. By the end of the 1970s it was estimated that there were between 3500 and 5000 military personnel in New Caledonia, and that number has subsequently increased. Their presence is symbolic of both French colonization and the determination to ensure that the dependent status of New Caledonia will never be changed. It is their presence that is most resented by the Melanesian population.

Almost all those born outside New Caledonia were born in France or other colonies and former colonies (Table 13) giving the structure of migration to New Caledonia a strongly French and francophone element. Only from Asia and the French colonies are migrants anything other than overwhelmingly European; for example,
### Table 13 Population born outside New Caledonia, 1983

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1983</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France and DOM&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>16,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Polynesia</td>
<td>3,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallis and Futuna</td>
<td>4,767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco, Tunisia</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francophone Africa</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>33,817</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>DOM includes principally Réunion, Guadeloupe and Martinique.


### Table 14 Non-French population by nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1976</th>
<th>1983</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Europe</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>1162</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asia</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America (USA and Canada)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Oceania</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeclared</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2964</td>
<td>2484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of the 1446 migrants who were born in North Africa, some 1385 (96 per cent) are Europeans. In a sense the French nature of the population has further increased since the boom as many non-French citizens have died, departed or become naturalized French citizens (Table 14). The remainder are an ageing population; fully 46 per cent of the non-French citizens are aged over 40 compared with only 23 per cent of the population as a whole and as ageing continues so this particular minority will disappear. Some of the diversity of New Caledonia will be lost.

In the post-war years, following Asian return migration and the high wages and labour demands of the nickel boom, migration to New Caledonia changed from a movement typified earlier by Asians to one typified by migrants from France itself and from the other French territories in the South Pacific. This has contributed to the cosmopolitan population of New Caledonia but in other respects it has emphasized the 'French' characteristics of migration, with countries outside the French colonial system playing little part in population growth. Leaders from Tonga, the Gilbert and Ellice islands (Kiribati and Tuvalu) and Fiji all requested opportunities for their citizens to work in New Caledonia in the boom years but all were rejected (Crocombe 1975:57). Several business firms, desperately short of labour, did import Fijians for the nickel works and the hotel trade between 1966 and 1972 but, because they did not speak French, most returned to Fiji at the end of their contracts (Roux 1981a:20); a few remained, intermarried and have been absorbed into Noumea society. Generally the bias towards France and French territories was such that French Polynesians, Wallisians and Futunans were imported during the nickel boom 'both as docile labour and "reliable" voters at election times... tossed across the Pacific by the existence of the labour market or the vagaries of electoral politics' (Chesneaux 1981:27). Yet the particular bias to the French territories of the South Pacific itself, which then also included the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), had never been intended by the French government. Of all post-war population movements by far the most important, in every way, was the immigration of workers from France who, relative to every other migrant group, were highly educated, skilled and came to take up well-paid jobs in the nickel industries, commerce or the expanding bureaucracy. Like that of other migrant groups their numbers increased dramatically during the nickel boom. More than half of all those who migrated to New Caledonia between 1971 and 1976 were from France, and a Bureau des Migrations vers la Nouvelle-Calédonie encouraged and organized this migration, to ensure strong French representation in the growing work-force. Young men who contracted to work in New Caledonia were even excused military service. The deliberate exclusion of migrants from anglophone areas, and the bias towards French citizens, especially from France itself, was a direct result of the increased value attached to nickel and the realization that it was essential for New Caledonia to remain a colony: 'no longer was New Caledonia content to attract migrants it actively recruited'
The essence of the population policy that resulted was set out in a letter from the French Prime Minister, Pierre Messmer, to the Secretary of State for the DOM-TOMs:

New Caledonia, a settler colony, though already destined to be a multiracial mixture, is probably the last non-independent tropical territory in the world where a developed country can encourage its nationals to migrate. It is necessary to seize this last chance to create another Francophone country so that the French presence in Caledonia could only be threatened by a world war and not by nationalist claims from the indigenous people supported by allies from other Pacific communities. In the short or medium term the massive immigration of metropolitan French citizens or citizens from the Overseas Departments (Réunion) would enable this danger to be averted, and would immediately improve the numerical balance of the races. In the long term indigenous nationalist claims will only be prevented if non-Pacific communities and European French form the majority. It goes without saying that this can only be achieved by the systematic migration of women and children and the setting up of small middle-class enterprises. To correct the imbalance between sexes it will doubtless be appropriate to reserve all private employment for the immigrants. If this is undertaken then Caledonia will be in twenty years a small French territory as prosperous as Luxembourg ... The success of this task, essential to support French interests east of Suez, depends on our ability to succeed, after many checks to our history, in carrying out an operation to populate this distant land (cited by Gabriel and Kermel 1985:51; Coulon 1985:231).

The French Prime Minister, Pierre Messmer attempted to preserve French economic and strategic interests by ensuring the permanent migration of French citizens, and then creating and retaining jobs for them to discourage temporary guest-worker migration. He was also concerned that they came from far beyond the Pacific, in order not to be influenced by local nationalist or independence movements. In this respect at least his wishes were not to be and migration did bring in other Pacific islanders though, at the same time, there was a wave of migrants from the French West Indies. Messmer need not have been concerned; the Pacific regional migrants were at least as conservative, and often more so, than more distant French citizens.

The decision to encourage immigration contrasted with the preceding years when the failures of earlier European agricultural settlement had led to the territory's General Council rejecting in 1953 a Dutch proposal to open New Caledonia's doors to Eurasian migrants from Indonesia and a similar suggestion from the French government in 1955 with respect to Eurasians from Vietnam. Similarly when some senators, led by Henri Lafleur, advocated the
admission of several thousand pieds-noirs, the Territorial Assembly rejected the idea (Thompson and Adloff 1971:269-70). The nickel boom altered this insularity in many ways.

The impact of this migration, as Messmer perceived and intended, was enormous, principally in its relegation of the Melanesian population to the position of a minority group. Moreover almost 90 per cent of the nearly 10,000 French who migrated to New Caledonia between 1971 and 1976 lived in the Noumea area, hence there was a major 'Europeanization' of the town as it went through its period of most rapid growth. Even now, though 63 per cent of the population of Noumea were born in New Caledonia, fully two-thirds of the 33,917 people born outside New Caledonia live in Noumea and another quarter live in 'greater Noumea': suburban Mont Dore, Dumbea and Paita. Thus the great bulk of outsiders, whether French, Asian or Polynesian, are resident in greater Noumea giving the capital a wholly different character from the rest of the country. The arrival of a large French 'middle-class', the greatest proportion from the Paris region, brought stronger ties with the metropolis. The growth of television and stereo-systems, the spread of books, newspapers and magazines, plus expensive and exclusive foods, all arriving on the much more frequent and faster air services, at a time when world air fares and freight rates were relatively low, consolidated links with what was increasingly seen as metropolitan France. These new European migrants, unlike earlier settlers, had come primarily for high incomes, had no intention of making a commitment to New Caledonia and had little time for the local population. In their turn they were viewed disparagingly as zoreilles or cinq-cinqs, those whose big ears had heard about the high wages and were converting them directly from Pacific francs to French francs. By the start of the nickel boom wage-earners could achieve roughly similar standards to those of Australia and New Zealand and local purchasing power was about twice that in France (Thompson and Adloff 1971:458-60). Consequently it was not only French migrants who came but Italians, Spaniards and also Australians. The character of the white settler colony had quite changed.

The migrants of the boom years, and the years that followed, were expatriates rather than settlers; almost never landowners, or descendants of earlier generations of pioneer settlers. Many, even after a decade of residence, continue, in the French tradition, to rent rather than own their homes. Regular leave and plans for eventual retirement to France nurture different sets of roots, and Caledonian regional associations of Bretons, Alsatians and others sustain these roots. There are few old people among them and their children are often educated in France; they are a working population in which both women and men take advantage of the excellent opportunities to increase their incomes at inflated rates of pay, with minimal taxation, that will eventually provide a pleasant life in France, and all in a reasonably pleasant,
almost Mediterranean environment (cf. O'Brien 1972:17). The end of the boom has meant that New Caledonia has become more like the former North African colonies des fonctionnaires (public service colonies) with the public servants conscious of eventual return to France, and the necessity to ensure the future interests of their children (cf. Kahler 1984:347), but anxious to retain the salaries and fringe benefits of colonial life. Almost all have strong, and universally conservative views about the necessity for New Caledonia to remain part of France and for the Melanesians, that few have direct dealings with and many comfortably ignore, to assimilate into French society with its multiple benefits. None cease to be French and many, through distance and their perceptions or prejudices, have become more French in their absence from the metropolis, especially through seeking to maintain white unanimity in the face of a large black minority.

After the Second World War, when labour recruitment schemes from Asia ended, there was a substantial fall in the Asian population, which now consists almost entirely of Indonesians (Javanese) and Vietnamese. With the decline of coffee, a more rural Asian population distribution also gave way to a principally urban population, as Asians have increasingly taken up commercial and administrative employment, to the extent that 82 per cent of Asians live in greater Noumea. Despite clear differences in ethnic origin a high proportion of the Asian population was born in New Caledonia and has chosen to remain there rather than return to their 'homelands'; they are in many respects assimilated into the French economy and society. Nonetheless, at times of political tension, doubts are cast on the extent of that assimilation.

After Melanesians the Indonesians are much the most likely of any ethnic group to have been born in New Caledonia, though there are more citizens of Indonesia resident in New Caledonia than citizens of any other country (Tables 12 and 14). In political terms they have attempted to be a 'silent community'. There has always been concern over the perceived threat that 'minority groups would be expelled from New Caledonia as soon as the territory becomes independent' (Roosman 1978:21). Like other ethnic groups few wish to leave New Caledonia and their silence has aligned them, almost without exception, to the less than silent majority of Europeans who oppose independence.

Vietnamese in New Caledonia have experienced stronger and more overt opposition from the local European population both in the 1950s, with the fall of Dien Bien Phu and the establishment of a communist government in North Vietnam, and more recently. In the 1950s slogans covered the walls of Noumea demanding that Vietnamese 'go home' (cf. Dornoy 1984:45-8) and several thousand did return to Vietnam. Most of those who remained have become French citizens. Two decades later, the fall of Saigon and the establishment of a single government throughout Vietnam in 1975
resulted in New Caledonia quietly accepting around a thousand migrants from Vietnam, including about 500 who had been born in New Caledonia. Consequently the Vietnamese were the only migrant group for whom the proportion of the population born in New Caledonia actually fell between 1976 and 1983 (Table 12). In December 1984 the walls of Noumea were again daubed with slogans demanding that Vietnamese go home, a reaction to the belief that a local Vietnamese businessman had provided financial support to supporters of independence. This, in turn, provoked Vietnamese to stress that 'we will not leave', that assimilation was such that 'there is no distinct Vietnamese community' (Van Can 1985) and that Vietnamese 'are so integrated into local society that it is impossible to find a family without some métis element' (NC 5 January 1985), a radical and politically inspired revision of the more dominant belief that Vietnamese in New Caledonia were less likely to intermarry than other ethnic groups (Dornoy 1984:80; Rallu 1985:733). In contemporary New Caledonia even intermarriage has strong political overtones.

The migration of Polynesians brought the last of the major ethnic groups to New Caledonia, with the expansion of substantial public works programs and the construction of the Yate dam in the 1950s. The first migrants were from the small French Pacific territory of Wallis and Futuna and were followed by French Polynesians in the 1960s. Wallis and Futuna was one of the most neglected and least viable economies in the world, where population growth rates were high, exports virtually non-existent, income-earning opportunities little better, and social tensions becoming grave (Chapter 15). Migration increased rapidly in the boom years so that the number of Wallisians and Futunans in New Caledonia is now only marginally less than in Wallis and Futuna itself. Almost all are in urban areas and the urban proportion is increasing; in 1983 more than 90 per cent were in greater Noumea (Table 15). Almost half the others were in the mining town of Thio but, after the siege of Thio late in 1984, few remained there and the concentration in Noumea is now even greater.

Independent of migration, the Wallisian and Futunan population has grown extremely rapidly and its rate of natural increase is more than twice that of indigenous Melanesians. Some 46 per cent of this population are less than 15 years old, an extremely high proportion (compared with 36 per cent for the total New Caledonia population) and one of the highest recorded in the world. Indeed in 1976 some 60 per cent of the Wallisian and Futunan population of New Caledonia were aged less than 20, a proportion which has been claimed as a global demographic record (Roux 1980b:174). More than half of these Polynesians were born in New Caledonia; many have never seen Wallis or Futuna and few intend or wish to return to islands of such limited social and economic opportunities. Few have done so even after the boom.
<table>
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<td>5,319</td>
<td>61,870</td>
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<td>5,570</td>
<td>2,381</td>
<td>12,174</td>
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Their home islands are seen as no more than 'holiday islands and havens for the retired' (Roux 1980b:174) and returning is an admission of failure (Bonnemaison et al. 1981). Some 57 per cent of the population in Wallis and Futuna were aged under 20 years, slightly less youthful than the migrant population in New Caledonia, but young enough for the population to double in 24 years. This probability causes great concern in New Caledonia that Wallisians and Futunans, because of their lack of skills, social reputation and high unemployment and population growth rates would be 'the first to be sent home in the advent of Kanak independence' (Dornoy 1984:75). Such a situation would create a massive disturbance to exceptionally conservative island societies, already experiencing disruption from relatively limited return migration (NC 8 February 1985). The threat of return migration with all its discontents has induced massive support for the political status quo among Wallisians and Futunans, whether in Wallis, Futuna or New Caledonia.

The minimal skills and French-speaking ability of these Polynesian migrants, who therefore compete for many of the same kinds of jobs that Melanesians seek (especially in mining), alongside permanent settlement (resulting in several buying land), have contributed to sporadic friction with Melanesians. Almost since their arrival, Wallisians and Futunans were regarded by Melanesians as culturally inferior, clannish and quarrelsome, and by outside observers as neither docile nor skilled workers (Thompson and Adloff 1971:363). They are consistently regarded as hard and strong workers, but without respect for Melanesian customs and attitudes, and too inclined to support French interests (cf. Kohler 1984:30-2). Tensions were accentuated by the end of the nickel boom which brought economic and social problems for Wallisians and Futunans in New Caledonia. Because most live in or near Noumea they are poorly assimilated into the economic and social activities of Melanesians for whom their 'dynamism has an aggressive and conquering nature' (Bonnemaison et al. 1981) and who quickly came to resent what they correctly perceived as 'black colonization' by the Wallisians (Ward 1980:198). For their part, the highest unemployment rates in New Caledonia (Roux 1980b) and large family sizes have made Wallisians and Futunans the poorest and most underprivileged migrant group in New Caledonia. Opportunities for return migration are miserable, hence, in the aftermath of economic recession and political problems, many are adjusting to a semi-subsistence life-style on the fringes of Noumea but without opportunities to acquire adequate land and achieve a degree of stability.

Migration from French Polynesia followed that from Wallis and Futuna by almost a decade with the nickel boom coinciding with economic recession in French Polynesia. Local custom in New Caledonia considers all migrants from French Polynesia as 'Tahitians', disguising the fact that many do not come from Tahiti but from the remote outer islands. Distance and better employment
opportunities in French Polynesia have slowed migration and, since 1972, any growth of the French Polynesian population in New Caledonia has largely been through natural increase. In the last seven years the only ethnic group whose population has declined are the French Polynesians who, unlike the Vietnamese or Wallisians and Futunans, have chosen to respond to politics and recession by returning home. The French Polynesian population is just as localized as that of Wallis and Futuna, with 90 per cent of the population in greater Noumea, a concentration only exceeded by that of the Vietnamese population. The remainder were, until recently, in areas associated with nickel mining, such as Thio and Nepoui. Urban concentrations, such as the 'Petit Tahiti' of Ducos in Noumea, or Robinson in Mont Dore, contribute to the maintenance of a Polynesian life-style (Fages 1976:689-90). A very high level of unemployment and housing problems have contributed to an uncertain future in New Caledonia, a future that would be more secure if both New Caledonia and French Polynesia remained French territories. The less the former looks probable, and the economy worsens, the more that French Polynesians, with their minority status, return home. Those who leave are mainly Tahitians; those from the outer islands, especially the Australs, where economic opportunities are very poor, have tended to remain.

A long established migration stream has been that from the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) which, like that of other migration streams, grew during the nickel boom when New Caledonia was seen by its neighbours as 'a kind of Eldorado' (Bonembaliason et al. 1981). Most migrants were young, unqualified, single men from the francophone districts of this traditional source of migrant labour. In a typically Melanesian manner, these migrants usually remained in New Caledonia for about six months, and rarely for more than a year. In 1970 it was estimated that over 3000 ni-Vanuatu were working in New Caledonia and that during the nickel boom more than 10,000 had worked there, a very high proportion of the Vanuatu work-force. However after 1972 migration slumped and the ni-Vanuatu community in New Caledonia now consists of little more than about 500 workers and their families. Most are from the more densely-populated areas of Vanuatu, where income-earning opportunities are poor; many have intermarried and, though typically intending to return home (Natuman 1984), have effectively settled in New Caledonia. Though the only Melanesian migrants to New Caledonia their numbers are so few that their influence is non-existent.

There were still other migrants to New Caledonia who remained beyond the nickel boom. Between 1971 and 1976 about 3000 French citizens from other French colonies moved to New Caledonia, the main group being from the French Caribbean départements, especially Guadeloupe and Martinique. Many were demobilized military and had come with the support of the Bureau des Migrations des Départements d'Outre-Mer (BUMIDOM) or remained in New Caledonia after military service there. Migrants from the
Caribbean, like the Polynesians who preceded them with limited opportunities at home, have usually remained and opted for the promise of better times.

Although 'nickel boom' migration rapidly increased the number of Europeans in New Caledonia there had always been a stream of French migrants to work in the bureaucracy, settle on the land or take up other kinds of employment. As the former French colonies of North Africa and Asia became independent some French citizens moved on to New Caledonia. Typical of these, and the largest numerically, were the perhaps 2000 pieds-noirs from Algeria alone (Ward 1982:15), most of whom remained in Noumea, in search of high wage levels and low taxation alongside the ability to retain some degree of power and status in a colonial situation. Some, too, like long-term white residents of New Caledonia, had few close kin in France. This curious step-migration away from a homeland that some had never known brought a population that, quite unlike most migrant groups from other places and of other races, was more than willing to play a prominent role in conservative politics to protect its foothold in one of the last colonies in the world.

The last distinct migration movement into New Caledonia was that from Vanuatu in the aftermath of the Santo rebellion (Chapter 15). About 1200 'refugees' had arrived in New Caledonia by mid-1982 and there was a steady stream in the months thereafter. Many were expelled by the newly independent Vanuatu government, as supporters of secession, and others chose to move voluntarily, in a similar manner to the earlier pieds-noirs. Although almost all the migrants were French citizens some were ni-Vanuatu and a few were of Wallisian, Samoan, Tongan or other Pacific island origin. Initially housed in the empty apartments on the fringes of Noumea that were the legacy of the nickel boom, they were subsequently largely integrated into the New Caledonian economy, or moved on to France or elsewhere. Once again another politically conservative migrant group had been added to the population of New Caledonia, so much so that militants at the 1982 Congress of the UC demanded that the refugees from Santo be repatriated to France because they constitute a danger for Kanak independence. The Kanak state is not the waste-bin of the Pacific... the new migrants (since 1972) were all traitors (that is supporters of French imperialism) from Algeria, Vanuatu, Vietnam. We get that sort of refugee! We haven't any refugees from oppression in South America or South Africa - for example, - the true refugees. No, we get the traitors of the world - the rubbish of the world (Ounei 1985:70).

Their inevitable impact on the ballot box produced vocal denunciation.
Until the mid-1970s there was a steady flow of predominantly European migrants, a situation which would have resulted in the European population reaching that of the Melanesian population by the start of the 1980s. Economic recession reversed the direction of migration and only natural increase significantly contributed to a more slowly growing white population. The return of Europeans grew in importance into the present decade (Chauvel-Leroux 1981) and it has been estimated that of 10,000 Europeans who came to New Caledonia during the boom more than 6000 had left again by the end of the decade. Almost all went to France although, by the end of the 1970s, 'a sizeable New Caledonian European community had resettled around Sydney, joined every year by a number of individuals concerned about the future' (Guiart 1979:22). Increased investment in out-migration to Australia followed the changing political climate of the 1980s although the proximity of Australia was offset by such factors as Australian legal restrictions, language, a level of unemployment which discouraged migration except for those with significant skills or relatives there, to the extent that in 1981 only 66 people moved permanently to Australia (Corail 12 March 1982) with similar numbers going there in subsequent years. In the five-year period 1980-84, 326 Australian residence permits were granted to applicants from New Caledonia and French Polynesia (the majority being from New Caledonia), most of which were for family reunions and, to a lesser extent, for preferred categories of employment (NC 12 September 1984). Many Europeans in New Caledonia have never visited France to the extent that, in the mid-1970s, some 79 per cent of a random sample of Europeans in New Caledonia, some of whom were pieds-noirs, stated that they would prefer to migrate to Australia or New Zealand, rather than France, which they felt was alien to them (Dornoy 1984:63). In the last couple of years European emigration has again grown in volume, in response to continued recession and especially fears of independence, and it seems highly probable that this will continue.

In contrast to the massive streams of diverse ethnic groups into New Caledonia very few Melanesians have left New Caledonia and almost none have left permanently. Those who have gone have joined the military, gaining a year's experience in France or perhaps another colony, and others have gone into secondary or tertiary education. If small in number, these migrants have had a massive influence on social, economic and especially political change. Almost all the prominent Melanesian bureaucrats and politicians, notably Nidoish Naisseline and Tjibaou, have had long periods of tertiary education in France. These are the exceptional, marginal men who may determine New Caledonia's future. At a very different level are professional footballers in France; Doumenge curiously regards this unusual but tiny and temporary skill-drain as 'a real drainage channel between New Caledonia and some metropolitan clubs' (Doumenge 1982:451). Like the other French Pacific colonies, but unlike other parts of Polynesia or France's Caribbean colonies, emigration of the
indigenous population has been extremely limited in size though less so in significance. The return migration of those Melanesians with education has been as important to the present and future of New Caledonia as the migration of Europeans, Polynesians and others.

**Internal migration and urbanization**

The substantial population movement into New Caledonia in the boom years and beyond had important repercussions for internal migration. If controls over immigration had existed, rather than it being encouraged and assisted, internal migration would have been greater and the population of Noumea would have had a quite different ethnic composition. Not only would Melanesians not have again become a minority but they would have moved into the expanding urban work-force, have come to play an important role in the town and made Noumea no longer the *ville blanche* (white town) that it remains, and is defiantly proclaimed as such by graffiti on the white painted walls of the city. Extended Melanesian incorporation in the urban work-force, and the more comprehensive decay of traditional agriculture, might even have weakened subsequent demands for independence.

During the 'nickel boom' Noumea expanded rapidly. Between 1969 and 1976 the population of Noumea itself grew by 34 per cent; outlying Dumbea, with its new housing areas, grew by an extraordinary 283 per cent and Mont Dore grew by 122 per cent (Table 16). Noumea spread outwards; second homes were converted into full-time residences and sold at good profits and unused plots of land were filled with speculative housing. Since then suburbanization has slowed as the boom tailed off, high oil prices discouraged commuting and concern over security favoured urban residence. Though by the 1980s the era of massive urban growth was over, probably forever, it left Noumea with a population of 60,112 and, with Mont Dore, Dumbea and Paita, a metropolitan population of more than 85,000, more than 58 per cent of the total population of New Caledonia (Map 11). Only French Polynesia, in the South Pacific region, has an urban population concentration close to this.

There are three unusual characteristics of urbanization in New Caledonia: its long history in comparison with other parts of the South Pacific, the extraordinary primacy of Noumea, which not only contains more than half the population of New Caledonia but contains (with surrounding communes) virtually the whole of the urban population, and the small proportion of the urban population who are Melanesian. Noumea, despite the establishment of the Doniambo nickel factory, had gone through a long period of stagnation until the Second World War. From a military post in the mid-nineteenth century Noumea became a town of 9200 by 1887
(Doumenge 1982:402); by 1925 it still only had a population of about 9500 of whom the vast majority, 8600, were Europeans. Bourail, with 2300 European inhabitants (and few others), was then the second largest town in New Caledonia and it had already become as large a town as it would ever be. By 1936, when Noumea had a population of approximately 11,000 it was already the second largest town in the South Pacific, surpassed only by Suva, a measure of the economic development and centralized bureaucracy of New Caledonia. During the war more than 80,000 American soldiers were based there for more than three years, establishing what are now the incongruously named suburbs of Receiving and Motor Pool, but by 1948 the town had returned to its normal state of scarcely 15,000 people. There was steady growth until the 'boom' of 1969-71 which precipitated the urbanization of Europeans, Polynesians and Melanesians. Outside Noumea urbanization has been so restricted that in 1962 it was even possible to regard some
Table 16  Population growth and density, 1956-83

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>1969</th>
<th>1976</th>
<th>1983</th>
<th>Population density (persons per sq. km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noumea</td>
<td>22,235</td>
<td>41,853</td>
<td>56,078</td>
<td>60,112</td>
<td>131.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mont Dore</td>
<td>1,288</td>
<td>4,809</td>
<td>10,659</td>
<td>14,614</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifou</td>
<td>5,594</td>
<td>6,837</td>
<td>7,585</td>
<td>8,128</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumbea</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>1,304</td>
<td>4,991</td>
<td>5,538</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mare</td>
<td>3,104</td>
<td>3,410</td>
<td>4,156</td>
<td>4,610</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canala</td>
<td>2,816</td>
<td>3,559</td>
<td>3,884</td>
<td>3,842</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houailou</td>
<td>2,241</td>
<td>3,475</td>
<td>3,853</td>
<td>3,995</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paita</td>
<td>1,397</td>
<td>2,522</td>
<td>3,407</td>
<td>4,834</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourail</td>
<td>2,212</td>
<td>2,433</td>
<td>3,149</td>
<td>3,410</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poindimie</td>
<td>2,152</td>
<td>2,481</td>
<td>3,010</td>
<td>3,644</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poya</td>
<td>1,066</td>
<td>1,281</td>
<td>2,915</td>
<td>1,961</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thio</td>
<td>1,776</td>
<td>3,176</td>
<td>2,894</td>
<td>3,019</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ouvea</td>
<td>2,180</td>
<td>2,001</td>
<td>2,777</td>
<td>2,772</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koumac</td>
<td>2,759</td>
<td>1,907</td>
<td>2,481</td>
<td>1,405</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kone</td>
<td>2,037</td>
<td>2,557</td>
<td>2,479</td>
<td>2,919</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ponerihouen</td>
<td>1,840</td>
<td>1,948</td>
<td>2,065</td>
<td>1,932</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Foa</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>1,333</td>
<td>1,993</td>
<td>2,094</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hienghene</td>
<td>1,940</td>
<td>1,846</td>
<td>1,932</td>
<td>1,729</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pouebo</td>
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<td>1,472</td>
<td>1,782</td>
<td>1,503</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touho</td>
<td>1,332</td>
<td>1,474</td>
<td>1,667</td>
<td>1,901</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voh</td>
<td>1,328</td>
<td>1,424</td>
<td>1,656</td>
<td>1,586</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ouegoa</td>
<td>1,199</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>1,514</td>
<td>1,468</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaala-Gomen</td>
<td>1,161</td>
<td>1,296</td>
<td>1,425</td>
<td>1,231</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yate</td>
<td>1,474</td>
<td>1,113</td>
<td>1,365</td>
<td>1,387</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ile des Pines</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>1,095</td>
<td>1,287</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bouloupari</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>1,139</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pouembout</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belep</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moindou</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarramea</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fariño</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poum&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New Caledonia 68,490 100,579 133,233 145,368 7.8

<sup>a</sup>In January 1977 Poum became a new commune, separating from Koumac.

centres with populations of no more than 25 as being 'urban' (Curson 1965:22) and nowhere has there been rapid urban growth. Noumea continues, without interruption, to reign supreme, 'an urban area, a small corner of the land but densely populated, living in semi-ignorance of the rest of the archipelago, but dominating it culturally, politically and economically (Doumenge 1982:1).

The increasing primacy of Noumea is reciprocated in the small size, stagnation and unimportance of other urban centres in New Caledonia. Although they have recently been described as 'embryonic' (Doumenge and Saussol 1981), there is no evidence that any other urban centre in New Caledonia is even growing. Most were never more than small colonial commercial and administrative centres and scarcely grew even during the nickel boom. The largest town outside Noumea until recently was the now declining mining town of Nepoui, which only had 1700 people, and the largest place with more wide-ranging functions is now Bourail with a population of about 1500, the largest town outside Noumea. The extraordinary and increasing population concentration in a single, eccentrically located city, far away from the historic and contemporary Melanesian population centres of New Caledonia, and the widening gap between Noumea and other 'towns' has had a massive importance for every aspect of development and change in New Caledonia.

During the boom, and the first stirrings of Melanesian nationalism, the policy of the Mayor, Roger Laroque, was to ensure that Noumea remained a white town with Melanesians no more than a quarter of the population (Bourdinat 1982:2270; Ounei 1985:10). In this he succeeded beyond his dreams and the urbanization of Melanesians has been a slow process, much slower than in the Melanesian towns to the north, where urban growth has been rapid in recent decades and capital cities are now overwhelmingly dominated by Melanesians. There were only 139 Melanesians in Noumea at the start of the century and, even in 1951, long after the end of the war, there were no more than 1575 (less than five per cent of the Melanesian population). Pre-war controls on the freedom of movement of Melanesians (the Indigénat) prevented residence in town; the only exceptions were those workers, primarily from the Loyalty Islands, with short-term labour contracts in Noumea. But there has been greater diversity in recent years and the proportion of Melanesians in Noumea grew from nine per cent in 1956 to 21 per cent in 1983. Though the urban Polynesian population grew from nothing in the same period, even in diversity the European population is dominant.

The European nature of Noumea is measured in numbers (Table 15) and symbolized in the names of suburbs, some of which, like Normandie and Auteuil, were named by nostalgic settlers after parts of France and others, like Vallée des Colons, for the settlers themselves. Roads too, like Rue du Maréchal Foch or Rue
Sébastopol are redolent of French history. While some of the poorer urban areas are more obviously characterized by Melanesian or Polynesian populations, it is rare to find concentrations of people from particular areas, though Melanesians from the Grande Terre tend to be found in the Vallée du Tir or the central urban areas, Loyalty Islanders from Mare at the Vallée des Colons or Verteuil and from Lifou at Port Despointes or Motor Pool. Nevertheless in contrast to larger Melanesian towns, there are no real 'urban villages' in Noumea (Doumenge 1982:407). There are few shanty towns; those that do exist are on the fringes of Noumea, such as at Robinson, and are occupied as much by poor Polynesians as Melanesians. But squatters and shanty towns are rare and more formal housing characterizes this southernmost and most European city in Melanesia.

The large houses at the southern end of Noumea peninsula have given a large part of Noumea an almost wholly European population; the suburbs of Baie des Citrons, Anse Vata and Val Plaisance have very few Melanesians, a situation apparent in the tiny proportion of votes for indépendantiste candidates in the ballot boxes from these suburbs. By contrast, the only real concentration of Melanesians in Noumea is at Montravel, a grim suburb of tenement buildings in the shadows and pollution haze of the Doniambo nickel works. Although Doumenge suggests that it is the only suburb where Melanesians have imprinted any character on the urban landscape (1982:406), the tenement blocks, indistinguishable from equally grim buildings in the poorest suburbs of large European cities and unlike anything else in the South Pacific, have equally imprinted their soul-less anonymity on the Melanesian population. Daubed with graffiti, stinking from inadequate waste disposal systems, these rented flats house some of the poorest Melanesians in New Caledonia. Many are unemployed but have chosen to remain in Noumea rather than return to reservations, where their social ties have been poorly maintained. They are the urban dispossessed.

Beyond the suburbs of Noumea population change in the past decade has rarely been dramatic. The old mining towns of Thio, Canala, Houailou and Yate have experienced either population decline or extremely slow growth; the greatest population decline has been in Poya, where fully a quarter of the houses were empty in 1983, victims of the collapse of the mining industry at Nepoui (INSEE, 1984b:26, 127). Nine other communes, almost all in the north of the Grande Terre, have recorded recent population declines, maintaining a pattern of long-term emigration. The Loyalty Islands, especially Lifou and Ouvea and Belep, also lost population. Much of this movement dates from the time of the nickel boom when the shift in the population distribution of New Caledonia began. The Noumea metropolitan area, with some other southern communes, grew at the expense of the remote areas; growth has continued in the wake of the boom, and been accentuated by much higher rates of natural increase in the metropolitan area.
Internal migration has emphasized numerical differences between a highly concentrated European, Asian and Polynesian population and a dispersed Melanesian population.

By far the most important element in this pattern of regional migration is the movement of Europeans and other ethnic groups away from the rural areas of the east and west coasts. By the late 1970s the growing strength of demands for independence and social pressures had already resulted in the out-migration of some European households. The Balade-Pouebo district was slowly being evacuated by descendants of the very first settler families (Guiart 1979:24). Europeans were moving away from Canal and, in some places, even by the early 1980s, this had resulted in the closure of a number of small stores. As the nickel boom faded Asians and Polynesians also moved into Noumea away from the small mining towns of the bush; young Wallisians, Futunans and French Polynesian families left the stagnant mining centres, some to return to French Polynesia (Villageois 1981:47), but most to the outer suburbs of Noumea. Each of these trends was emphasized in the 1980s by the rural-urban migration of non-Melanesians and some return migration of Melanesians.

The return of Melanesians to the east coast has further emphasized the existing polarity of European town and Melanesian country. Europeans form a majority of the population in just four communes; Noumea, Dumbea, Koumac and the tiny Farino (Table 15). Outside the metropolitan area there are only seven communes where Melanesians are a minority: six of these are on the west coast and one single commune on the east coast had, in 1983, a Melanesian minority (Maps 12a and 12b). This was Thio, decaying mining town and the site of many of the major disturbances of 1984 and 1985. Until then Thio was the most ethnically diverse commune in New Caledonia, with a large European, Wallisian, Futunan and French Polynesian population. This diversity was destroyed in the aftermath of the events which temporarily sealed the town from the outside world and disrupted mining operations (Chapter 14) as many Europeans and Polynesians left, making Thio a Melanesian commune much more like others on the east coast. Elsewhere Europeans and Polynesians also fled the east coast and Melanesians returned to their home areas. Political violence, with its impact on population migration, symbolized growing ethnic divisions and dramatically emphasized the slow and steady movement towards an ethnically divided New Caledonia.

Though Melanesians are a minority in metropolitan Noumea they nonetheless constitute a population of more than 16,000 in the four metropolitan communes, more than a quarter of the Melanesian population of the whole of New Caledonia, and a higher urbanized proportion than anywhere else in Melanesia. Moreover birthplace data from 1976 (unavailable in 1983) indicate that, of the 10,064 Melanesians then in Noumea, 3535 (35 per cent) were
Map 12a  Melanesian population distribution, 1983

Map 12b  European population distribution, 1983

born there; although this proportion includes a large number of children it does indicate a certain stability and the existence of a core of urban Melanesians who are likely to have restricted ties to rural areas. Consequently this is a population whose beliefs and attitudes are critical to future developments in New Caledonia. In the last inter-censal period, 1976 to 1983, the proportion of Melanesians in Noumea was still growing slowly, largely through natural increase, though that growth may now have ended. In earlier years migration had been principally responsible for the growth of Noumea, and Melanesians came above all from the Loyalty Islands, the historic source of labour for the Grande Terre and beyond. Migration from the Loyalty Islands to the Grande Terre resumed after the Second World War, and Loyalty Islanders, and to a lesser extent, migrants from Belep and the Isle of Pines, dominate the Melanesian population of Noumea in every way. Many of the early migrants were relatively well educated and subsequently obtained the more prestigious and better-paid jobs open to Melanesians in the capital. Their power, relative to Melanesians from the Grande Terre, has always been considerable.

In 1959, 71 per cent of all Melanesians in Noumea were from the Loyalties and the percentages away from their home communes were nearly three times as high for the Loyalties as anywhere else in New Caledonia (McTaggart 1963:113-14). This dominance of the Loyalty population in Noumea has never been lost. Their significance is even more apparent in terms of participation in the urban economy. Loyalty Islanders from Lifou alone occupy 49 per cent of the positions occupied by Melanesians in the Noumea public service; islanders from Mare and Ouvea take up another 26 per cent (Doumenge 1982:423).

The difference between high levels of Melanesian migration from the Loyalty Islands and low levels of migration from most parts of the Grande Terre can partly be attributed to the different early contact history, limited opportunities in the Loyalties for either employment or cash crop production, but also, as Doumenge (1982) discusses at length, to the significance of the disruption of traditional land tenure by land alienation in the Grande Terre, resulting in the continued reluctance of Melanesians, especially leaders, to leave their remaining tribal lands. The distance between the Loyalties and the Grande Terre, and employment bias in their favour has also increased the probability of migrants from the Loyalties being permanent urban residents and thus obtaining higher status jobs. The easier access of Loyalty Islanders to jobs in Noumea produced friction between them and Melanesians of the Grande Terre, although Loyalty Islanders were at least regarded as more acceptable than Polynesian migrants (Thompson and Adloff 1971:362). These differences have been partly maintained and it is not therefore surprising that the Melanesians least likely to be in favour of independence are from the Loyalty Islands and the Isle of Pines.

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The nickel boom provided high incomes and a means for many more Melanesians to participate in the wage economy. Movement into urban and mining centres was not only a response to new job opportunities but, more significantly, was also a recognition of the fact that rural incomes could no longer satisfy needs such as the necessity for children to receive (and pay for) education from the ages of six to fourteen (Doumenge 1982; Zeldine 1967). The ease of obtaining high incomes during the 'boom' eventually resulted in substantial migration from villages of the Grande Terre, although this migration often lasted less than a full year. Even relatively short-term, circular migration had a significant impact on the rural areas, beyond the mere provision of capital. It inevitably resulted in the ageing of the agricultural labour force and declining productivity and production (Macrae 1974:39-41). The tribal economy was thus disrupted, many migrants becoming committed neither to urban nor rural life, finding attractions in each, moving intermittently between the two sectors and being unable to make a significant investment in the future (cf. Bazinet 1970:26). As the boom faded away, many Melanesians returned to the social and economic security of the rural hinterland. Where rural opportunities were fewer and population densities higher, as in the Loyalty Islands, the tradition of migration was firmly entrenched, the benefits long-standing and return migration was less common. The same was true of the Isle of Pines where numerous families, resident in Noumea, found the costs of urban life so high that family heads sent back women and children to the island (Doumenge 1982:370) to increase the rural component of household incomes and spread the burden of earning a livelihood. Even after the boom was over, migration from the Isle of Pines actually increased, in absolute contrast to the return movements of the Grande Terre (Doumenge 1975b:84). Those who opted for full-time employment were principally from the islands, hence the end of the boom emphasized the distinction between a more permanent Melanesian labour force, primarily from the Loyalty Islands, and those from the Grande Terre who continued to circulate between rural and urban areas.

Not all Melanesians from the Grande Terre returned to their tribes in the aftermath of the nickel boom; those who did not were mainly the young. Although they were said to have 'overturned Kanak life and its values' (Anon 1976:43), even the most assimilated Melanesians remain wholly conscious that they straddle two very different societies and, if unsatisfied with life in the reservations, also remain uneasy with European life. About two-thirds of Melanesians live in the reservations and the essence of life, whether welcomed or partly rejected, is the life of the reservation; for many, a single reservation and tribe are both place of birth and death. The ideology of migration remains one of circularity even if, as in the outer islands, those who have good jobs in Noumea think only of returning 'home' on retirement (Doumenge 1975b:87). The ideology is retained but the reality, at least for many of the island migrants, has increasingly been one
of effective permanence. Only in the last two years has this reality been shaken and disturbed.

Spatial and social imbalance

In every sense population change in New Caledonia has had strong political overtones. From the nineteenth century colonial era, when France sent convicts and free settlers to the new colony, resulting in the decline and withdrawal of Melanesians from the south and west, a new population geography was created. Asian immigration created a second wave of migration and settlement, though the third wave, in the boom years, including Polynesians and Europeans, was the most politically inspired since the era of Governor Feillet and, for the first time, was deliberately organized with the intention of securing permanent French control over the colony and consolidating a white Noumea. So far it has been successful. This diversification of the ethnic structure of New Caledonia suggested to conservatives the 'Caledonization' of the total population, where different races and cultures are fused together into a single harmonious society, so that the accidents of history can be ignored and no group given a distinctive status. In a different perspective, throughout the DOM-TOMs, 'Noumea is probably the town where the colonial anachronism is most glaring. In Noumea the virulence of white Caldoche society, obsessed with racial arithmetic that will one day put it in a minority, provides a situation that is openly racist' (Guillebaud 1976:48). The contemporary politics of New Caledonia are inseparable from its population history, and the principal outcome of that history is a colony where only a minority (44 per cent) of the population are Melanesian. New Caledonia has the highest European population, both in absolute numbers and proportion of the total population, of any state in the South Pacific region and is the only place, other than Fiji, where the indigenous population is a minority population.

Though conventional divisions separate the population of New Caledonia into Europeans, Melanesians, Polynesians, Asians and others, there are no official census categories for those métis who must, in the census at least, define themselves according to the race with which they feel best assimilated. In the run-up to the 1983 census there was angry Kanak opposition to a changed classification (Dardelin 1984:88), where métis could only be classified with Europeans, a change that contributed to the census under-enumeration; New Caledonia is quite unlike French Polynesia where métis has long been a separate category. How many métis there are in New Caledonia is thus quite unknown although Brou suggests a total of 13,000 of European and Melanesian origin alone (Brou 1980:19) and others have suggested 70,000 (Spencer 1985:10). In practice such numbers are wildly exaggerated, even though there is obviously a large biological métis population, and also irrelevant in a context where the métis are not a socially
recognized category but appear as Europeans or Melanesians according to context (Kohler and Pillon 1982a:8), and almost always as Europeans (Guiart 1984a:334). Though Brou talks of 'the problem of the métis' (1975:260), it is not a problem for most métis themselves, conscious of their own identity and with a place in either Melanesian or European society. Emphasis on the variety of ethnic groups in New Caledonia is scarcely without political connotations; arguments over the extent of métissage in New Caledonia, along the lines of Chirac's extreme claim that 'we are all métis now' (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:57), enables settlers, some of whom claim to be the first occupants of a particular tract of land, to demand 'in the name of what nation, what colour, through the first occupation of land, how can we possibly be separated?' (Garofalo 1985:34; cf. Roux 1985b:26). Such extreme manipulation is palpably absurd. For the conservative geographer Roux, New Caledonia has become 'a crucible of a "New World"' (Roux 1984:134). By contrast Guiart argues more bluntly that 'the line of separation in New Caledonia is due to history. It is between Melanesians and all others' (Guiart 1983a:101). In reality the situation is neither as vague as Roux suggests nor as rigid as Guiart asserts. Brou simultaneously attempts to argue that Melanesians wholly aspire to imitate Europeans and that there has been a 'Caledonization' of the total population so that there is a 'general Creolization' of society (Brou 1980:31-2). Outsiders are equally prone to make silly statements: 'New Caledonians, given their extremely varied population, can more realistically regard themselves, as Pacific Islanders (or Frenchmen) than as Melanesians' (Chowning 1977:96). In the illustrations to Brou's population monograph, many postcards and the judiciously chosen photographs in some official publications, there is a mixture and harmony of races that suggests that there is an ethnic 'melting pot' in New Caledonia. It has been seriously argued by Le Figaro that all the prominent indépendantiste leaders, Tjibaou, Naisseline and Machoro, are mixed race and hence, with these men as leaders, and 'widespread métissage, Kanak culture was an invention' (Spencer 1985:10). This is, of course, an argument rejected by Kanaks; in 1972 a Melanesian from Mare declared 'we and our land were believed dead, put to sleep for ever, anaesthetized by modernization and cultural assimilation. After 129 years we are now awakening' (Guillebaud 1976:178). Assimilation is no more than wishful thinking by those conservatives most prone to reject Melanesian values. At the margin there are similarities and convergence but to take no note of ethnic divisions in New Caledonia and their massive significance in economic and political life would be wholly to misunderstand the local situation.

The issue of 'Caledonization' is important in one further way and that is the insistence of the French government that history is irrelevant and that the contemporary population situation is the reality around which all political negotiations should take place. Polynesians and Asians in New Caledonia
support this view, and a number of political parties have emerged in the past decade that emphasize racial equality as a key element in their platform, effectively denying the possibility of redress of historical inequalities, especially over access to land. Melanesians were officially granted no special position, until very recently (Chapter 13), and this too has never been widely accepted. Every ethnic group, however small, has had some role in political change. The ethnicity, and to a lesser extent the geography, of population are critical determinants of past and future in New Caledonia. Marginal 'Caledonization' has failed to erode major differences and Kanaks (and also some Europeans) dispute the existence of such convergence, arguing instead that Melanesians above all, but also the Caldoche descendants of the early colonists, are 'victims of history' and thus must be clearly distinguished from recent migrants of whatever race. Diverse and often conflicting economic interests have ensured that divisions between ethnic groups are largely maintained; recent claims, such as those of the Vietnamese, that intermarriage has blurred racial divisions, more reflect the politicization of population changes than real social change. Though 'the traditional concept of integration is seen as the desirable and viable alternative by many liberal Europeans who are attracted to the idea of a harmonious multiracial society' (Dornoy 1984:69), even if practicable it would lead to further destruction of Melanesian traditions, hence opposition to assimilation and integration have increasingly become bywords in the struggle for independence. In the last few years 'Caledonization' has been shown to be no more than a figment of conservative imaginations. Ethnic polarization is increasingly the reality.

It is not only for New Caledonia as a whole that population change and ethnicity have strong political connotations; regional shifts in population have also had a strong influence on economic and political change. Population movements in New Caledonia exemplify several trends found elsewhere in the Pacific, including the urbanization and centralization of the population. Within the Melanesian communes the population is becoming even more concentrated as tribes move downwards from the remote mountainsides, where services are exceptionally restricted (Coulon 1982), and problems of access have resulted in 'the slow desertification of the mountainous parts of the territory' (Seguin 1982:8). As elsewhere in Melanesia colonial restrictions on population movement have been lifted but, unlike the independent states, this has not led to Melanesian dominance of the urban population; indeed, in recent years, the urban migration of European settlers, the Caldoches, has been greater than that of Melanesians. These ethnic divisions have been the basis of proposals, such as that of Ukeiwe and Pisani and the Fabius Plan (Chapter 14), for a division of New Caledonia into quite distinct political and administrative regions.
The increasing urban location of the population and especially the non-Melanesian population has emphasized a development policy focused on Noumea and 'desertification' has reduced the likelihood of appropriate rural development strategies being carried out. In the era of increased unemployment that followed the nickel boom the skills learnt by migrants in mines and towns proved useless in the rural areas, while returning migrants were unwilling to revert to agricultural tasks in a rural economy that had stagnated. Some chose to remain in Noumea, secure high status employment and see their urban-educated children lose their tenuous rural roots; others, unable to return to impoverished and overcrowded reservations, have remained unemployed in the tenements and dilapidated homes of Montravel. In different ways many Melanesians have chosen, or have had thrust upon them, an urban future. Migration and urban employment have pointed to the differentiation of particular regions within New Caledonia, and especially the great differences between the Loyalty Islands and the Grande Terre.

The end of the nickel boom provided problems not only for Melanesians but also for migrants from other French territories. For them and other minority ethnic groups, the future has been uncertain. As migrant groups have become more urban so their necessity to obtain and retain employment has increased; likewise, in the absence of opportunities for 'return migration', and many ethnic minorities (especially Europeans) no longer, if they ever did, even recognize 'homes' elsewhere, the necessity to remain in New Caledonia has intensified. Ultimately however only Melanesians have no other homeland. In a climate of uncertainty most minority ethnic groups have inevitably supported the present administrative structure which offers long-term residence and employment opportunities. To these concerned and conservative minorities have come even more conservative European migrants: the pied noirs and Europeans from other former French colonies! Large numbers of military and bureaucrats, still participating in 'the waltz of the governors', have so far ensured that population numbers have been sufficient to ensure that Messmer's vision of a prosperous French state largely remains reality. International migration is closely controlled. Curiously despite the fact, much-resented by Melanesians, that French citizens could vote in New Caledonia after no more than six months residence, French-born French citizens must hold a return ticket, which has to be renewed regularly, indicating that New Caledonia (like French Polynesia) has a very distinct status, and that France exerts some control on migration. At the same time European Communities (EC) legislation on the free movement of labour also does not apply, so maintaining French domination.

The composition and distribution of the population are crucial elements in electoral geography. Older electoral divisions, that gave most territorial seats to the European south and west, have been as criticized for bias (Dornoy 1984:59) as
have contemporary regional divisions, that reverse the bias in favour of the Melanesian regions (Chapter 14). Increasingly, voting has also become polarized by race. Symptomatic of the crucial role of demography is the manner in which migrants to New Caledonia have overwhelmingly voted in favour of the parties that have promised the strongest, long-term ties with France. Renewed migration is thus a constant Melanesian concern: Guiart has claimed that the prominent conservative politician Jacques Lafleur was still encouraging immigration at least as recently as 1982 (Guiart 1983a:255) and the indépendantiste Hnalaine Uregei has even claimed:

We are aware that the right-wing parties in France are intending to bring an extra 20,000 settlers to New Caledonia from the small island of Réunion. The population there is 600,000 and they have a problem of overpopulation. So they hope to solve two problems at once by sending 20,000 to New Caledonia. This is why we cannot wait beyond 1986 (Direct Action 5 December 1984).

The continued complexity of politics and recent history in New Caledonia results from it being the only contemporary French settler colony, with early settlement effectively strengthened by the more diverse settlers of the boom years again swamping the historic population. A new settler policy firmly shifted the balance of power towards Noumea and Paris, created new inequalities withoutremedying the old, heightened political tensions and denied the opportunity for independence at exactly the time that Melanesian nationalism was emerging.
Chapter 11

The end of a nightmare?

The future of the islanders obviously lies in cooperation with the white man; but the realization of this must be brought home to them before they get out of control as a result of prolonged disillusion and bitterness. When they themselves come at their own slow pace to make use of modern political methods, the present opportunity will have been lost. These islands may be Paradise, but past experience shows that they are not impervious to social upheavals (Guiart 1951:90).

The war brought fundamental changes not only to the economy of New Caledonia. From 1946 New Caledonia was no longer officially a colony but a territory of France, a largely cosmetic change but one which coincided with other important changes. The Indigénat was finally abolished and a few Melanesians, just over a thousand ex-soldiers, pastors, chiefs and monitors, were also granted the right to vote; it seemed to be 'the end of a nightmare' (Doumenge 1982:438). The right to vote was partly the result of the actions on the eve of the war of the Parti Communiste Calédonien, a small party but one with many Melanesian members (Saussol 1979a:363, 370). Rising expectations had been stimulated in the war years and it was fortunate that the end of the war coincided with a more liberal French colonial policy even though significant changes took several years to implement.

Before the war there had been only the most trivial opposition to the conservative administration and much of this had come from a number of small trade unions. A union organizer, Florindo Paladini, created a local branch of the French Communist party in the 1940s, called Progrès Social, which was supported by a few Europeans and Melanesians from the islands of Belep and Lifou (Thompson and Adloff 1971:277) though Guiart suggests that, in Lifou at least, it was organized on cargo-cult lines and soon disappeared (Guiart 1951:84, 88). A second socialist party, the Trotskyist Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire, had similar support and propaganda tracts were widely distributed among the tribes. These tracts called for revolt and told Melanesians that 'the racists have taken away the heritage of your ancestors' and 'you should enjoy the same privileges as the whites: if this doesn't
please them they can return to the country of their fathers' (Thompson and Adloff 1977:277). Though these parties were only tiny and short-lived they had a significant influence among Melanesians, even though they could not vote, fostering for the first time the promise of positive future changes at a time when the war was simultaneously destroying a seemingly immutable order.

In anticipation of the post-war elections genuine political parties began to emerge for the first time. As a territory, New Caledonia was now to be represented in the French parliament and, in the elections of October 1945, Roger Gervolino, a member of the Comité Calédonien, won easily, far ahead of his main rival, Paladini. The Comité Calédonien, though a conservative party (Dornoy 1984:154; Thompson and Adloff 1971:277), initially collaborated with Progrès Social in seeking greater autonomy for New Caledonia. Both parties sought the imposition of an income tax, nationalization of the nickel industry and public utilities and the breaking up of the big cattle stations; however by the time of the elections their unity had disintegrated. Gervolino became the first of several New Caledonian conservatives in the French parliament; like so many subsequent autonomists he was also largely unsuccessful in achieving decentralization of power from Paris to Noumea.

The new French constitution of 1946, which gave Melanesians some access to citizenship and enabled their widespread mobility, began the process of emancipation. Christian missionaries took the initiative in training the first Melanesian political élite, creating early on the symbiosis of Christianity and incipient nationalism widespread in pre-independence Melanesia. In New Caledonia the relationship between religion and Melanesian politics has never disappeared. First into the arena were the Catholic missions; Father François Luneau, a Canala missionary who had spent 24 years in New Caledonia, published a pamphlet titled Revendications de l'Union des Indigènes Calédoniens, Amis de la Liberté et de l'Ordre, which appealed for the unity of all Melanesians in respect of their legitimate grievances, such as the violation of the reservations, inadequate schools and controls over the sale of alcohol. This led to the establishment in 1947 of the Union des Indigènes Calédoniens Amis de la Liberté dans l'Ordre (UICALO). The Protestants were not far behind; the Association des Indigènes Calédoniens et Loyaltiens Français (AICLF) was established under the leadership of Pastor Raymond Charlemagne and, like UICALO, worked to improve the legal rights and social welfare of Melanesians (Doumenge 1982:123; Dornoy 1984:156-8; Thompson and Adloff 1971:285-6). Attempts were made to unite the two associations, which would then have broadly represented some 30,000 Melanesians, and both presidents, Henri Naisseline, a grand chef from Mare and Roch Pidjot, chief of Conception, met to discuss a merger but vague 'external influences' prevented a successful outcome. Nonetheless for the
first time Melanesians were established on the fringes of the political arena.

Initially the administration was favourable to the establishment of the two new organizations, because of their mission support (and hence their anti-communism) and because they believed (and hoped) that the two organizations were pressing more strongly for more schools and greater economic opportunities, rather than for political power. There was of course a continued conservative backlash to any social and economic evolution of Melanesians and widespread European support for any policies 'that promised to maintain the Melanesians in their present state of passivity' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:289). The reorganized Office of Native Affairs sought to revive Melanesian tribal life in the reserves, 'to protect' them so that they could 'fulfil their manifest destiny as a peasantry' (Dornoy 1984:160; Thompson and Adloff 1971:289). Policies were thus largely directed to ensuring that Melanesians remained rural and took no part in the major political and economic activities of the territory; in these circumstances UICALO and AICLF lost their initial momentum and it was becoming apparent that only external pressures, from France, could bring about any real change in Melanesian society. Despite the liberalism of the war years, the demands of Melanesian returned soldiers (Doumenge 1982:122; Dornoy 1984:155), the establishment of two large Melanesian organizations throughout New Caledonia and the repeal of the Indigénat, genuine change in the second half of the 1940s was largely non-existent and a local conservative oligarchy easily prevented further evolution in response to Melanesian aspirations. It was a pattern that has largely remained in place ever since with advances aimed as much at establishing a Melanesian élite, that would dampen subsequent nationalist and anti-colonialist sentiments, as a liberal response to the necessity for widespread reform.

Melanesian enfranchisement and the rise of the Union Calédonienne

Political change came only from Paris and even when it came 'it was exerted inadvertently rather than deliberately' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:290). In May 1951 the French parliament hastily passed a law that massively increased the number of electors qualified to vote for parliamentary deputies from the DOM-TOMs. There was no protest against it from New Caledonia's deputies who were absent from parliament at the crucial session. Since the law was aimed at France's African colonies, where the number of Africans was far greater than the number of settlers and bureaucrats, there is doubt that it was ever intended to be applicable to such small settler colonies as New Caledonia. Inadvertent or not, the enfranchisement of Melanesians, which meant that the number of Melanesian electors went from 1144 to 8700 giving them a situation of near equivalence with the 10,888 European electors, was a major turning point in the history of New
Caledonia (Thompson and Adloff 1971:290). The principal immediate consequence was the election of Maurice Lenormand as a deputy to the French parliament in the elections of July 1951. Lenormand, a pharmacist, married to a Melanesian from Lifou, was a migrant from France and quickly became known to Europeans by the derogatory epithet, 'the Deputy of the Kanaks', at a time when most Europeans continued to see Melanesians as no more than 'an agricultural and seasonal work-force' (Saussol 1979a:363). A new era had begun.

Before the 1951 election a number of influential Europeans, including Jacques Barrau, the head of the Agriculture Service, and Charlemagne, came together to prepare a platform for a new political party, the Union Calédonienne (UC), which was intended to be liberal enough to gain support both from many Europeans, notably the small settlers, and the newly enfranchised Melanesians. For Melanesians and liberals alike, 'it was still unthinkable that a Melanesian could represent New Caledonia' (Dornoy 1984:161); the candidate that best represented the UC interests was Maurice Lenormand. Encouraged by Charlemagne and by Guiart, then just embarking on a lifetime of increasingly pragmatic anthropological research in New Caledonia, Lenormand was a last-minute contender in the elections. He stressed the defence of the CFP franc and the 'native question' as the two most important issues facing the electorate. The early successes of Gervolino encouraged a sense of complacency among divided conservative forces and Lenormand, with 37 per cent of the votes, was victorious. Of his 5064 votes only 530 were from the largely European Noumea area, implying that a large majority of the Melanesians who had voted supported Lenormand and the UC (Thompson and Adloff 1971:292). Yet, if Lenormand was 'the Deputy of the Kanaks', in the spirit of the times his attitudes to Melanesians were often paternalistic (Dornoy 1984:161; cf. Guiart 1951:90). Even so, for the first time, New Caledonia had a deputy who broadly sympathized with and supported the diverse interests and aims of the Melanesian population.

Enraged and infuriated by the election of Lenormand the conservative forces disintegrated into various factions. Almost inevitably one small faction wanted New Caledonia to secede from France and form an alliance with Australia or the United States. A second group aimed for two seats in the French parliament (one for Melanesians and one for Europeans) and two local assemblies, though the European assembly would be dominant. Both proposals were resisted by Melanesians, by Lenormand (Lenormand 1953:287) and by European radicals. In the conservative forces, though rarely united, were most prominent local businessmen, such as Henri Lafleur, Senator for New Caledonia since 1946 and owner of large mining and grazing interests, and Henri Bonneaud, a director of the Ballande trading company. It took more than a year for France to respond to conservative pressures. The single electoral college was preserved and the five electoral divisions also remained, with twenty-five seats; nine of these were in the south.
(including Noumea), seven in the west, two in the east, four for the tribes and the Isle of Pines and three in the Loyalty Islands. Thus on the east coast, where more than 75 per cent of the electorate were Melanesian, there were separate European and Melanesian constituencies (Thompson and Adloff 1971:294-8; Dornoy 1984:162-3). This situation remained the broad basis for most subsequent elections, though separate racial seats soon disappeared.

The first election to be fought under the new system was the 1953 election for the Territorial Assembly. Although there were a number of independents, and 60 candidates competed for the 25 seats, the two main groups were the Liste d'Union, led by Henri Bonneauad, and the UC, now primarily associated with Lenormand. Bonneauad demanded much greater financial autonomy for New Caledonia, alongside the development of mining and agriculture with new migrant labourers, but without new taxes; with reference to Melanesians the Liste d'Union stated: 'we have the sincere desire to collaborate with the natives and want them to enter political, economic and social life. If we have drawn up no precise program in this respect it is because we want first to consult with the natives as to their own wishes' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:163). Such detachment and disinterest was not surprisingly met by widespread Melanesian support for the UC. In some areas the UC and the Liste d'Union advocated similar policies, especially in respect of greater autonomy and French financial support for economic and social development; however the UC went much further in advocating that France only retain control of foreign affairs, defence and finance. Moreover the UC advocated breaking up the large estates and distributing the land to smallholders, ending the monopoly of big firms and the Banque de l'Indochine, increasing Melanesian participation in relevant organizations such as the Land Commission and equal wages for Melanesians and Europeans. Such a comprehensive program of reforms appealed to Melanesians, petits blancs and some missionaries and metropolitan French, and gave the UC a landslide victory, with 15 of the 25 seats in the new assembly.

The political geography of New Caledonia was again clearly revealed in the election results. In Noumea the Liste d'Union gained all seven seats as Noumea remained the bastion of conservatism it has invariably been. Indeed two months later Roger Laroque, supported by most conservative groups in the territory, became Mayor of Noumea, a position that he held for more than thirty years. For the first time Melanesians were elected to the Assembly; nine of the 15 UC councillors were Melanesians, three from the Loyalty Islands (including Michel Kauma from Ouvea), two from the east coast and four from the west coast (including Roch Pidjot). The majority were chiefs, most were middle-aged and none were radical (Thompson and Adloff 1971:298-300). Lenormand too, despite being branded a communist, had considerable interests in nickel mines and coffee plantations.
Though the new councillors were no more than liberal the Assembly promised to be a focal point for confrontation with the conservative minority.

The *Liste d'Union* and the UC were actually in agreement over a number of issues, through their common desire for greater financial and political autonomy and control over French public servants. However, there were clashes over financial issues and over Lenormand's increasingly dictatorial attitude. These divisions were enhanced by basic differences in political philosophy and accentuated by sweeping trade union and socialist support for the UC. Though economic philosophies were virtually polar opposites, attitudes to France were broadly similar, both parties seeking French intervention to achieve local goals but, above all, both parties saw New Caledonia as a legitimate part of France. At the centenary celebrations of the annexation of New Caledonia in 1953, Maurice Lenormand declared that 'New Caledonia and its dependencies are and will remain French by the irrevocable and permanent wish of its inhabitants' (Lenormand 1953:299). Despite constant dissatisfaction with French promises and projects that never met local demands for decentralization and autonomy, and despite minor right wing dreams of secession, any real thoughts of independence from France were far distant. The winds of change had not yet begun to blow even in France's African colonies.

The establishment and dominance of the UC in the Territorial Assembly so provoked conservative reaction that a smear campaign sought to convince France not only that Lenormand was a communist but that, with communist aid, he was attempting to make New Caledonia independent. The campaign was effective enough for two visiting French deputies to stress New Caledonia's 'unfortunate subordination' to Australia and for the Assembly's control over some issues, including tax collection, to be reduced, apparently at the instigation of the SLN (Thompson and Adloff 1971:302). Otherwise the UC consolidated its authority and soon controlled all three seats in the French parliament; Louis Eschembrenner joined Lenormand as a deputy and in 1955 Armand Ohlen defeated Henri Lafleur in the Senate election. In the following year Lenormand was re-elected with a far larger majority than ever before and the power of the UC in New Caledonia appeared to have been wholly consolidated. During the 1950s the UC achieved a series of social reforms, including family allowances, holiday pay and a minimum wage (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:96), hence the consolidation was a response to effective reforms and in large part a result of virtually unanimous Melanesian support for the UC as their status was liberalized, economic and educational opportunities increased and a measure of social justice began to redress historic imbalances.

Meanwhile, in France, the socialist government that came to power in January 1956 began to draft a liberal statute, a *loi-
cadre that would apply to all French overseas territories. The loi-cadre finally introduced universal suffrage and ensured that the Territorial Assembly would share executive power with the French appointed Governor, though it did not give New Caledonia the degree of autonomy that everyone sought, especially the power to control the budget and the public service. However New Caledonia gained an embryonic cabinet, a Government Council within the Assembly, whose eight members were to be called Ministers in charge of one or more administrative departments. Just as important was the enlargement of the Assembly, from 25 to 30 members, and a revision of the electoral boundaries so that there was one genuine electoral college. There were now four electoral divisions; the first division included Noumea, Yate and the Isle of Pines and had ten seats; the second, the west coast, had eight; the third on the east coast, including Ouegoa and Belep, had seven, and the fourth, the Loyalty Islands, had five. The first elections under the new statute took place in October 1957 and, once again, the UC achieved a conclusive majority with 18 of the 30 seats. The 30 seats were contested by 123 candidates representing eight parties, all of which, with the sole exception of the UC, had been recently formed. The conservatives were still fragmented, this time into three groups, although the introduction of proportionate voting minimized this disadvantage: Action Economique et Sociale, led by Henri Lafleur, only contested seats in Noumea and won three; a small rural party, the Paysans Indépendants, won one seat and the Républicains Sociaux, led by Georges Chatenay, a local-born lawyer who supported closer relations with France, won seven seats including two of the five Loyalty Island seats. Only one other party, a small labour party called Rassemblement Ouvrier (Workers' Assembly), gained a seat and allied itself to the UC. The new Assembly now included 13 Melanesians, although only six former members were re-elected; one of them, Michel Kauma, became Vice-President of the Assembly, and the first Melanesian to preside over its affairs (Thompson and Adloff 1971:303-6). Although one Melanesian was elected to represent Noumea, four came from the east coast and all five councillors from the Loyalty Islands were Melanesians. Some ten years after becoming citizens Melanesians were firmly involved in the government of New Caledonia, which had become the first territory in the South Pacific to have a measure of self-government and also Melanesian ministers.

Moreover the UC had become the first genuinely multiracial party, uniting rural Melanesians and the poor whites of Noumea into a single force. It was also the first real Caledonian party, concerned about those who were relatively poor and uninterested in the machinations of businessmen and graziers that had passed for earlier political life and whose principal interests extended beyond New Caledonia. It promised a new era for the underprivileged of New Caledonia though it had not yet come to terms with the single most important issue that concerned Melanesians, restoration of the title to lost land. For more than
De Gaulle and the conservative renaissance

With its greater control over the Assembly, and with all three members of the French parliament, the power of the UC appeared invincible. Yet in some respects 1956 had already marked the zenith of the fortunes of the UC although organized opposition remained weak, except in Noumea where Lafleur and Laroque marshalled the conservative forces, and in parts of the bush where rural settlers opposed land reforms. The settlers' representatives stated: 'we shall oppose any attempt against our land and property... we are the authentic keepers of the French presence' (Dornoy 1984:166) and a Union de Défense des Propriétaires Ruraux was set up to oppose land redistribution; settlers opposed the invasion of metropolitan Frenchmen, argued that 'Melanesians can live as good a life as Europeans if they really want to' and, in a manner destined to be constantly repeated, gratuitously, criticized Australian treatment of Aborigines (Dornoy 1984:166). Through these campaigns many of the rural petits blancs, who had initially supported the UC, shifted their allegiance from a party which they saw as becoming too concerned with Melanesian issues. In the same year de Gaulle made a private visit to New Caledonia where he established the first effective contacts between local conservatives and Parisian Gaullists, an alliance that was to prove exceptionally troublesome to Lenormand and eventually led to the emergence of the main conservative party in New Caledonia.

After the 1957 elections the UC nevertheless continued to consolidate its position. With its slogan of deux couleurs mais un seul peuple, two colours but one people, it was still gaining support among urban European wage-earners. Yet two related events took place in 1958 that would slowly change the course of history. The first of these was the Algiers coup of 13 May 1958 which led to de Gaulle becoming President of France. This coup inspired a similar event in Noumea. To the Caledonian conservatives who were beginning to despair of removing Lenormand by legal means the example offered by French officers in Algeria was a catalyst. The local ringleader was Major Henri Loustau, the military chef de cabinet of the Governor, Aimé Grimaud. Loustau had previously served in Algeria and, in Noumea, organized patriotic organizations similar to those that had precipitated the Algiers coup. How far the rebellion, or quasi-coup (Ward 1980:194), might have gone may never be known but, with army support, Loustau could have achieved one reported aim of shooting Lenormand. In the end a group of dissidents demanded that Governor Grimaud dissolve the Assembly, a demand that Grimaud referred to Paris. Lenormand arranged for Melanesian supporters of the UC to organize a counter
demonstration; rumours of this resulted in European conservatives forming a *comité de vigilance*, arming themselves and digging trenches and erecting barriers in the streets of Noumea. The vigilantes, many of whom were *broussards*, manhandled Pidjot and 'arrested' about ten UC Assembly members who were taken to Bourail and illegally imprisoned there. Governor Grimald managed to prevent a violent showdown by appealing for peace, forbidding Europeans to carry guns and promising to use neither the local army nor gendarmes to prevent further disorder (Thompson and Adloff 1971:307-8). It was an early indication of just how easily conservative passions could be inflamed in Noumea and how violent response might follow political frustration.

Reconciliation of the opposing forces proved impossible although Lenormand consented to proportional representation within the Government Council of the Assembly. A militant conservative group would accept nothing less than the resignation of all the UC Assembly members and, at the urging of this group, six of the 11 conservative members resigned in protest. In the course of these bitter disputes the Gaullist government proposed a new constitution for the Fifth Republic; in New Caledonia and other overseas territories a negative vote for this constitution would have resulted in immediate independence but also an end to all French aid. In this threatening context only one local leader advocated such a negative vote; Pierre Jeanson, editor of the left wing *Le Calédonien* and a trade union organizer, opposed the Gaullist government for its subservience to local capitalists. However, in the official tally of the September 1958 referendum, 26,085 people out of a total of 27,028 voters sought to remain with France. By contrast in French Polynesia there had been strong opposition to remaining with France with 36 per cent of all voters opposed (Thompson and Adloff 1971:45-6). In one area at least local opinion was solidly united and the conservatives of New Caledonia temporarily ceased charging the UC with promoting secessionism (Thompson and Adloff 1971:310). Nonetheless Jacques Soustelle, France's new Minister of Information, announced that because tension still prevailed in New Caledonia the Assembly would be dissolved and new elections held. At much the same time Laurent Péchoux was appointed Governor, in succession to Grimald, another conservative response since Péchoux had a record of harsh, if unsuccessful, repressive measures in the French colonies of Togo and the Ivory Coast, and came with the declared aim of breaking Lenormand (Thompson and Adloff 1971:45-6). These were all omens of growing opposition to the UC, both more formally from a conservative French government and more dramatically and violently from local militants.

Once again the elections of December 1958 confirmed the supremacy of Lenormand and the UC, which won 18 of the 30 seats, while its ally *Rassemblement Ouvrier* held its one seat under a new name, *Union Républicaine*. Though the conservative forces were more closely united so that a new grouping, the *Rassemblement*
Calédonien, founded by Senator Henri Lafleur, gained the other 11 seats, it constituted another grave disappointment, a blow in the face of those who sought redress of grievances through the ballot box. Governor Pechoux ignored the election results and the demand of the new Assembly that the full powers of the lot-cadre be applied, and began to reduce the powers of the Government Council. The French government ignored Lenormand's complaints and he resigned as Vice-President of the Government Council, arguing that he could no longer accept responsibility for an administration over which he had no control. Previous governors, who were also presidents of the Government Council, had tended to be primarily titular heads, unlike Pechoux who had now effectively begun his program of opposing Lenormand. In April 1959 Henri Lafleur was re-elected to the Senate in an election from which Pechoux had managed to exclude Melanesians. However the UC fought back and in the following month Lenormand was re-elected as a deputy to the French parliament, with over 70 per cent of the votes and, for the first time, gained a majority of the votes cast in Noumea (Thompson and Adloff 1971:311). As never before the urban electorate rallied around a liberal; it was an event destined to be rarely repeated.

Drama was never far from the political stage in a colony where the ballot box has often been incidental to political change. In April 1960 an attempt was made to blow up the house of the conservative politician, Georges Chatenay; Chatenay was now leader of another small conservative party, the Union pour la Nouvelle République (UNR), part of a process of fission and fusion, an inferior version of the French pattern, that has compounded Caledonian politics since the emergence of parties. Though responsibility for the attempt was never determined it was widely blamed on the UC, who naturally disclaimed responsibility. Meanwhile Lenormand had lost authority within the UC, in part because of his increasingly autocratic behaviour, perhaps brought on by his loss of influence in the French parliament where his support now only came from the extreme left. Towards the end of 1960 Michel Kauma, Vice-President of the Government Council, and Doui Matayo, Minister of the Interior, effectively dissociated themselves from the UC and were expelled from the party. Later Kauma stated that he had originally joined the UC because it advocated integration of European and Melanesian societies but left it because he believed that it was sowing discord between the two ethnic groups (Thompson and Adloff 1971:312); he never backed down from this view and by the mid-1980s had become one of the more vocal and conservative Melanesians in New Caledonia. Thus after a decade of existence tensions were emerging within the UC, leading to the withdrawal of prominent and influential Melanesian members, creating new problems for a party that was always opposed by powerful conservative forces with strong support in France.

In the end it was economic recession that initiated the decline of the UC. From 1958 the nickel industry entered a period
of depression and in 1962 the SLN sought a tax exemption on exports from the Assembly. Its request was accompanied with the threat of closing down the Doniambo refinery in Noumea if it was refused the exemption. The Governor supported the request but the Assembly rejected it, in a vote that cut across party lines. Two days after the debate a bomb exploded in the Assembly and, once again, the French government decided to dissolve the Assembly. Just as it had done four years earlier, the UC again won 18 of the 30 seats, but there were changes in the political geography; the UC lost two seats and, for the first time, the conservatives gained a seat in the Loyalty Islands (Thompson and Adloff 1971:313), an indication that a significant number of Melanesians were willing to vote for conservative candidates. Indeed Michel Kauma joined Chatenay's UNR, a broadly Gaullist party, while Doui Matayo joined Action Calédonienne, a splinter group from the UNR. Although the conservatives were again disunited they still obtained 12 seats, nine to the UNR and three to the Rassemblement Calédonien, but the UC actually won six of the 10 seats in Noumea. As it lost control of important rural areas it was gaining in Noumea itself, so much so that Chatenay claimed that the count had been rigged.

Violence erupted into politics again. Within weeks of the election Lenormand received threatening anonymous letters, and he believed that militant conservative extremists would soon attempt to assassinate him. Late in April a bomb exploded at the UC headquarters; the Governor banned all political meetings and imprisoned three suspects, all of whom were members of the UC and whom gendarmes had found at the scene of the explosion. Only one, Michel Bernast, was a Caledonian and had some political prominence as secretary of the UC; the others were recent migrants, one of whom was believed to have worked for the French secret police in Indochina and the other who had previously been a member of an Israeli terrorist organization. These two 'confessed' that they had planted the bomb, but had done so with the consent of Lenormand so that blame would fall onto the Gaullists (Thompson and Adloff 1971:314-15). Though Lenormand defended himself against a series of garbled charges, most seriously that he had 'voluntarily failed to prevent the execution of a crime', the inadequacies of the prosecution witnesses did not prevent him from being deprived by the court of his civil rights for five years, being given a one-year suspended gaol sentence and, in 1964, being formally removed from his post of deputy in the French parliament and replaced by Roch Pidjot who continued as deputy until 1986.

While this legal drama was unfolding Roch Pidjot, now Vice-President of the Government Council, and the only one of Lenormand's early Melanesian collaborators to remain faithful to him, had gone to Paris to demand a new statute for New Caledonia and the recall of Governor Péchoux. Lenormand joined him, once again to demand that the loi-cadre be applied in full, enabling New Caledonia to gain greater autonomy, and escape the tyranny of
an appointed governor and a metropolitan public service. In an interview in May 1962 he blamed the malaise in New Caledonia neither on the 'justified hostility to Le Nickel nor to the Melanesians' resentment against an oppressive European minority' but solely on the same cause 'which had led to disaster in North Africa and Indochina - the French government's failure to understand and satisfy the overseas populations' aspirations by "decolonising" its administration' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:315). He later called for an end to colonial and capitalist privileges and for greater self-determination (Dornoy 1984:169). Though Lenormand had been re-elected a deputy in 1962, with waning support, the tide was running against him. President De Gaulle and the Premier, Georges Pompidou, refused to meet him and his removal from the post of deputy was a personal disaster. 'At almost the same time the struggle that he had carried on for more than twelve years against the combined forces of his conservative opponents, the local administration and the Société le Nickel ended in a crushing defeat for the more liberal statute which he had sought for New Caledonia' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:317). A few months before Lenormand was removed from his position of deputy the French Minister for Overseas Territories, Louis Jacquinot, visited New Caledonia, denounced the loi-cadre as 'unsuited to a territory that is an integral part of France' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:317-18) and announced a series of restrictive measures that tied the budget more closely to that of France, reduced the power and authority of the Government Council and with it the autonomy that already existed (Thompson and Adloff 1971:317-18). In all this time Lenormand had never budged from his belief that New Caledonia must remain French. With the loi-cadre emasculated by France and the UC leader, Maurice Lenormand, relegated to political obscurity, liberal and socialist politics were in disarray. By contrast Senator Henri Lafleur, who had ably supported Jacquinot's legislation through the Senate, was on hand to guide the renaissance of conservatism towards a new ascendancy.

Full circle

Although Jacquinot's legislation and the removal of Lenormand were bitter blows they could not suppress a party that had fought so long for basic economic and social privileges for the majority of the population and fought so hard against the crippling weight of the large landowners and the SLN. Without Lenormand the UC 'for some years was but a shadow of its former self [though there was] consistent electoral support for the former leader's alter ego, Roch Pidjot' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:319). Pidjot was elected a deputy to the French parliament in 1964 in succession to Lenormand, despite a new electoral regulation introduced ostensibly to prevent electoral fraud but, in practice, aimed at preventing the UC supporters in Noumea from voting by requiring voters unregistered on the rolls where they lived to cast their votes in their home areas. By this election...
the left wing had become a spent force; there was nothing left of the largely defunct Communist Party and the only socialist candidate, Pierre Jeanson, received a derisory 514 votes. Pidjot received 14,407 compared with 11,518 for Edouard Pentecost, a wealthy métis businessman born on Mare, who while nominally an independent was effectively the candidate of the UNR. Pidjot became the first Melanesian in the French parliament.

Despite French opposition to autonomy and to the UC the party had again survived; its survival 'seemed to intensify France's determination to bring New Caledonia even more closely under the control of the metropole' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:320) and a new element entered into the debate. In October 1964 Jacquinot stated that New Caledonia had become of vital importance to French policy in the South Pacific and in that same year de Gaulle announced France's intention of establishing a Centre d'Expérimentation du Pacifique in French Polynesia, an elegant euphemism for continuing a nuclear testing program (Chapter 15) that was no longer possible in the Algerian Sahara. To maintain this program it was believed essential to reinforce France's presence throughout the Pacific hence France made several moves to increase its control of New Caledonia. In 1967, after a period of quiescence, the French government introduced further controls over the New Caledonian Assembly and thus the economy of New Caledonia. The new laws (lois Billotte) reinforced French control over mining, by ensuring that France control all exploration and extraction permits, investment in New Caledonia and decentralization to the communes. All three bills were first rejected in the New Caledonian Assembly but inevitably the rejections fell on deaf ears in Paris. For the Melanesian priest, Apollinaire Anova-Ataba, writing in 1965, all this constituted 'a return to the colonial era' (Anova-Ataba 1984:157-9).

Electoral reform, designed to increase the conservative presence in the Assembly, was one French intervention that badly misfired. In 1967 the number of seats in the Assembly was increased to 35, which remained the situation until 1979, with additional seats allocated to Noumea and the number reduced on the east coast, which had always been a UC stronghold. The UC stood for election on a now familiar platform of social and economic reform and again pressed for 'a statute of self-government to implement decolonisation in New Caledonia' (Dornoy 1984:170). Again they were extremely successful and gained 22 of the 35 seats while the conservatives actually lost seats. The miscarriage of the Government's plan was 'due to the French politicians' chronic inability to follow developments in the territory closely and to interpret their meaning correctly' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:321) at a time when the growth of a European proletariat in Noumea had given the UC new support. As usual the conservative parties were both divided and new; three parties, Calédonie Nouvelle, Union des Patentés and Entente, all of which were destined to be short-lived, gained seats in the new Assembly. By the time of the 1968
territorial elections yet more new conservative parties had formed. Again the UC secured 22 of the 35 seats but a new, more widely-based conservative party, the Union Démocratique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (UD), led by Laroque, Lafleur and Chatenay, secured 11 seats and a slightly more lasting role in local politics.

Continued divisions reflected the inability of conservative politicians to formulate policies that did any more than oppose the UC and its alleged secessionist tendencies. Parties formed, fragmented and coalesced, foundering on personal rivalries and ambivalent attitudes to de Gaulle and the policies of the French government (Thompson and Adloff 1971:322). The interests of conservative politicians were often best served through alliance with France though even the most conservative parties, such as the Rassemblement Calédonien under the leadership of Henri Lafleur, when it was described as a group of 'ultras...Most of its members were wealthy local-born businessmen and mine-owners, who opposed Le Nickel's domination of the mining industry and also De Gaulle's policy in Algeria and Black Africa' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:322), still pressed for autonomy in some areas. In practice it was the less conservative parties, such as the UNR, closely tied to the metropolitan party of the same name, who saw its interests as most closely identified with those of France; this orientation prevented such parties developing local policies, especially in relation to Melanesian aspirations, and encouraged fission and fusion according to short-term interests and goals. These tendencies were emphasized by growing French interest in the South Pacific, for nuclear testing and mineral exploitation in New Caledonia, which meant that 'autonomist movements in both territories must be nipped in the bud, even if this involved eliminating their leaders on obviously trumped-up charges, and that the powers of the local assemblies must be reduced to controllable proportions' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:325).

The continued frustrations experienced by the UC in its demands for autonomy were increasing and were exactly paralleled in French Polynesia to the extent that the two territories sent a joint delegation to Paris in 1968, which the Minister for Overseas Territories, General Billotte, simply refused to meet. The complaints of the UC remained largely constant:

the demand for autonomy by the Polynesians and ourselves is due to our disgust with the ill-will and stupidity of a colonial administration attached to a mandarinate which dates from the age of sailing ships and kerosene lamps. The Polynesians, like the Melanesians, feel immensely frustrated...Neither of us wants independence, which is too often illusory...but a new contractual relationship that will give us full internal autonomy (Roch Pidjot, in Thompson and Adloff 1971:326).
For the first time however there was no talk of the *loi-cadre*, with its partial and limited autonomy; opposition to France had stiffened the reaction of the UC to the extent that it was now pressing for full autonomy. The new pressure for autonomy marked the end of a conservative, and relatively homogeneous, period in Melanesian politics.

The end of the 1960s brought the promise of more violent political confrontations to come. After the independence of Algeria, *pieds-noirs* had migrated to New Caledonia where they constituted a source of militant ultra-conservatism, violently opposed to even hints of autonomy that might one day lead to independence, as it had done in Algeria. Some of the *pieds-noirs* formed in 1968 a *Comité d'Action Civique*, which declared its determination to 'carry on the struggle against the local autonomists' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:327). Fearing armed struggle the government sent a battalion of French paratroopers to Noumea, but their presence merely provoked more unrest. Once again, and not for the last time, militant conservatives had demonstrated their strength.

In the more liberal post-war years almost a century of repression had been partially ended by the enfranchisement of Melanesians, the abolition of the *Indigénat* and the achievement of citizenship, though long after that of French Polynesians. Social reforms led to improved health and education and the extension of cash cropping, and the first successful land claims brought Melanesians slowly towards a fuller incorporation in the national and international economy. Through the UC Melanesians first tested their political muscle and, in a few years, took the UC to political power, with Melanesians elected to the Territorial Assembly and later to the French parliament. But there the evolution ended. The emergence of the conservative government of de Gaulle quashed hopes for the devolution of power and the new strategic significance of French Polynesia was the first hint of a 'domino theory' in the South Pacific, where France sought to retain all its four colonies lest the most important eventually tumble. New Caledonia, the only settler colony, was a mineral-rich colony of some importance. The only radical party, despite continued electoral success, was forced to take backstage in all the important debates over the political economy of New Caledonia. For all their electoral disasters the conservative parties scarcely needed to formulate policies; their objectives were largely shared by France although, for them too in these early post-war years, the lack of autonomy proved a considerable problem. In a situation where any real increase in autonomy was proving almost impossible to achieve there was usually no hint of the possibility of secession; Pidjot, echoing the words of Lenormand, had argued specifically that demands for greater autonomy should not be feared or ignored because they were not demands for secession or independence. In the end, perhaps paradoxically, continued French rejection of demands for autonomy
placed the UC on the road towards self-government and ultimately pushed them towards independence. The echoes of Algerian independence in 1962 had not been felt in New Caledonia, however, and pressures for radical change were still to emerge. Anova-Ataba argued that Melanesians recognized that, lacking adequate skilled leaders of their own the time was not yet ripe for similar demands to be made and 'no one dared openly to speak of independence' (Anova-Ataba 1984:43, 165). For the moment Melanesian aspirations had been turned full circle; once again reforms were denied by a conservative French government which sought greater control in New Caledonia as Algeria and other African colonies gained independence.
Chapter 12

The rise of radicalism

[French colonial policy] provides a common ground for the egalitarian idealism of the Jacobins and the Christian missionary ideal of the ancien régime, the worldly and the religious form of that 'imperialism in its civilising role' which is inseparable from the French national idea; in short it envisages a whole great section of humanity on the march to absorption by France, the civilised nation par excellence (Luethy 1955:217).

If the first quarter of a century after the war had been marked by evolutionary political changes, with New Caledonía largely isolated from the affairs of the wider world, in subsequent years this pattern was overturned. One pattern, the extreme differences between conservatives and radicals, continued to be marked by sporadic violence on a scale quite unlike that of any other part of the South Pacific. A variety of new factors complicated the scene. The first was the 'nickel boom' that totally transformed the economy and led to the arrival of a large new conservative electorate that made the Melanesian population a minority. A further impact of the boom was the increased awareness it created of the disparities between urban and rural incomes and life-styles and thus between Europeans and Melanesians. This was emphasized by the existence of trade unions in urban workplaces and hence by a slow but inevitably increased radicalization of the Melanesian labour force. The second was the emergence of radical politics, stimulated by Melanesian students in French universities: the first regional echoes of the student-worker demonstrations of April and May 1968 that challenged conservative French society and which a few Melanesians had witnessed. Even more important was the sense of Melanesian frustration with the UC more out of disappointment with its limited achievements than through rejection of its program. In different ways each of these trends transformed and regenerated Melanesian politics and began to drive the first effective wedges into the UC mixed-race consensus on political philosophies and strategies.

In a period of less than a decade, though parties and politicians came and went in a bewildering variety that demands
expertise with acronyms, political trends became exceptionally clear. Where in the past debates had concerned a range of economic issues, increasingly everything became subsumed into arguments about the future status of New Caledonia with indépendantiste parties becoming primarily Melanesian, and conservative and smaller centrist parties becoming primarily European, though with substantial and significant support from Melanesians, Polynesian migrant workers (especially from Wallis) and others. Melanesian frustrations intensified, land disputes and occupations increased and, by the end of the decade, political divisions had become more like battle lines. Yet, at the start of the 1970s, there were few indications of increased opposition to French colonialism; only a prolonged strike in the nickel industry in 1971 indicated that not all was well, and few outside observers had noticed that although 'conflict is now mainly in the economic field the underlying political conflict between the metropole and the local advocates of self-determination is sharpening...French ability to retain control is not in doubt but the will to do so may be eroded by persistent local pressures' (Brookfield 1972:123). Those local pressures had reached a crescendo by the end of the decade though the French will remained unbroken.

Red Scarves and the Kanak awakening

By the end of the 1960s a small number of Melanesians were at university in France. One of the first of these was Nidoish Naisseline, the son of the Mare chief, Henri Naisseline, and he, with other students, organized meetings in France to protest against colonialism, at the height of widespread student dissent. These meetings crystallized into the organization Fouards Rouges (Red Scarves), with its bulletin Réveil Canaque (Kanak Awakening), which united young and more radical Melanesians 'whose basic nationalist, anti-colonialist stance found expression in a certain amount of Marxist analysis and rhetoric' (Ward 1982:19). In practice they were directly concerned with land rights, the role of Melanesian languages and culture in the education system and the right to publish newspapers in Melanesian languages, a situation forbidden as 'subversive' by the administration (Ward 1982:19). Their viewpoints were forged rather less from tertiary education than from their own experiences of discrimination and exploitation. Elie Poigoune, one of the first Melanesian university graduates and initially a strong supporter of the French presence, had quickly been radicalized through racial discrimination on his return to Noumea (Colombani 1985:66-7). Such experiences fuelled bitterness, resentment and frustration and a determination to organize opposition to colonialism through

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1 This chapter partly draws on the work of Myriam Dornoy (1984) who presents an exceptionally detailed, though sometimes confusing, picture of New Caledonian politics, especially in the period 1976-77.
more direct confrontation. As the radical Melanesian Parti de Libération Kanake (PALIKA) subsequently claimed:

with their parents stultified by the bible and the voting slip, the young Kanaks decided to oppose colonialism in a more radical manner and thus lay the foundations for the modern phase of the battle for national liberation in which they were to engage from then on with their people (PALIKA 1978:16).

The direct confrontations were not long in coming.

In this nascence of radicalism were two important elements. The first was the attempt to rediscover and assert Kanak identity and culture. For a century the word 'Kanak' (or Kanaka) had been a derogatory term for Melanesians, as it was and continues to be elsewhere in Melanesia; the Foulards Rouges, and especially Naisseline, for the first time used Kanak (initially Canaque) in a positive way to identify Melanesians with a long-standing cultural tradition. From then on more nationalistic Melanesians, and more recently pro-independence Melanesians, have been increasingly referred to as Kanaks; conservatives, whether Europeans or Melanesians, have deliberately preferred Melanesians and, for them, Kanak has largely remained a derogatory term.2 With the recognition of identity came the inevitable importance of land rights and the more sweeping demands for 'the return of our land without conditions' (Ounei 1985:4). This theme was taken up by a later offshoot of the Foulards Rouges, the Groupe 1878, clearly named in identification with the Great Revolt; 'after too many years of restrained silence, the sons of the Kanak people opted for resistance as the only way of recovering the dignity, the liberty and the justice for which Atai and Noel had fought to the death' (PALIKA 1978:16). These more radical and wide-ranging demands for land provoked conflict with settlers and eventually led to land occupations.

The first confrontation came in September 1969 when Naisseline was arrested and accused of writing and distributing on his home island of Mare a pamphlet inciting people to racial hatred and encouraging them to organize a coup. On the same day the Foulards Rouges organized a protest meeting in the centre of Noumea; the protest became a riot in which several people were injured. About fifteen of the protesters, including Fote Trolue from Lifou, later to be the first Melanesian judge, were arrested alongside Naisseline. These arrests, the first for political

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2 One conservative Melanesian, Jeannine Bouteille, later wrote, in part to the indépendantiste Yelwene Yelwene, 'we are not Kanaks but Melanesians... the term 'Kanak' is a phonetic translation of an insult... Do not return your Melanesian brothers to cannibal times... in your political struggles' (NC 17 May 1985). (cf. Ounei, 1985:4).
activity, hastened the process of radicalization and, for the first time, slogans like Calédonie libre (Free Caledonia) appeared on the walls of Noumea. For all that, the incidents resembled the contemporary student unrest of Western countries in that it was a demonstration of protest, being a mixture of anti-colonialism and support for Black Power and the revolutionary concepts of the New Left. It was also locally oriented in that it reflected an indigenous hostility to the growing economic inequalities of Caledonian society, in which the extremes of wealth and poverty happened to coincide with its ethnic divisions (Thompson and Adloff 1971:329).

What is equally significant is that this birth of radicalism exactly paralleled similar developments elsewhere in Melanesia, especially in Papua New Guinea (where the first university had just been established), primarily among those with some tertiary education obtained in teachers colleges, universities or seminaries.

Almost a year later, as the wheels of French justice characteristically turned slowly, Naisseline was put on trial for his 'subversive actions' and eventually sent back to France. The September demonstrations acquired a symbolic importance, as Réveil Canaque thundered, 'Since 2 September colonised people are no longer from Mare, Lifou, Houailou or Canala. They are simply Kanaks. We must destroy colonial exploitations. We oppose the capitalist killings, the Bible, the land thefts, alcohol and arms, the mass media owned by the bourgeoisie which represents French imperialism and white prejudices' (Dornoy 1984:204). A further element in the new radicalism was the genesis of a more ebullient nationalism, the desire and necessity to unite all Melanesians in a common cause, irrespective of region or origin, language or culture. Partly born out of these struggles Melanesian unity has always been stronger in New Caledonia than elsewhere in Melanesia.

There were further confrontations between Melanesians and the French administration in the early 1970s and in 1972 Naisseline again returned from France; 'we called him back because the struggle began to get strong. He came and we organised our struggle against colonisation around him' (Ounei 1985:4). In March Naisseline confronted the administrator of the Loyalty Islands in Mare, declaring 'it is not France here, I couldn't give a damn about your uniform, the man behind it is an imbecile' and calling him 'an idiot and a landgrabber' (PALIKA 1978:16; Dornoy 1984:205). Naisseline was imprisoned for six months for 'obstructing the law in the exercise of its duties', effectively crystallizing Kanak radicalism around him as he became 'the political hero of the new generation of Melanesians' (Dornoy 1984:205). Radical opposition became more wide-ranging, attacking the administration and the missions, as the Foulards Rouges argued.
that 'God and the motherland are linked in the colonial crime' (Dornoy 1984:205). The firebrand opposition of the young nationalists spilled over into the increased militancy of older Melanesians who had hitherto supported the simple autonomist demands of the UC.

The Groupe 1878 also provoked their share of confrontation. With their demand 'that all ancestral lands of the Kanak tribes, pillaged by the whites and the administration, be returned to the Kanaks' (Dornoy 1984:205) they were bound to be opposed by settlers. Their first public meeting in September 1974 was broken up by police and another meeting in protest against the actions of an army captain, alleged to have ordered his men to strike Melanesians, was banned. A demonstration on 24 September 1974, timed to coincide with the annual military parade to celebrate France's occupation of New Caledonia, ended with the violent arrest of several militants, including Elie Poigoune and Dewe Gorodey, alongside Henri Bailly of the Foulards Rouges. At the trial of Poigoune and Bailly, militants from several organizations, including a left wing European group Union des Jeunesses Calédoniennes (Union of Caledonian Youth), staged a sit-in at the court; 12 were arrested including Suzanne Ounei (Ounei 1985:5). A defence committee for the Melanesian 'political prisoners' was set up in France and the French communist paper L'Humanité railed against 'the intolerable repression that took place in the territory' (Dornoy 1984:206), a move of support that enabled all radicals in New Caledonia to be easily and automatically branded as communists. The harshest punishment was reserved for two Europeans, Jean-Paul Caillard and Jean-Pierre Devillers, who were imprisoned for six months (PALIKA 1978:17-18). Beginning a pattern that has lasted for a decade the greatest vilification, and punishment, has been reserved for those who, in ethnic terms, supported 'the wrong side'.

Worse was to come. In December 1975 a young Melanesian, Richard Kamouda, either 'walking along in full view in the centre of Noumea' (PALIKA 1978:19) or 'acting out a mock boxing match with a friend' (Dornoy 1984:207) was shot and killed at point-blank range, apparently while resisting arrest by a French policeman. Reaction to the incident in different quarters demonstrates not only the extent to which politics already pervaded all aspects of life in New Caledonia but how a single incident could be viewed in vastly different ways. At the trial of the policeman, Blairet, the defence argued that he acted normally and courageously and that 'most of us would have shot before he did after being followed by a howling horde screaming for his death' (Dornoy 1984:277). PALIKA have consistently spoken of the 'assassination' of Kamouda while Suzanne Ounei speaks of 'the French government' killing him (PALIKA 1978:19; Ounei 1985:6). Blairet was given a suspended sentence. In the same court on the same day Nidoish Naisseline and Dewe Gorodey were convicted of issuing rebellious pamphlets, Naisseline being fined

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and Gorodey being imprisoned for 15 days. Myriam Dornoy, who sat through each trial, recorded that 'the conviction of the two militants appeared singularly severe' (Dornoy 1984:208) compared to that of Blairét. The right wing newspaper, *Le Journal Calédonien*, naturally thought otherwise: 'Order will reign in our streets. So the Caledonian population has decided by supporting the police. We despise the political manoeuvres of anti-French activists who have manipulated the incident. These provocateurs are well-known drunks, vague thinkers and professional unemployed parasites' (Dornoy 1984:208-9). The descent to antagonistic epithets has characterized much subsequent political 'debate' in New Caledonia and the variety of attitudes to the death of Kamouda reflect not just substantial differences of opinion but massive distrust and miscomprehension. Confrontation, conflict and violence slowly came to be central to New Caledonian politics.

Melanesian politics

The frustrations of the late 1960s, as the prospects for autonomy worsened, had led to a certain degree of disillusionment within the UC, reducing active support for the party and contributing to the radicalization of the young. The first major sign of this radicalization was the emergence of the *Union Multiraciale de Nouvelle Calédonie* (UMNC), which broke away from the UC in 1970, a sign of the serious split within the UC as Melanesians sought a more radical position and Europeans preferred a more moderate approach. This division was never healed and over time increased with profound effects for the ethnic composition and policies of the UC. By the 1970s it was becoming extremely difficult to unite Melanesians and Europeans in political parties seeking greater autonomy or social and economic reforms; by contrast conservative parties, broadly in favour of the status quo, began to attract some Melanesian support.

Despite its name, the UMNC was the first essentially Melanesian political party, as a number of Protestant Kanaks broke away from the UC, led by Yann Celene Uregei, who came from Tiga, the smallest of the Loyalty Islands. The party's program which included autonomy, greater respect for traditional values and leaders and more emphasis on social and economic development, especially for Melanesians, was scarcely different from that of the UC. Where there was a significant difference was in the belief that Melanesians would have to correct injustices primarily through their own actions; consequently, as a Melanesian-organized party, it attracted many Melanesians from within the UC and received substantial support from the Foulards Rouges. Initial supporters came primarily from the Loyalty Islands and later from the south of New Caledonia and the Isle of Pines, when it was joined by François Neoere (Dornoy 1984:178). The new party gained substantial support in the 1971 municipal elections but failed to consolidate the gains; the UC argued that Uregei had been bought
off by the administration to split the autonomist movement, he was criticized for being in Paris at a time of crisis and it proved difficult for the new party to adopt and maintain a consistent position on critical issues. Uregei's own position vacillated and, at the request of the *Foulards Rouges*, Neoere was expelled as 'a traitor to the Kanak cause' early in 1972 (Dornoy 1984:179), while later in that year UMNC members took such a conservative position in the Territorial Assembly that the *Foulards Rouges* withdrew their support. Uregei also took a more racist approach by expelling from the UMNC two small groups of Europeans, including the *Union des Jeunesses Calédoniennes*, but, in 1973, he was elected Vice-President of the Territorial Assembly. A year later he briefly aligned the UMNC with the anti-autonominist parties to form a majority in the Assembly. This growing conservatism within the only exclusively Melanesian party, and the increased authoritarianism of its leader, finally provoked a significant challenge within the party and the expulsion and withdrawal of a number of prominent Melanians.

The expelled members of the UMNC, most prominently André Gopea and Edmond Nekiriai, joined with François Neoere to form in 1974 a new political party, the *Union Progressiste Multiraciales* (UPM). Another expelled member of the UMNC set up a separate party, *Front Populaire Calédonien*, which was represented in the Territorial Assembly between 1973 and 1977 until it joined with the UPM. The broad aims of the UPM were similar to those of the UMNC although it more directly advocated independence, by peaceful means, perhaps appropriate to a party that included many active Christians. Over time the party became more radical, especially on land issues; by 1977 it was arguing that 'when traditional claims to land by Melanesians become powerless in the face of current French legislation, then dialogue and cooperation are useless' (Dornoy 1984:186). As it became more radical it rejected the pretence that it was any longer multiracial and in 1977 the name of the party changed to *Union Progressiste Mélanésienne*, symptomatic of the continued and growing polarization between Europeans and Melanesians.

Polarization was also apparent in the withdrawal of Europeans from the UC; the first significant loss for the UC had been the establishment in 1967 of the *Mouvement Populaire Calédonien* (MPC) following the departure of two Europeans who regarded the UC as insufficiently socialist. They achieved immediate success with the election of one member to the Territorial Assembly in 1968 and were represented in the Assembly for seven more years, being largely supported by the white proletariat that was no longer inclined to support the UC. The MPC included most of the leading trade unionists in New Caledonia and aimed at more extensive social reforms and the 'territorialisation of the means of production' (Dornoy 1984:187). In 1976 it became the *Parti Socialiste Calédonien* (PSC) and,
though in favour of autonomy and the 'territorialization' of mines, industries and banks, opposed independence.

The UC, with Lenormand restored to leadership in 1971, remained somewhat more conservative than the UMNC or, later, the UFM. Indeed there was a growing belief that, with a European leader, the UC could never be genuinely radical though, in the end, it was loss of European support that weakened the UC most. The emergence of the MPC had been a relatively minor setback compared with the defection of Europeans that followed. In 1971 a group of European members of the Territorial Assembly broke away from the UC to form the Mouvement Libéral Calédonien (MLC); though favouring decentralization the new party fell short of supporting autonomy and increasingly advocated more conservative positions. In consequence the UC turned more deliberately towards the Melanesian electorate and, for a long time, Lenormand supported Naisseline but the UC continued to lose the support of more radical Melanesians towards the UMNC and Europeans to both the MPC and the MLC. More directly the departure of the MLC resulted in the UC losing its majority position in the Territorial Assembly although, until 1979, it consistently obtained more seats than any other party. Within the Assembly the UC was unable to exert its previous authority and outside the Assembly its historic prominence and prestige were being eroded on all sides.

Conflict within the UC increased in 1975 when, once again, the French government rejected a new statute of autonomy proposed by the UC. Uregei has subsequently recorded that the Prime Minister, Chirac, told non-Melanesian members of a delegation to Paris that self-government was out of the question and that the choice was henceforth simply between independence or becoming a French department (Uregei 1982:122-3). Some of the Melanesian members of the delegation consequently returned from Paris to demand independence (cf. Gabriel and Kerme 1985:105-6) and an independence motion in the Territorial Assembly was supported by Pidjot of the UC alongside the UMNC. Abandoning his brief conservative stance, and in reaction to what he and others regarded as their contemptuous treatment by Olivier Stirn, the Secretary of State for the DOM-TOMs, Uregei made the first real demands for independence on behalf of the UMNC, who had decided 'cost what it may, to wage a campaign for the independence of New Caledonia and the Caledonian nation', blaming the French government for the 'irrevocable step in favour of independence' because of French failure to respect the 'legitimate aspirations of the majority of the Caledonian people and for wanting, like every colonialist, to base its policy mainly on nickel, without worrying about the Caledonian people, especially the Melanesians' (PIM August 1975:9). While Pidjot supported the motion Lenormand remained in Paris without declaring his position and, from then onwards, although many Melanesians 'remembered that Lenormand had once been the only politician to look after their interests' (Dornoy 1984:175), his role in the party declined. For some years
he continued to reject independence arguing that Kanak independence was not feasible because Melanesians were a minority and if independence were based on racism it would be a reversed colonial regime; he did however support 'independence with links with France and not against her' (Dornoy 1984:176-7). As his prestige and authority waned so the UC shifted towards a more nationalistic position and became more obviously a Melanesian party, though it never lost a number of prominent Europeans.

Melanesians throughout New Caledonia came together in 1975 to organize a massive festival, 'Melanesia 2000', a cultural resurgence that was not without strong political overtones directed towards Melanesian unity. At the centre of the festival was Jean-Marie Tjibaou, a former priest from Hienghene who had renounced his ordination, declaring that this buried him 'in a mystical-religious ghetto where he could take no position of responsibility in society' (Le Monde 2 December 1984) but was continuing to work for Melanesian socio-economic development. The festival contributed to 'nationalist ferment' (Doumenge 1982:465) and, in some respects, it contributed significantly to increasing Melanesian consciousness of the necessity for change (cf. Colombani 1985:118-21; Tjibaou and Missotte 1978). New Caledonia 'was sliding towards political, racial and geographical polarization' (Colombani 1985:109). In the 1977 elections three of the nine UC members elected were Europeans, Lenormand, Pierre Declercq and François Burck from Thio. Lenormand was now 64 and Pidjot 70 hence much of the effectiveness of the UC came from younger Melanesians such as Tjibaou, Yeiwene Yeiwene (from Mare) and Eloi Machoro (from Canala). In its annual congress the UC finally came out in official support of independence: a major shift in its policy.

Symptomatic of this transformation to a more radical nationalism was the emergence of PALIKA. Though the militants of the Foulards Rouges and Groupe 1878 had, at different times, supported either the UMNC or the UC they had never sought to transform their organizations into political parties. Frustrated by the relative conservatism of the parties, the increasing racism of the European population (cf. Dornoy 1984:209) and catalysed by the death of Kamouda, PALIKA was founded in May 1976 under the leadership of Nidoish Naisseline, Dewe Gorodey and Elie Poigoune. Not surprisingly its program was radical and socialist, demanding the nationalization of mines, industries, banks and the land, the establishment of cooperative economic enterprises, a strong Melanesian component in education and, although participating in elections, it favoured mass demonstrations, hunger strikes and land occupations (PALIKA 1978:20-2). Elie Poigoune stated, 'we want a Cuban-style socialist society without a small Melanesian bourgeoisie. There will be no capitalist system and the nickel firm, the SLN, will not remain' (Dornoy 1984:210). Within months, PALIKA was demanding 'Kanak independence' rather than a capitalist neo-colonial independence (Gorodey 1978:68-9). At other times
PALIKA affirmed its affinity with traditional values; Poigoune, and also Machoro, reacted against the festival 'Melanesia 2000' as an exhibitionist, commercial enterprise that prostituted sacred values (Dornoy 1984:69). However, in general, the revolutionary and youthful fervour was out of step with the majority of Melanesians to whom a more gradual evolution seemed to offer the only viable prospect of change. PALIKA was however able to achieve the election of two of its members to the Territorial Assembly in 1977. One of these was Nidoish Naisseline, elected in his home island of Mare. Although PALIKA's influence was considerable, its popular support was always limited and localized.

By the late 1970s each of the predominantly Melanesian parties had come out in favour of independence though the strength of their demands varied considerably. The UC tended to take a more gradualistic perspective; Pidjot stressed in 1977 that internal self-government was the best way to move towards independence while a new European member of the Territorial Assembly, Pierre Declercq, argued that the onus for movement towards independence rested on the French government which was 'responsible for the present disastrous situation and should act accordingly' (Dornoy 1984:177). The UMNC took up a more radical position and indicative of this stance was the changing of the name of the party in 1977 to Front Unifié Libération Kanake (FULK). The position of FULK was that:

Independence is essential to regain the freedom and salvation of the Melanesian culture and religion. It must be for Kanaks because they are the only legitimate people. Kanaks must be united and not divided as they are now. Independence must be gained, not through armed struggle but through the assertion of customs and religion. To regain their 'soul' Melanesians must get their land back (quoted by Dornoy 1984:184).

PALIKA most obviously favoured immediate Kanak independence and stressed that 'it would never give a white man the right to intervene in the affairs of the Kanak people' (Dornoy 1984:210). For a brief period in 1975, the UC, UMNC and PALIKA were united in a Coordinating Committee for Independence to give a political, economic, social and cultural definition to the slogan of Kanak independence with the intention of moving towards the formation of a single Kanak political party (PALIKA 1978:19). Personality clashes, inflexibility and different philosophies ensured that such unity was able to last for no more than four months and it was not for several years that unity was again created out of adversity.

The more radical positions of Melanesians towards independence antagonized the vast majority of the European electorate, especially as it became increasingly apparent that
these wishes were not those of a handful of 'extremists' but represented a growing majority of Melanesians. Consequently European support for the UC dwindled rapidly and the other smaller and more radical parties became almost exclusively Melanesian. These parties increasingly shared two major aims: restoration of title to land and independence. Though there were variations in the philosophies and programs of the parties, primarily over the extent to which change would be gradual or revolutionary or might be expected to occur with French assistance, the major divisions between parties were more those that surrounded personalities (and thus regions and religions) than policies. For all that personalities dominated politics, as they do elsewhere in Melanesia, their broad programs were clear and consistent and quite unlike those of the parties ranged in opposition to them.

Every primarily Melanesian political party, with the partial exception of the UC, has achieved support as much through sectarian divisions and the region of origin of the leaders as through political philosophies and programs. The relation between religions and political parties is not accidental, nor is it true only of New Caledonia. Exactly the same patterns are true throughout Melanesia, nowhere more so than in Vanuatu. While the details of political and religious affiliations have not been unravelled, contemporary divisions are, at least in part, reflections of social divisions forged before European contact, the kinds of divisions that brought different trades and religions to different parts of the same island, notably in the Loyalty Islands. Historic divisions remain important.

Since the start of the century, coinciding with the arrival of Maurice Leenhardt, Protestantism in the French tradition has generally been seen as more radical and progressive than Catholicism. However this division is far from absolute. Concern with economic advancement resulted in one prominent Protestant church, the Eglise Evangélique Libre (Free Evangelical Church), once the most radical in New Caledonia, aligning itself on the side of conservatism (Kohler and Pillon 1982a:95) and it was left to other churches, and other religions, to effectively promote the independence movement. Though Tjibaou has argued that the Catholic Church was 'always on the side of the Noumea bourgeoisie' (NC 20 December 1984), whereas Protestant missions were localized, preached in local languages and allowed traditions to be maintained (Dornoy 1984:106, 184), the real differences are slight as both churches have tended to support reformist and autonomist positions and, in private, pro-independence sentiments. Many of the principal Melanesian political leaders including Tjibaou, Machorò and Francois Burck', have been pastors or have trained towards the priesthood, a training that has often contributed to their radicalism, given a religious note to their political philosophies and ensured continuous ties between some parties and particular religions. As political parties have become more
sophisticated and more radical so the influence of the churches has declined but never disappeared.

Conservative currents

The fission and fusion that had earlier characterized the conservative parties continued to mark their evolution in the first half of the 1970s. To an even greater extent than the autonomist parties their divisions and rivalries were marked by a series of personal quarrels and disagreements between Chatenay, Laroque, Henri Lafleur and his son, Jacques Lafleur. Their unity within the UD, despite successes in the 1968 and 1971 territorial elections, was not destined to last as Chatenay pressed for reforms which gave increased power to Melanesians while Laroque concerned himself with gaining support from the 'conservative elements of the local European bourgeoisie' (Dornoy 1984:197). Chatenay took over the leadership of the UD and in 1972 Laroque and the Lafleurs formed their own party, the Entente Démocratique et Sociale (EDS). Both were conservative parties strongly opposed to any movement towards autonomy.

For the first time a second issue united the two parties in the 1970s; the necessity to gain some degree of Melanesian support. The EDS supported the Protestant association AICLF which retained considerable influence among Melanesians; one High Chief, Nea Gallet, joined the EDS and many former supporters of the UMNC on the east coast followed him. An even more significant gain for the conservative parties came in 1974 with the support of Dick Ukeiwe in the Loyalty Islands, once again at the expense of the UMNC. Ukeiwe, a teacher from Lifou, was a supporter of the UC in the 1950s but by the late 1960s he had shifted his allegiance to the UD. Nevertheless the UD declined at the expense of the EDS and in 1974 Chatenay resigned from the party. After 1975 both parties established closer contacts with French parties; the UD allied itself with the Union Démocratique Républicaine and in 1977 changed its name to the Rassemblement pour la République (RPR(NC)), Assembly for the Republic, with a new leader, Ukeiwe, whose aim was to achieve 'a multiracial society that only France can guarantee' (Dornoy 1984:199). In France that potential guarantor was Chirac, the Mayor of Paris, and a prominent figure in the French party, Rassemblement pour la République (RPR(F)). The UD made its swansong at the 1977 Territorial Assembly elections, with the election of Gaston Morlet on the east coast, the last representative of a party which had once represented the conservative small settlers of New Caledonia.

The EDS remained the largest and most powerful conservative party, especially in Noumea and on the west coast. It allied itself with the French party, Républicains Indépendants, and gained support not only from conservative Melanesians but also from Wallisians and Futunans. For the first time in the mid-1970s
migrant workers, increasingly becoming an established community in New Caledonia, were throwing in their lot with the conservative parties in opposition to the Melanesian parties, whose demand for independence was seen as posing a threat to their jobs and residential status. Although in 1977 Uregei was proclaiming on behalf of FULK that independence would emancipate not only Kanaks but also other migrant workers, especially Tahitians, and PALIKA declared themselves engaged in a united struggle with migrant workers who were in New Caledonia 'as a direct consequence of the colonial situation' (Dornoy 1984:185, 209), the prospects for even minimal Polynesian support for the Melanesian parties had already disappeared. Melanesians had been outnumbered, and the Polynesian migrants showed no sign of returning 'home' or supporting Melanesian interests. In 1977 the EDS also changed its name, becoming the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie and combined with the RPR(NC) to fight the Territorial Assembly elections together. By then the only real difference between the two parties was actually in France, following the split between the more conservative Chirac and President Giscard d'Estaing, a division which had little impact 18,000 kilometres away. Nonetheless Gaullist (Chirac) and Giscardian divisions even now retain significance, a mark of the manner in which these parties were tied to and supported French interests. Of the 12 Rassemblement pour la Calédonie members elected in the 1977 elections one, Petelo Manufioa, was a Wallisian and four, including Ukeiwe, were Melanesians. Of the seven Europeans, one was born in France and two were born in other French colonies, Vietnam and Morocco.

The combined conservative forces made further gains in all sections of the community. A small Melanesian party, Unité Kanake, that had broken away from Uregei's UMNCC in 1975, disbanded two years later to merge with Rassemblement pour la Calédonie. Its Melanesian leader argued that this was necessary because 'the community must become solid in its support for the French nation' (Dornoy 1984:200). As the Melanesian parties swung towards support for independence more conservative Melanesians began to throw in their lot with the right. There were a number of reasons for this. Older Melanesians especially believed that French policies had contributed to Melanesian social and economic development, they recognized substantial improvements in their own lives and still venerated de Gaulle as a war leader; a future without France was hard to contemplate. Others, such as the former UC leader, Michel Kauma, believed that independence would create chaos in New Caledonia and favoured the access of Melanesians to private property to break away from both the reservations and 'the weight of coutume that prevented them being individuals in their own right' (Dornoy 1984:195). Those Melanesians who moved to the right broadly favoured the certainty of a dependent capitalist development with France in comparison with the uncertainty of an independence that only a minority of the New Caledonian population wanted.
Although the broad conservative currents were well-defined a number of smaller centre-parties emerged in the 1970s, further sapping the strength of the UC and weakening its remaining ties with the European population. The MLC under the leadership of Jean Léques, was the first and for long the foremost of these though by 1977 its separate identity had almost ended. Though still opposed to formal ties with the conservative parties because of their 'obsessive campaign of fear against independence' it had joined with them in all electoral districts other than Noumea and the south (Dornoy 1984:190). A further group, the Club de Réflexion Politique, also broke away from the MLC and succeeded in two Assembly elections. A second group to break away from the UC was the Union Nouvelle Calédonienne (UNC), which was founded by Jean-Pierre Aifa in 1977. Aifa, a farmer, Mayor of Bourail, descendant of Arab settlers and also son-in-law of Lenormand, had earlier opposed Pidjot's support for independence within the UC, and stressed that the program of the UNC was virtually the same as the 1971 UC program when the UC were not in favour of independence (Dornoy 1984:191). Many of those Europeans who left the UC at that time were already strongly opposed to what they saw as 'Kanak racism' or 'revengeful Kanak independence' (Dornoy 1984:196). Though more conservative on the major political issue of independence the UNC retained its autonomist and reformist position and never allied itself with the real conservative forces. A second mildly reformist, autonomist and anti-independence party, Union pour le Renouveau de la Calédonie (URC) was also founded in 1977 but without ever having the impact and electoral success of Aifa's UNC. More conservative still was a fourth new party, Ensemble Toutes Ethnies (Unity of all Ethnic Groups), founded in 1976, which gave first priority to the maintenance of the French presence in New Caledonia, scarcely surprising in view of the original aim of its founder, Dr Raymond Mura, to represent the 'metropolitan' French population in the Territorial Assembly. It did not last long as a separate party and by 1968 had merged with the stronger right wing.

Although the conservative and centre parties were all firmly opposed to independence a number of specifically anti-independence groups also emerged in the mid-1970s. The largest of these was the Comité d'Action contre l'Indépendance created in 1975 through the efforts of a former member of the UC, Roger Galliot, who later became an extreme right wing mayor of Thio. It was reported to have attracted 12,000 members, including Melanesians, on a wide platform to support the interests of 'those who want to remain French' (Dornoy 1984:213). The whole concept of independence was placed beyond the pale; Eriau, the French High Commissioner in 1977, had threatened that any group which advocated 'separation from France' would be liable to French security laws against secession and treason. There were also two tiny groups of young Melanesians in opposition to independence: the Rassemblement des Jeunes Canaques Français (Assembly of Young French Kanaks), founded with the help of Henri Morini, and the Union des Jeunes
Canaques Français, supported mainly by Lifou youths with the support of the UD Mayor of Lifou, Robert Paouta Naxue (Dornoy 1984:213). Many other small groups like this emerged and just as quickly faded away as, in typically French fashion, committees were established to confront particular issues and either the issue faded or personalities intervened to lead to a swift demise. Nonetheless groups like these represented a substantial expression of opposition to independence and were the surface expressions of still small but well-armed and more clandestine groups and individuals who were willing to play a violent part in the resolution of political crises.

Through the 1970s the broad balance between the dominantly European conservative parties and the increasingly Melanesian and nationalistic parties was maintained, though the picture became confused in the constant shifting of allegiances and especially in the fragmentation of the UC, once the solid rock of all reformist and autonomist sentiments. The profusion of political parties (Figure 4) in a territory of no more than 130,000 people had become considerable though the diversified economy and the complex cultural and political history explained much of this. The shift in the UC towards a more nationalistic position and its association, however tenuous, with the socialist pro-independence party, PALIKA discouraged conservative Melanesians who, after some trivial attempts at party formation, allied themselves with the major conservative parties. These parties, somewhat surprisingly, eventually achieved a membership that was ethnically more representative of the New Caledonian population than was the membership of the UC. This was achieved primarily because the European supporters of the UC, small settlers and the urban
proletariat, had deserted en masse for reformist but anti-independence parties. The conservative parties never changed their position of opposition to autonomy but, as the UC and other Melanesian parties shifted to more firmly nationalistic positions, they lost what little zeal they had for reformist policies. Moreover, between 1968 and 1973, the era of the nickel boom, the number of electors increased from 40,253 to 53,000; more than two-thirds of these were recent migrants and half lived in Noumea (Dornoy 1984:237). The arrival of this generally conservative group, most of whom came from France, resulted in the conservative parties not only turning to them to enlarge their support but forming links with metropolitan parties. In response to the more obvious polarization of conservatives and nationalists a number of centre parties emerged with a tenuous hold of what little there was of a middle ground.

Shifts in the structure of political parties and migration to New Caledonia had brought a shift in electoral geography. In the 1957 Territorial Assembly elections when the UC was widely supported it won as many seats in Noumea and the west coast as it did on the east coast and the Loyalty Islands. Everywhere but the south (which included Noumea), the UC won more than half the votes until the splits which made the UMC and the MLC separate parties in the 1971 elections. As Melanesians left to form separate parties and Europeans left, mainly to the conservative parties, the UC lost votes throughout New Caledonia and, in 1977, the Territorial Assembly elections 'reinforced the split between the predominantly white Noumea and the predominantly Melanesian interior' (Dornoy 1984:240) as the pro-independence movements progressed, especially on the east coast, where the UPM did particularly well (Table 17). In 1978 New Caledonia was divided for the first time into two electoral districts: the west coast (including Belep and Ouegoa) and the east coast, including the Loyalty Islands. These elections for the French parliament demonstrated the increasing split between Melanesians and Europeans; no European candidates stood for election on the east coast though there was one Melanesian (who got four per cent of the vote) among the six west coast candidates. Noumea had emphatically returned to the conservative fold; Lafleur, for the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie, gained 64 per cent of the vote there compared with less than 10 per cent for the UC candidate, François Burck. It had also become abundantly clear that the large migrant Wallisian and Futunan population, with a Rassemblement pour la Calédonie deputy (and previously with an MLC deputy), were voting en bloc for conservative parties. The

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3 Both PALIKA and FULK received most of their support in the Loyalty Islands. However Lafleur’s conservative party, the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie, with more than a quarter of the Loyalty Island votes, received more support than either FULK or PALIKA.

4 Somewhat surprisingly this division then included the French population of the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), an indication of the close ties between the two colonies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parties and Members</th>
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<td>1953</td>
<td>UC (14), Action Réforme (1), Liste d'Union (10?)</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>UC (18), Rassemblement Ouvrier (1), Républicains Sociaux (7), Action Economique et Sociale (3), Paysans Indépendants (1)</td>
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<td>UC (22), Calédonie Nouvelle (2), Union des Patentés (1), Entente (10)</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>UC (22), Union Civique (1), Movement Populaire Calédonien (1), UD (11)</td>
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<td>UC (12), UMNC (4), Union Civique (1), MPC (1), Mouvement Libéral Calédonien (6), UD (11)</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>UC (12), UMNC (5), MPC (2), MLC (5), UD (4), Entente Démocratique et Sociale (7)</td>
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<td>1973</td>
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<td>1974</td>
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<td>1984</td>
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political impact of the nickel boom, Melanesian moves towards independence and electoral reform had combined to ensure that there was a large conservative majority in Noumea; on the east coast and in the islands Melanesian frustrations mounted and electoral geography combined with population and economic geography to contrast Noumea and the bush.

The 1979 elections: towards independence?

The 1977 Territorial Assembly elections had for the first time involved the issue of independence but, in terms of discussions and dissent to come, this was no more than the tip of an iceberg of substantial dimensions. In France New Caledonia was viewed, if it was contemplated at all, as a territory which sought to remain French despite the presence of some 'bad-tempered political malcontents' (Dornoy 1984:104) with local grievances and aspirations for independence which could be ignored as being no more than forceful, if aberrant, pressures for decentralization and autonomy. If France had ever shown signs of bowing to the pressures for greater autonomy, the metropolitan perspective might have been broadly correct. Instead, by strengthening their control over this dependent and distant territory, those who could have been satisfied autonomists became dissatisfied indépendantistes.

After the 1977 elections the conservative and centrist parties in the new Assembly combined to form a majority and, for the first time, the UC was no longer in power but sat in opposition with the smaller Melanesian parties. Within a year the two right wing parties the RPR (NC) and Rassemblement pour la Calédonie, under the leadership of Lafleur, combined with the MLC, under Jean Léques, to form the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR), the Assembly for Caledonia in the French Republic, to prevent the 'Balkanization' of conservatism. The occasion, in July 1978, was a visit to New Caledonia of Chirac, the former Prime Minister of President Giscard d'Estaing. The new party was supported by other organizations, including Jeunes Canaques Français and the Protestant AICLF (Ward 1982:22), and was now much the most important in the Assembly. Its policies were unchanged: 'the philosophy of the conservative forces in New Caledonia is simple: conserve. This means protecting and conserving acquired social and economic privileges in a society where being European can confer both social status and economic benefit' (Dornoy 1984:260-1). This philosophy, and hence absence of policy, were widely supported by metropolitan French, now a major group, and poor whites, because of their fear of displacement if independence occurred, and those Melanesians who were more conservative or had gained positions of privilege.

One further outcome of the 1977 elections and the rise of conservatism was the greater degree of unity between the broadly
Melanesian *indépendantiste* parties. After the elections, the UC formally shifted its policy to support full independence and effective support for independence increased. In the 1977 elections PALIKA and FULK overall gained 14 per cent of the vote, the UPM gained 4 per cent and the UC 20 per cent, so more than a third of the electorate, but about 80 per cent of Melanesians (Dornoy 1984:259), broadly supported the independence movement, proportions which, in changing circumstances, scarcely altered in subsequent years. By contrast, the RPCR (then RPR) gained 32.5 per cent of the votes in that election but steadily increased its share in later years.

As conservative forces became entrenched in the Assembly, ensuring that there would be no significant decentralization of power from France, and Melanesians found themselves in a minority and in opposition, resentment surfaced regularly and there was increased friction between the administration and Melanesian dissidents. In 1977 a gendarme was transferred from the Loyalties for suspected links with *indépendantistes*, others were transferred from New Caledonia, Kanak students were expelled from their Paris hostel, there was intermittent violence at Poindimie (an important PALIKA and pro-independence centre) with riot police being brought in from Tahiti, and the Mayor of Lifou was suspended for stating at a war memorial ceremony that, 'the two world wars have been colonial wars and France has forcibly led the people of Lifou to the slaughter' (Dornoy 1984:113). Gains by *indépendantistes* in the 1977 municipal elections, especially on the east coast, with PALIKA mayors being elected at Poindimie and Ouvea, and Tjibaou becoming mayor of Hienghene, were swiftly followed by the transfer of control over municipal budgets from Noumea to Paris, a move which naturally stimulated further nationalism (Ward 1982:20). Dissent was greatest in the Loyalty Islands and the east coast, where land claims and land occupations increased, with the destruction of fences and the killing of cattle. In some valleys, tensions mounted with settlers and Melanesians claiming that each had fired on the other. Military and police forces in New Caledonia were reinforced. Disruption, rather than securing gains, only forced the conservative parties into firmer support for the status quo.

Though disputes and disagreements focused on the economic issues that had first prompted demands for autonomy, with land issues becoming more important as the nickel boom receded into history (though the power of the SLN and big business were resented no less than in earlier times), all economic debates were increasingly incorporated into the major debate on the political future of New Caledonia. Moreover the rise to power of the RPCR, the most durable and successful conservative party, emphasized the entrenched power of Noumea. The RPCR included many prominent urban businessmen, several with economic interests in France; despite the graziers, few had economic interests in the rural areas or were aware of reformist pressures and needs there.
Necessarily Melanesians shared 'the general cynicism of la brousse towards Noumea-dominated politics, with its empty rhetoric and false promises' (Dornoy 1984:263). Melanesian economic aspirations became subsumed into political demands.

French response to worsening tension and increased polarization was inevitable although until 1979 the government of President Giscard had taken a wholly defensive policy designed to stop the further progress of independence groups by the 'reinforcement of links between France and the overseas territories, acknowledgement of the interests of the local population and of their attachment to France' (Dornoy 1984:265). In practice this was merely rhetoric and the failure of containment led to 'an offensive aimed at economic recovery' (Dornoy 1984:265) and a comprehensive plan for social and economic reform (the Dijoud Plan). Paul Dijoud, the new Secretary of State for the DOM-TOMs formulated a plan that included a range of social and economic reforms (Chapter 7). The ten-year Plan, with a massive increase in French investment, stressed greater economic diversity, the more rapid transfer of land to Melanesians, education reforms and the establishment of a Melanesian Cultural Institute. However Dijoud was politically conservative and, with his argument that: 'Independence is impossible for New Caledonia. Only the French presence guarantees public order and stability' (Dornoy 1984:266), announced no political reforms but only the consolidation of French control and authority.

Though Dijoud was the first French minister to recognize explicitly that the social and economic position of Melanesians was unsatisfactory, his program of reforms effectively demanded that they postpone the goal of independence for the ten-year duration of the Plan (Ward 1980:196). But Melanesian aspirations were also towards power, control and the restitution of the authority they once had in and over their own land; their social and economic demands were subsumed in the political demands that Dijoud ignored and they were in no mood to be bought off. The 'public order and stability' that was a repeated theme of both the French government and local conservatives had no importance to those who argued that this order exploited them and the continued presence of France as a peacekeeper in fact guaranteed instability, irresponsibility and tension (Ward 1984a:23). Moreover, though social and economic reforms were generally welcomed, Melanesians saw little future in the prospect of becoming a coffee-growing peasantry, with insignificant influence in the country's economy. By then they argued that the whole political and economic structure was intertwined: 'French imperialism through SLN, UTA, the banks, the French administrators and the armed forces is so strong in local institutions that the local populace have no real power' (Uregei 1982:121). thus nothing short of controlling the whole structure of an independent state would satisfy Kanak aspirations.
The Dijoud Plan and related proposals, specifically his proposal that income tax be introduced to New Caledonia, became the focus of extensive debate and disagreement. Within the Assembly, the RPCR proposed a very low taxation rate and a very high threshold; this angered a number of members from centre parties who crossed the floor to form a majority with the UC and the other indépendantiste parties, resulting in Lenormand once again becoming Vice-President of the Government Council of the Assembly. When the Dijoud Plan was introduced to the Assembly, the UC was briefly in office. Though sympathetic to several social and economic objectives, the UC rejected postponement of independence and were concerned that the Plan would entrench a much deeper and more permanent dependency on France, perhaps involving new immigration, which would create further instability and further retard independence (Ward 1980:196; 1984a:22-3). Uregei has even claimed that Dijoud stated that further immigration would bring the population of New Caledonia to 400,000 by the end of the century (Uregei 1982:126). In debates over the Plan, UC speakers, such as Tjibau, argued that only a program definitely leading to independence would generate responsibility, maturity and cooperation between races with all ethnic groups making the compromises necessary to build a genuine New Caledonian society and economy. The more radical Melanesian parties, PALIKA, FULK and the UPM, simply boycotted all debates on the Plan and the socialists (PSC) were divided. The conservatives and the centre party members supported the Plan, and ensured that it was passed in the Assembly, though not without complaints that Dijoud was giving far too much assistance to Melanesians (Ward 1982:38-42). Since the UC would neither support the Plan nor resign its majority of seats in the Government Council, Dijoud collaborated with the RPCR leader, Lafleur, to secure the dismissal of the Council and the dissolution of the Assembly (Ward 1980:196; 1984a:22-3). Once again the principal result was to ensure further polarization. In the debate over the Dijoud Plan the issue of the nature of independence constantly recurred. The UC speakers interpreted Indépendance Kanake as the achievement of a genuine multi-racial Pacific state. Tjibaou pointed to the Kanaks' legitimate demand for independence stressing that non-Melanesians, who were legitimately Caledonian by French law could become Caledonian in reality by supporting Melanesians in their struggle. Machoro emphasized that not only was there no wish to drive European settlers out but that the UC wished to recognize the rights of European settlers (Ward 1982:40). Ward concluded that the UC speakers in the debate showed 'a quiet determination in favour of Independence, a moderate and constructive attitude and a view of Indépendance Kanake which (among those who cared to pay attention) could have gone far to assuage the anxieties which that concept arouses among non-Melanesians in New Caledonia' (Ward 1982:41). But moderation, constructive attitudes, compromise and consideration through dialogue were scarce commodities in New Caledonia. Conservatives could only contemplate meagre reformism under pressure, though the minority Melanesian population, and
minimal Melanesian participation in the commanding heights of the economy or bureaucracy, would have ensured, under existing UC proposals, continued European control of the state for some time to come. RPCR supporters were sure that such proposals would eventually change and others, including Larque and Lafleur, were intent on guarding their privileges (Ward 1982:41). Melanesian members of the RPCR, like Ukeiwe, fearing confrontation and conflict, felt that the safest course was to secure the economic advantages of continued ties with France. The strength of such wishes would be tested in the forthcoming elections.

The elections that followed the dissolution of the Assembly in 1979 were fought under new electoral laws incorporating changes that conservatives had finally managed to pass through the French parliament. The elections were still fought under the list system. Parties presented a list of candidates for each of the four political divisions and members were allocated in proportion to the votes in these divisions. There were however two changes. The first was that parties which polled less than 7.5 per cent of all votes in New Caledonia would not be entitled to any share in the allocation; the second was that seats in the Government Council would be distributed according to majority vote in the Assembly and not proportional representation. Though its conservative supporters argued that the new legislation was designed to produce a stable majority in the Assembly and the Council, it was clearly designed to exclude the smaller and more radical Melanesian parties (like PALIKA, which received only 6.5 per cent of the vote, but had two members, in 1977). If that was its aim it was a complete failure since the various groups supporting independence came together to form a single Front Indépendantiste (FI) offering a combined list in each of the divisions; the FI consisted of the UC, PALIKA, FULK, UPM and what was left of the PSC, led by Jacques Violette, after anti-independence socialists formed the Federation Socialiste Calédonienne (FSC). The campaign statements of the FI 'were rhetorically anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist and for an Independence both Kanak and socialist' (Ward 1982:43); yet another conservative policy had pushed the indépendantistes further to the left.

The new legislation also forced changes in the centre of the political spectrum, as two of the centre parties, the UNC of Aifa, and the remnants of the UD with Gaston Morlet, joined with a number of smaller groups to form the Fédération pour une Nouvelle Société Calédonienne (FNSC) under the leadership of Aifa and the Senator for New Caledonia, Lionel Cherrier, a supporter of President Giscard. The party was broadly in favour of the reformist proposals of the Dijoud Plan and opposed both independence and closer integration with France. Dijoud, among others, supported the FNSC in the hope that it would become a powerful centre party, checking the immobility of the RPCR and the radicalism of the FI (Clark 1982:116). On the right the RPCR
formally consolidated its position by absorbing the other remaining parties who had consistently supported them in the Assembly.

If the 1977 elections had related to independence the 1979 elections revolved around them to an unprecedented degree; after a tense but surprisingly peaceful campaign some 74 per cent of the electorate turned out to give the RPCR 15 seats, the FI 14 and the new FNSC the balance of power with 7 seats. The FNSC joined with the RPCR to form a majority in the Assembly and the Government Council, under the Vice-President, Ukeiwe. The new legislation ensured that the diversity of parties had been dramatically reduced; although five other parties offered lists, including the Unité Wallisienne et Futunienne, all were defeated soundly and amoebic tendencies were temporarily over. Because of the manner in which the FI had ranked its candidates, the distribution of seats according to the previous parties, which continued to exist under the umbrella of the FI, was almost exactly the same and most former members were returned. Some 34 per cent of support was for the FI, compared with 40 per cent for the RPCR and 18 per cent for the FNSC. Of the other parties the FSC received a derisory 2.7 per cent of the vote and disappeared without trace; the new legislation had claimed the FSC as its first victim. The Unité Wallisienne et Futunienne received only 560 votes (one per cent) suggesting that Polynesian migrants had chosen the RPCR to more effectively represent their interests. The predominantly Melanesian communes voted strongly for the FI; on the east coast the FI gained 62.7 per cent of the vote and in the Loyalty Islands 64.4 per cent, compared with 38.6 per cent on the west coast and only 14.1 per cent in the south, where the electorate was almost as large as the other three combined. The price paid for its radical unity was also greatest in the south, where support was scarcely more than half that of two years earlier. By contrast the RPCR gained 50.1 per cent of the votes in the south, 30.6 per cent in the west, 32.5 per cent on the east coast and 29.7 per cent of the votes in the almost wholly Melanesian Loyalty Islands (Map 13). Hence although one critic viewed the election of Dick Ukeiwe as Vice-President of the Government Council, the highest elected office in New Caledonia, as mere 'cosmetic tokenism' (Clark 1983:26) there is no question that Ukeiwe was much more than a figure head, an influential leader supported by many Melanesians.

In the process of radical amalgamation, support for the FI had actually fallen from 38 per cent in 1977 to 34 per cent in 1979 though some of those who voted against the FI could have supported an independence that was not 'Kanak and socialist' (Ward 1984a:26). Although somewhere between 65 per cent and 85 per cent of Melanesians voted for the FI there was much greater 'leakage' from the Melanesian electorate than there was from the European electorate, few of whom could have voted for the FI. Uregel, pointing to the position of the FSC within the FI, has suggested
that 10 per cent of FI voters were non-Melanesians (Uregei 1982:127) but this appears somewhat optimistic. The FI challenged the validity of the results on the grounds that many of those who voted in the election, especially in Noumea, were transients, such as servicemen and bureaucrats, whose real homes were in France, and that they should not play any part in determining the future of New Caledonia. The UC began to prepare a bill to table in the French parliament limiting the franchise to those born in New Caledonia or resident for twenty years (Ward 1984a:27). For the first time there were serious discussions of the necessity to restructure the most fundamental element of the electoral system.

Despite the dissent of the FI the elections provided an overall mandate for maintaining the existing relationship with France and seeking to implement the Dijoud Plan. The FNSC had achieved a reasonable degree of success and gave encouragement to Dijoud that this could be a strong centrist party. President Giscard visited New Caledonia in July to declare his support for the new government and state that France would remain in New Caledonia only as long as the majority of people wished them to
stay so that Melanesians could have independence when they won it at the ballot-box; after two good election results such generous gestures could confidently be made. The FI boycotted his speech to the Territorial Assembly and much evidence pointed to a new era of conservative consolidation. However for the RPCR to respond 'with unmitigated enthusiasm to Giscard's demand that Caledonian society implement the Dijoud Plan, integrate its Melanesian community and so become "a land of fraternity, justice and progress", as Giscard declared in his Noumea speech, seemed inherently improbable' (Clark 1983:28). The first attempts were made to implement the Plan. A local income tax was again proposed, the Melanesian Cultural Institute established and the administration began to purchase more land for redistribution. In opposition, the FI worked towards their own land reform proposals and the seeds of confrontation were sown.

Somewhat apart from the Plan itself was Dijoud's support for Promotion Mélanésienne, which included the demarcation of historic Melanesian land areas and greater attempts to ensure Melanesian access to higher status employment. Once again Kanaks were opposed to the reformist philosophy, argued that the Melanesian chairman of Promotion Mélanésienne, Franck Wahuzuè, a former Foulard Rouge but then an RPCR member of the Government Council, was merely a French puppet, and opposed moves to establish a single educational system (Uregi 1982:123). If Kanaks were in no mood for compromise nor were the right wing, and especially the smaller settlers, who saw themselves as the immediate victims of French attempts to placate Melanesian demands through the simplest expedient of land redistribution. When Dijoud proposed further land reforms in 1980, involving the expropriation of under-used land, the RPCR was bitterly opposed; expropriation seemed 'a death-blow' for rural hopes and a new organization Ruraux unis pour une réforme agraire libérale et équitable (RURALE) emerged to fight the proposals under the leadership of Justin Guillemand, a Bourail farmer and hardline RPCR member. Both RURALE and Mouvement pour l'Ordre et la Paix (MOP) threatened violence and engaged in fine rhetoric about 'dying for Caledonia', sentiments well documented elsewhere (Gabriel and Kerml 1985:62-3). An already polarized situation was slowly becoming entrenched as extremists on either side gathered strength.

Direct confrontations led to further violence. PALIKA, characteristically, took to direct action, mounting a campaign of protests and demonstrations, barricading roads during Giscard's visit and organizing strikes in the teaching service against the lack of Melanesian teachers and the colonialist curriculum (Ward 1982:46; 1984a:27). The expulsion of three Melanesian teachers in September 1979 provoked violent clashes just before another Kanak demonstration against the annual 24 September celebrations. Right wing extremists, (including many pieds-noirs, established the inappropriately named MOP in confrontationist style in August 1979, 'to keep law and order in case the French authorities did
not' (Dornoy 1984:213), and there were counter demonstrations and severe police repression. In January 1980 a young Melanesian, Theodore Daye, was shot and killed by an off-duty French police officer, himself a member of MOP, who was sentenced for manslaughter and sent back to France (Ward 1982:64). Somewhat later another Melanesian, Emile Kutu, was shot by his employer in a dispute over wages, and a light jail sentence was given (Bourdinat 1982:2269-70). Both incidents and their legal sequels resulted in Melanesian demonstrations and tensions continuing to mount. Minority groups were drawn into the disputes and there were riots between Melanesians and Wallisians at the annual Noumea Fair in October 1980, in part over Wallisian access to Melanesian land (Ward 1982:56-7). By then it had become French policy to grant land to Wallisians and migrants who had left Vanuatu after independence (PIM April 1981:15), a policy firmly opposed by Melanesians. The FI increasingly distanced itself from the formalities of government, accusing the administration of paternalism and, through its demonstrations and right wing reaction and counter-demonstrations, 'an atmosphere of menace and tension throughout New Caledonia' (Ward 1984a:28) was maintained. Demonstrations, marches, stoning of cars, arson and street fighting added to the tension.

The way out?

Denied the parliamentary road to independence either within New Caledonia or France the indépendantistes began to seek other options. One was the direct confrontationist approach favoured by PALIKA, which invariably succeeded only in precipitating strong right wing retaliation, but a second was to resort to external agencies. It had scarcely gone unnoticed in New Caledonia that elsewhere in the South Pacific other colonies, some smaller than New Caledonia, were either achieving independence or the pattern of self-government that they wanted. New Caledonia was the only place where the historic population was denied similar status. Indeed after almost two decades of pressure for greater autonomy virtually nothing had been achieved other than the radicalization of a proportion of the Melanesian population. Moreover there was little evidence that any further changes were probable; directly and indirectly the nickel boom suggested to some that the probability of future changes leading towards greater autonomy were less likely than they had been in earlier decades. At the end of their detailed examination of political change in New Caledonia Thompson and Adloff concluded: 'Probably the prosperity resulting from the territory's imminent economic expansion will be sufficiently widespread to offset the dissatisfaction caused by the inequality in its distribution' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:329). Though they were ultimately wrong, especially when the end of the boom intensified dissatisfaction, other factors then supported their conclusion that political change was unlikely.
As a settler colony, New Caledonia had a large European population while the expansion of the mining industry and post-war public works construction had brought Asians, Polynesians and more Europeans. Only briefly were Melanesians a majority population in the post-war years. Moreover it was already evident from Asia, Africa and especially Algeria (Chapter 15) that France was a relatively intransigent colonial power which gave special status to its settler colonies. French settlers were even less willing to see French control disappear than their counterparts in British colonies like Rhodesia. When French control did disappear elsewhere many settlers chose to migrate to New Caledonia. In the 1960s there was virtually no precedent for greater autonomy or independence in the Pacific; although Western Samoa, a somewhat exceptional case (Macdonald 1982b:52), had become independent in 1962 there was no evidence of significant demand for independence in Melanesia where Irian Jaya, rather than moving towards independence, had just become part of Indonesia. France was also increasing settler numbers and maintaining its influence in New Caledonia. In the 1970s however the tide turned; Fiji became independent in 1970, Papua New Guinea in 1975, Solomon Islands in 1978 and decolonization was at last proceeding in Vanuatu. For the FI it was time that the tide reached the southernmost shores of Melanesia.

Isolated by colonial ties and language, Melanesians escaped many of the subtleties of changes elsewhere in the Pacific and Europeans, aware of the trend towards independence, ignored its implications. The media in New Caledonia took no interest in the region and reported only the most dramatic, and invariably negative, events. However the South Pacific was not wholly unknown. By the mid-1970s Uregei was demanding independence on the Fijian model, and contemplating land tenure arrangements similar to those of Fiji, where Fijians rented land to Indians (Dornoy 1984:184,106). The movement towards independence in Vanuatu increased Melanesian awareness of independence movements elsewhere and Pidjot believed in 1978 that this would lead to independence in New Caledonia (Dornoy 1984:258). Although in the end the French 'loss' of Vanuatu in 1980 led to its reinforcing its control in New Caledonia to preserve its presence in the South Pacific (Dornoy 1984:265; Chapter 15), this could not then be known and Melanesians, buoyed up by regional developments, turned beyond New Caledonia for support.

There had, of course, been earlier external opposition to French colonialism in the South Pacific and beyond. Delegates at the Conference for a Nuclear Free Pacific, held in Suva in 1975 declared, 'New Caledonia is dominated by the imperialist and colonialist government of France... no powers of decision have even been given to the locals... and therefore we must fight for self-determination of all people' (Dornoy 1984:117), and at the South Pacific Conference in 1973, after extensive criticism resulted in the walk-out of the French delegate, the Cook Islands
Premier, Albert Henry, commented, 'If France walks out of the conference, it is our duty to help France walk out not only of the conference but also of the Pacific' (Dornoy 1984:118). After the 1979 election disappointments the internationalization of the Kanak cause intensified. At the July meeting of the South Pacific Forum in Honiara, within days of the elections, the conference expressed its support for the principles of self-determination and independence but without singling out the particular status of New Caledonia, as the more radical Papua New Guinea delegation would have liked. A month later the General Synod of the Evangelical Churches supported the concept of independence for New Caledonia (Dornoy 1984:266). So continued the process by which a large number of countries, trade unions, churches, reformists and radical groups gave increasingly vocal support to the cause of independence. However, little of this influenced France in any way at all. Direct approaches by the FI to external bodies were no more successful, even when, in 1980, the FI approached the United Nations Committee on Decolonization in an attempt to re-establish New Caledonia with the Committee. The FI constantly approached the South Pacific Forum, and such varied organizations as the Organisation for African Unity, the League of Rights of Man and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace. Invariably messages of sympathy and support were received but messages meant little in practice.

Meanwhile there was every evidence that the French government was taking a more conservative approach to New Caledonia; though continuing to pursue reformist goals Dijoud had lost any distant vision of possible independence. Visiting New Caledonia in January 1981 he stated:

New Caledonia will stay French for good... In this Territory the majority of the people are determined to remain French... France will do everything in its power to ensure that New Caledonia remains French. The experience of other neighbouring countries shows that when the status of independence is achieved when all the conditions for its success are not present, defiance, gaolings, lasting oppositions and much suffering ensue... This is the reason which will lead all concerned, including those who for political reasons are working actively for independence, to remain under the protection of France, to guarantee the protection of all sides, the security of all sides and civil peace... I am among those who believe that battle must be done to keep New Caledonia French, battle against any and every threat (PIM March 1981:21).

The reference to neighbouring countries was not lost and the Vanuatu government has consistently provided the greatest external support for the independence struggle. In the following month Dijoud launched himself further into the fray arguing that Melanesians who voted for the UC did so purely from sentimental
attachment and not because they were indépendantistes, who were a small minority (PIM April 1981:15). Such statements were an affront to the indépendantistes and a clear sign that they could only look elsewhere for support.

If direct appeals to the external world were unsuccessful, and only by analogy could the FI convince themselves that decolonization must eventually occur, there was one other possibility and that was the end of the conservative government in France, and thus the end of the alliance of the French and New Caledonian governments. In 1979 the French Socialist Party had issued a joint statement with the FI condemning 'The colonial policy expressed in the refusal of political emancipation' and supporting 'the right of Kanak people to freely decide their future' (Dornoy 1984:267); François Mitterrand himself had stressed the need for structural reforms and stated that 'France should be open to all forms of decolonisation and freedom' (Dornoy 1984:267). The French Socialist Party appeared to be offering their clear support for everything short of actually promising independence but the achievement of independence in nearby Vanuatu suggested that the 1980s were going to usher in a new era under a more enlightened president. It was a dream that in a few years would become a new nightmare.
Mitterrand's Socialist party has a substantial majority in the French national legislature. It does not follow that a Socialist President will haul down the Tricolour quickly in the South Pacific. Mitterrand faces the same phalanxes of national interests and lobbies which must give any French President pause, particularly a President who will be seeking to persuade the bourgeoisie that a Socialist President is not the advance scout of the Communards. And, in New Caledonia in particular, there are French settlers determined to ensure that the rising demands of Melanesian 'nationalists' do not produce a repetition of the French 'loss' of Algeria; once bitten by De Gaulle they may yet test Mitterrand's political skills very severely during his presidency (Dalton 1981:9).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s French response to Melanesian claims was invariably too little and too late; by the time positive responses arrived frustration and disappointment had forced Melanesians into more nationalistic and antagonistic positions with more all-encompassing demands. The advent of a socialist government in France, after 23 years of conservative governments, at last seemed to offer some possibility of genuine and rapid response to Melanesian demands and the end of French intransigence. Meetings between members of the FI and senior officials of the Parti Socialiste in France had produced emphatic declarations of support from the Socialists; a joint communiqué of 1980 stated that 'the Socialist Party expressed its complete solidarity with their Front Indépendantiste in its struggle against the policies of the Right, and reaffirmed its determination to support and guarantee the Kanak people's right to determine their future freely' (Ward 1984a:29) and François Mitterrand himself had taken a similar position. The stage was thus set for a redirection in the political history of New Caledonia.

It was not however without considerable misgivings that the FI gave any support to Mitterrand's campaign in New Caledonia. The UC decided to support Mitterrand provided that he recognized the need for Kanak socialist independence, for land reform and
solutions to the economic and social crisis, but their questions to him received no satisfactory answers. Consequently, in the first round of the presidential elections in April 1981, the UC did not campaign actively though Pidjot called on supporters to vote for Mitterrand. FULK advocated abstention while the other parties in the coalition, PALIKA, the UPM and the PSC, left their supporters free to choose between abstention, Mitterrand or the Communist candidate, Georges Marchais. Mitterrand fought the election against the retiring President, Giscard d'Estaing, who was supported in New Caledonia by the centre party FNSC and those members of the RPCR who sought reformist policies. Chirac, the other conservative candidate, was favoured by the Gaullists in the RPCR who believed that Chirac took a more uncompromising stance on traditionally conceived French interests in New Caledonia and the Pacific region. The themes of the first round of the election were legitimacy, bipolarization and localization (Clark 1983:29-30). In that round Giscard obtained 49 per cent of the vote in New Caledonia, Mitterrand gained 23 per cent, the conservative Chirac had 18 per cent, Marchais received three per cent and five minor candidates received six per cent. Despite the obvious support for the maintenance of the constitutional status of New Caledonia Mitterrand received a higher proportion of the votes in New Caledonia than he did in any other of the DOM-TOMs. He convincingly topped the polls for the east coast and the Loyalty Islands but was far behind in Noumea. There were however significant local variations; in the Loyalty Islands Chirac and Giscard received 31 per cent and 13 per cent of the votes respectively, a clear indication of the considerable extent of Melanesian conservatism, though the turnout there was only 50 per cent. By contrast, on Mare, an indépendantiste stronghold, 30 per cent of the voters supported Marchais giving him more than a quarter of his votes in New Caledonia.

Though the large vote for the Communist candidate, Marchais, in Mare was not unexpected, it was not wholly coincidental that, after Giscard sent Dijoud to New Caledonia twice during the election campaign to stress that it would remain French, he arrived on Mare, complete with helicopters and gendarmes, during a religious ceremony where Nidoish Naiselle was a participant. A scuffle broke out, stones were thrown and tear gas fired by the gendarmes. It was Dijoud's final appearance in New Caledonia; his promise that New Caledonia would remain French was again made in no uncertain terms:

New Caledonia is and will remain French, and our friends in the Pacific have to know that this is so and that France will carry out its mission here, that it will ensure the defence of its citizens with all the means at its disposal. France is a great power which knows how to make itself respected. As you saw during the New Hebrides affair, we did not hesitate to bring from the other side of the world one of our best military units. We did not do this to
impinge upon the destiny of the New Hebrides - everyone knew
that unfortunately that affair was over. We did it so that
everyone should understand that we were capable of sending
to New Caledonia, when and how we chose, as many of the best
French soldiers as necessary, equipped with the most modern
weapons and heavy equipment (quoted by Dalton 1981:7-8).

His speech encouraged wavering Melanesians to swing towards
Mitterrand; it was also a theme that was to recur in different
guises.

Between the two rounds of the presidential election there
was a brief intervening period. During that fortnight there was
one further development in Melanesian politics. After a turbulent
party congress early in May in the west coast village of Temala,
PALIKA split into two ideological factions; one group became a new
party, the LKS, under Nidoish Naisseline, and remained in the FI,
while the remainder of PALIKA separated itself from the FI,
weakening Melanesian unity. Even more militant than the other
parties it saw the leaders of the FI as 'so well established in
their petit-bourgeois armchairs that they do not even think of
supporting the interests of those who took them to power (Kanak in
Gabriel and Kermel 1985:143). PALIKA opposed 'electoralism' and
remained outside the FI for three years, in sympathy with its aims
but preferring direct action.

In the second round of the presidential election, in May
1981, the minor candidates were eliminated leaving Giscard and
Mitterrand to compete alone. With the departure of Chirac, the
conservative and centrist parties closed ranks behind Giscard and,
partly in consequence, the UC and the FI decided to campaign
vigorously for Mitterrand, more because he 'was seen as a symbol
of greater socio-economic justice... while the question of
independence was markedly de-emphasized' (Clark 1983:31). FULK
called on Kanaks to reject Giscard, the candidate of unemployment,
inflation and colonialism, and only the now tiny PALIKA spoiled
the campaign unity of the FI. Within the FI there was still
considerable dissent over support for Mitterrand. In calling for
abstention, PALIKA had become the only party to keep the issue of
independence so much to the fore that they were unwilling to
support a reformist candidate; retrospectively, as Clark suggests
and Ounei recognizes, 'it may have been the most lucid of the
independence parties' (Clark 1983:31; cf. Ounei, 1985:6-7). Radicalism was not yet widespread.

The result of the election in New Caledonia was predictable
enough; Giscard gained 65.5 per cent of the votes (with a turnout
of 72 per cent, rather higher than in the first round). Once
again there was a massive regional imbalance; Giscard gained 81
per cent of the votes in Noumea and the south and 61 per cent on
the west coast compared with 39 per cent on the east coast and 38
per cent in the Loyalty Islands. Of all the electoral districts
in the DOM-TOMs, these were the only two where Giscard did not receive a majority. It was in France that Mitterrand won his election victory and his lack of support in the DOM-TOMs concentrated his subsequent focus on domestic policy. In New Caledonia his election was cautiously celebrated as a victory by the FI which argued that for the first time they could now count on at least some support from the President of France. There had been little else to celebrate.

Mitterrand in power

The issue of New Caledonia and the DOM-TOMs was discussed in the first Cabinet meeting of the new Socialist government. The French Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy, emphasized the new government’s intention to maintain national solidarity between France and the DOM-TOMs. The new Secretary of State for the DOM-TOMs, Henri Emmanuelli, specifically denied any intention of downgrading relations between France and any of the Pacific territories and promised further decentralization and more effective social and economic reforms, scarcely different from those of Dijoud before him (Clark 1983:32-3), though after his visit to New Caledonia he proclaimed himself shocked at the social and economic inequalities and injustices there (Colombani 1985:124; Gabriel and Kerme 1985:119).

Any real optimism of the indépendantistes was shattered by two other events within five months of the start of Mitterrand’s presidency. The first of these, the elections to the French parliament after it had been dissolved by the new president, took place in June to elect two New Caledonian deputies. Yet another new party briefly appeared, the Rassemblement Calédonien pour une Majorité Présidentielle (RCMP), a socialist centre party that emerged after Mitterrand’s election; a new party was again founded in support of a particular cause or individual rather than coalescing around a coherent long-term philosophy. In the west coast and Noumea constituency the election was relatively straightforward and the election was fought in only one round (Table 18); Lafleur (RPCR) secured 54 per cent of the vote to win outright, well ahead of the FNSC (19 per cent) and the FI (15 per cent). Far behind were the Caledonian Socialist Party (five per cent) and the RCMP (four per cent). Lafleur benefited from conservative reaction to Mitterrand’s victory and the presence of communists in his cabinet. On the east coast and in the Loyalty Islands the election was much more complicated and demonstrated the complexity of Melanesian politics. In the first of the two rounds four of the five candidates were Melanesians. Pidjot (UC) gained 39 per cent of the vote; second, with 26 per cent of the vote, was Wetta (RPCR) and third, with 24 per cent of the vote, was Naisseline (LKS), supported by FULK and the PSC. Behind them was the only European candidate, Lionel Cherrier (FNSC), with nine per cent of the vote and the RCMP could gain no more than one per
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral roll</th>
<th>Participation rate</th>
<th>RPCR</th>
<th>FNSC</th>
<th>UC</th>
<th>RCMP</th>
<th>LKS/FULK/FSC</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Round One (14 June 1981)</strong></td>
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<td>51.5</td>
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<td>71</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thio</td>
<td>1561</td>
<td>54.1</td>
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<td>257</td>
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<td>Participation rate</td>
<td>RPCR</td>
<td>FNSC</td>
<td>FI/UC</td>
<td>RCMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
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<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
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<td>947(5.9)</td>
<td>662(4.1)</td>
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<td>650(18.6)</td>
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<td>360(22.2)</td>
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<td>45(12.8)</td>
<td>103(29.3)</td>
<td>3(-)</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Foa</td>
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<td>477(58.6)</td>
<td>146(17.9)</td>
<td>115(14.1)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>71(42.0)</td>
<td>23(13.6)</td>
<td>61(36.0)</td>
<td>7(4.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farino</td>
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<td>69.6</td>
<td>87(69.0)</td>
<td>25(19.8)</td>
<td>2(1.6)</td>
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<td>114(55.6)</td>
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<td>86(26.1)</td>
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<td>453(45.7)</td>
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<td>76(16.3)</td>
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<td>150(42.4)</td>
<td>59(15.3)</td>
<td>125(35.4)</td>
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<td>290(50.3)</td>
<td>119(20.7)</td>
<td>111(19.3)</td>
<td>12(2.1)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>56.5</td>
<td>118(21.3)</td>
<td>23(4.2)</td>
<td>376(68.0)</td>
<td>5(-)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poum</td>
<td>515</td>
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<td>122(48.2)</td>
<td>1(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>77.9</td>
<td>49(15.0)</td>
<td>1(-)</td>
<td>270(82.8)</td>
<td>0(-)</td>
</tr>
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<td>5549(18.5)</td>
<td>4486(15.0)</td>
<td>1068(3.6)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Socialist candidate Max Chivot was supported by the Comité Provincial Socialiste Calédonien, rather than the full PSC. There were four other candidates: two independents (Guy Champmoreau and Lucien Lyonard), one candidate of the Mouvement Social Democrat Calédonien (Daniel Bayley) and one candidate of the Mouvement des Radicaux de Gauche (Alain Fraise). Since only Champmoreau and Fraise gained more than one per cent of the vote, their results are not included here.

cent. The new centre party was still-born. Dreams of a new socialist party forming the centre of New Caledonian politics were shattered but, more important, the elections demonstrated the fragility of unity within the FI, especially when, for the second round, Naisseline refused to withdraw in favour of Pidjot. At a press conference between rounds Naisseline pointed to the continued lack of any commitment by Mitterrand to Kanak and socialist independence, and accused Pidjot and the UC's leadership of compromise on this issue by supporting the new President. On this point he was supported by Tjibaou who argued: 'We may be further away from independence with Mitterrand than we were with Giscard. Mitterrand will try to please everyone and give us more autonomy under the guise of "decentralisation". But decentralisation for whom? The miners and whites' (PIM August 1981:14).

In the second round Pidjot received 42 per cent of the votes, Wetta 35 per cent and Naisseline 23 per cent. Pidjot, now a 73-year old Melanesian elder, was elected but the consensus of opinion was that the UC was losing ground and the Melanesian parties were as divided as ever.
These were the last elections to be effectively contested by a range of parties throughout New Caledonia until the elections for regional assemblies in September 1985 (Chapter 14), hence the results are worth examining in greater detail for a clearer perspective on political geography (Map 14). In Noumea, where more than a third of the electorate lived, the RPCR had a crushing victory gaining almost two-thirds of all votes cast. In only five of the 26 electoral districts did they fail to gain at least half the vote and these were the low status Melanesian suburbs. By contrast virtually nowhere did FI candidates receive less support than their derisory six per cent in Noumea. In predominantly middle-class European suburbs their vote was tiny and, even in Ducos (the smallest district), where the FI gained more than 40 per cent of the vote, the RPCR was still ahead. Outside Noumea (excluding Farino) the RPCR nowhere scored similar successes though they generally recorded better results nearer Noumea. In each of the almost entirely Melanesian island communes of Belep, Isle of Pines and the three Loyalty Islands the RPCR never received less than 15 per cent of the votes in the first round and, after the withdrawal of the FNSC, recorded more than 40 per cent of the second-round votes in both the Isle of Pines and Lifou, a clear demonstration of substantial Melanesian support for the RPCR and opposition to independence. The centrist FNSC had one of their best results in Thio, but otherwise were most successful in their traditional strongholds on the west coast; their worst results were in the Loyalty Islands and Belep where the polarization of voting was already clear. The overall pattern of voting remained much the same as in the 1977 and 1979 Territorial Assembly elections, and the 1978 French national elections, though polarization had become rather more acute.

On the Grande Terre Melanesian support for pro-independence candidates was usually greater than in the islands. Comparing the vote for pro-independence parties (UC, LKS, FULK and PSC) with the Melanesian population not surprisingly demonstrates the strong correlation between the two (Figure 5) and draws attention to communes that departed from that trend. Communes that were particularly supportive of independence included such largely Melanesian east coast communes as Pouebo, Canala, Ouegoa and also Yate but also two largely European west coast communes, Paita and Mont Dore; why this particular cluster of communes should produce a greater degree of Melanesian nationalism is not clear. The communes least supportive of independence included several west coast communes, the Melanesian east coast commune of Touho, the Isle of Pines and especially Lifou, with its large Melanesian population. That Loyalty Islanders from Lifou and, to a lesser

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1 The correlation coefficient (0.91) is high; a measure of the strength of this relationship.
extent from Ouvea, were less supportive of the FI was not surprising. The Loyalty Islands had long been characterized by internal conflicts, accentuated by religious friction between Catholics and Protestants. Loyalty Islanders, like those of the Isle of Pines, had a much greater stake in the Noumea economy than Melanesians from the Grande Terre and there was no 'land problem' in the islands. Though it has been argued that 'there is no racial or national fraternity between the inhabitants of the Loyalty Islands and the mainland' (Chaville 1979a:26), to the extent that Loyalty Islanders might one day wish to 'secede' from the Grande Terre, there is no basis for this claim and Melanesians in Mare were much more supportive of independence. Noumea, with the largest Melanesian population of any commune, was also substantially below the normal support for independence. Assuming that each ethnic group shared the same participation rate (and there is no information on this) then the highest proportion of Melanesians who could have voted for pro-independence parties was 76 per cent (which assumes that members of no other ethnic groups voted for independence). With a few Europeans and others voting for pro-independence parties, the proportion of Melanesians voting
for independence was probably somewhere between 70 and 75 per cent, a widely accepted proportion but less than that claimed by indépendantistes.

After this electoral demonstration of Melanesian disunity the next event was more shattering, though it undeniably began the process of returning towards greater Melanesian unity. On 19 September 1981 the European Secretary-General of the UC and member of the Territorial Assembly since 1977, Pierre Declercq, was shot in the back and killed, the first politician to be murdered in New Caledonia and, in death, became for indépendantistes, 'the first white martyr for Kanak socialist independence'. Despite two arrests the murder has never been solved and, although conceivably what the French elegantly term a crime passionnel (Spencer 1985:27), it is most unlikely that it was without political connotations. Tensions mounted rapidly as it became dramatically clear exactly how little had changed and how vulnerable Melanesians and their European supporters were (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:66-7). The response was almost immediate; roads were blocked throughout New Caledonia, temporarily restricting access to the international airport, a family of Australian tourists was briefly held hostage, settlers' houses were fired on in the Canala area, cattle were killed and there was rioting in Noumea. A bomb blast damaged the massive Cross of Lorraine on one of Noumea's highest hills and more than a hundred demonstrators were arrested. The right wing mounted a counter-demonstration of perhaps 20,000 people in Noumea. To avert a worsening crisis riot police were flown in from Tahiti and the carrying or use of guns was banned. This crisis was the first embarrassment that the new French President faced (McShane 1982:52), and to resolve the crisis he appointed, in December 1981, a politician, Christian Nucci, a close colleague and a senior Socialist member of the French parliament, to be the High Commissioner in New Caledonia. In New Caledonia the murder was no mere embarrassment but an incentive and focus for more radical aspirations and activities.

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2 Indicative of the extent of concern over violence in New Caledonia was Guiart's extreme claim that 'the right wing European political elite is not averse to the idea of murders of independence leaders. But it would prefer not to do the job itself. So it has been looking for men to hire for such work. The result is that over the last ten years a score or more of very curious individuals have come to Noumea, former or would-be mercenaries, mythomaniacs and police informers, whose loose talk tends to create a cover for a small, very small, number of professional hit men, who are carefully hidden in plum jobs by the high level politicians who first brought them in' (Guiart 1982a:20). Guiart's claim, in which he attributed the murder of Declercq to such a hit man, has never been disputed or corroborated.

3 It did provoke embarrassment for local socialists. At its annual congress in October 1981 the PSC split over the issue of Kanak independence with one group, which became the new Parti Socialiste Caledonien, led by Max Chivot, arguing that it was necessary to prepare for independence because 'we Caldoches cannot prevent the independence that Kanaks demand' and hence the PSC must support the FI, but move towards a multi-ethnic independence. A second group, supported by the French Socialist Party, became the Parti Socialiste de Nouvelle-Calédonie, in vague opposition to independence.
The elections had demonstrated that not only was there no prospect of a genuine reformist centre party allied to Mitterrand's Socialist Party but that the FI coalition was disintegrating with the centre of power moving towards the left while the right wing in New Caledonia was more powerful and as uncompromising as ever. The overwhelming opposition to independence again focused attention on an electoral system where French citizens could vote after no more than six months in New Caledonia, and election results were invariably and increasingly viewed as a referendum on independence. The indépendantistes argued that only Melanesians have the right to determine whether New Caledonia becomes independent; as Burck argued in 1981: 'who has the right to determine independence other than those who have been colonised? Who is entitled to land rights other than those whose land has been stolen?' (PIM January 1982:18; cf. Bourdinat 1982:2263). But, in respect of the rights of settlers, it was also realistic to allow long-term residents to vote. Maintaining the theory that a multi-racial society was being achieved through assimilation there was strong conservative reaction against any attempt to destroy the constitutional right of 'one man, one vote'. Recognition that grievances were unlikely to be redressed through the ballot-box prompted movement towards more direct action.

Soon after the July elections Pidjot stressed on behalf of the FI that Kanaks were mobilizing themselves to proclaim independence on 24 September 1982, some 129 years after the French colony was founded. It was the first time a target date had been fixed and it was to be the first of many. Discussions between the UC and Mitterrand were held in Paris but were marred by bomb explosions for which a 'Kanak Liberation Army' claimed responsibility though the organizers were probably members of MOP supported by the French extremist organization Ordre Nouveau. Meanwhile in New Caledonia Kanaks were pushing forward their own efforts to reclaim land, primarily on the east coast; as the scale of direct occupation increased so white reaction intensified, producing several violent clashes. Much conservative reaction focused on Tjibaou's proclamation of 'the independence of the regions' of New Caledonia, through which each of six or eight regions was claimed to have taken charge of the direction of its economic activities. By early 1982 Tjibaou was claiming that 'we have gained control at the regional level over the resolution of land problems, the establishment of businesses and industries, including mining, and over immigration' (PIM April 1982:35). The extreme right wing Noumea weekly Corail drew attention to a 'Republic of Canala' where Machoro was formulating his own laws, and 'inviting' the few remaining colonists to compulsory meetings of the Land Reform Commission; it argued that the UC was 'in the process of systematically dividing up New Caledonia' (PIM January
The local press dubbed Machoro 'the chienlit' of Canala' and he rapidly became the obsession of all those who saw their situation becoming more tenuous (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:151). Certainly Machoro's influence, and the union movement in nearby Kouaoa, had radicalized Melanesians, but the escalation of direct action coincided with beliefs that a French Socialist government would not employ violence against those making legitimate claims on land and also that the French government was not wholly unsympathetic to such direct action.

Conservatives were not slow to respond to the disorder that followed the murder of Declercq; after the large demonstration of November 1981 in favour of civil peace, law, order and one law for all, the right wing organization Association Fraternité Calédonienne (AFC) was born, in support of a multi-racial society in the French community. One of its founders, a young Melanesian, Christian Biciw, declared that 'we should not feel we are condemned to live together but on the contrary we should be happy that we can live in harmony' (PIM November 1981:5). The UC now contained few non-Melanesians whereas the AFC had significant Melanesian and Polynesian support. Within months it had adopted the old UC slogan 'two colours, one people'. As much as anything else it sought to oppose Kanaks who had 'outrageously exploited the assassination of Declercq in an attempt to create a climate of insurrection' (Association Fraternité Calédonienne 1984:7). Once again conservative sentiments demanded that the established order be reformed only through the ballot box, where Kanaks would never win, just as calls for 'order' and 'reason' were simply designed to maintain the status quo.

Further to the right a new Parti National Calédonien (PNC) was formed in January 1982, under Chatenay, once again exerting his independence of Lafleur, with the support of some metropolitan French and some rural settlers, amidst growing fears that the French government would somehow acquiesce in a Kanak unilateral declaration of independence. Among those supporting the new party were Roger Galliot (the Mayor of Thio), Henri Morini (founder of MOP), Justin Guillemand (the RPCR deputy) and the petit mineur, Georges Montagnat. The party had one major difference from all other conservatives; it was oriented towards independence. Its first communiqué argued that the PNC was convinced that 'New Caledonia had no future, other than independence. This independence will have no colour and be for all Caledonians of good will, of whatever race, religion or origin' (NC 9 January 1982). At last those who objected to French policies in New Caledonia had come together in the wake of Mitterrand's election to oppose what they regarded as a French government, more socialist than democratic, that misunderstood the situation,

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4 A chienlit, literally 'dog's bed', constantly interferes in other activities and succeeds only in creating absolute chaos. Its use here follows de Gaulle's use of the expression during the 1968 riots in France.
ignored the constitution and was prepared to abandon them to Kanak socialism. Emmanuelli was perceived as a 'neo-colonial dictator' and France was holding New Caledonia in an 'imperialist vice' which prevented real development of local resources and development policies; minerals, a national airline and customs duties were all areas that had suffered. Immediate demands from this 'Caledonian nationalist awakening' were for the dissolution of the Assembly, which had gone beyond its mandate, and the dismissal of the Government Council (NC 29 January 1982). The new party, the first in New Caledonia without any Melanesian presence, gained only slight support though its attitudes were widely shared. Kanaks had also long feared the possibility of a unilateral declaration of independence and Uregei had warned of a 'new Rhodesia' *(Times of Papua New Guinea* 30 July 1982:6) but there was little reaction to the PNC other than to abhor its attitudes. Tjibaou commented that 'this party is like the white putsch in Santo [Vanuatu] whose history has already been written' *(PIM* April 1982:37). Thoughts of a unilateral independence had been around for most of the century but had begun to come to the fore with the coincidence of a nickel boom that promised economic viability and Melanesian political evolution. Towards the end of the 1970s right wing Europeans had apparently conceived a plan where the Melanesian Loyalty Islands would be detached from the Grande Terre, leaving the Europeans to declare and establish New Caledonia as a mini-Rhodesia *(cf. MacClancy 1981:95)*. In many respects the PNC arrived too late; the slump in the nickel industry no longer suggested that New Caledonia could maintain its existing economy and employment structure without massive French support. Many *broussards* within the PNC anticipated American political and financial support for unilateral independence and a rash of graffiti in French and English, 'America Come Back', 'I Love USA' and American flags, blossomed on walls and trees.

Kanak direct action, white reaction, and the formation of the PNC, which served to harden the RPCR's line, were indices of a situation where the prospects for reform were now exceptionally poor. Nevertheless Emmanuelli began to set the wheels in motion, with Nucci's support and despite objections from the Territorial Assembly. There were four elements to the initial plans for decentralization and reform: a much more rapid land reform, accelerating the pace and scale of Dijoud's proposals, economic development in the more remote rural areas (implicitly those occupied by Melanesians), the establishment of the Melanesian Cultural Institute and the appointment of Melanesian assessors in court cases concerning customary law *(droit particulier)* *(Ward 1984a:32)*. In January 1982 the French parliament approved a bill

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5 Though many RPCR supporters had contemplated a unilateral declaration of independence the threat of change was rarely sufficient to induce any action towards that end. Later that year, in a concessionary mood, Lafleur stated that 'maybe there could be independence in twenty years or so but it depends on what sort... I would never become a Kanak citizen' *(Islands Business* November 1982:27).
covering an even wider range of reforms but, more significantly, granting the French government authority to rule by decree, so bypassing the Territorial Assembly. In Noumea the RPCR and FNNSC had come together in the Assembly to vote against what the two parties declared to be an undemocratic imposition of reforms, with the FNNSC arguing that real development could only occur in New Caledonia if responsibility were given to New Caledonia rather than taken away from it (Clark 1983:35; Ward 1984a:32). Anxious to press on, and supported by the FI, Emmanuel stressing that the situation in New Caledonia could not be allowed to remain the same while France was carrying out a new and ambitious policy for developing countries (Dornoy 1984:268). Emmanuel stressed firmly that social and economic reform had to precede any political reform though he had finally spoken of the need to 'make a political response to the Melanesian problem' (PIM January 1982:15). However, at the same time, he deferred any thought of consultations over independence for three years to enable the reforms to have some chance of success. There is little doubt that the French government believed that successful reforms would indefinitely postpone demands for independence.

The Front Indépendantiste to power

In France there was substantial support for Melanesian aspirations and economic and social reforms among those very few politicians who had any knowledge of or interest in the situation in New Caledonia. Some surprising conversions were made; Olivier Stirn, a conservative Minister for the DOM-TOMs under Giscard, claimed to be in favour of independence to maintain 'civil peace and the image of France' (PIM May 1982:6). French politicians continued to maintain their vision of assimilation and the creation of a 'new society' in New Caledonia but Melanesians who had once shared such dreams no longer welcomed them. Tjibaou stated 'we are used by the French government so that both we and our country can serve as a "window of France" in the Pacific. We reject that because our structure of society and our conception of man, founded in nature, are ignored and rejected' (Bourdinat 1982:2272) and he consequently argued that Melanesian models were appropriate both for contemporary and future society.

In this broadly reformist climate the balance of political power dramatically changed in New Caledonia when the temporary alliance of the RPCR and the FNNSC broke down. Always generally in favour of reform, the FNNSC joined with the FI in January 1982 to vote in favour of the introduction of income tax and, despite the RPCR's attempts to reconstitute the alliance, the FNNSC argued that no dialogue was possible without the support of the FI. By June 1982 the FNNSC and FI had themselves formed an alliance and a successful motion of no-confidence resulted in the formation of a new Government Council, in which, for the first time, the FI became a majority. Nucci, like previous High Commissioners,
remained President of the Council and the new Vice-President became the FI leader, Tjibaou, Mayor of Hienghene and Vice-President of the UC. Three other members of the FI were also elected to the Government Council: Henri Bailly (LKS), André Gopea (UPM) and Yvonne Hnada (PSC); two members of the FNSC, Stanley Camerlynck and Gaston Morlet, were elected and the final place went to Henri Wetta, elected as a member of the RPCR but who had since become an independent. The RPCR had been dealt an earlier blow when two other members, Marie-Paule Serve and the only Wallisian member, Petelo Manuofiu, also resigned from the RPCR to become independents. Others, like the Melanesian Franck Wahuzue, had preceded them, 'disgusted with the adamantly reactionary attitude of Lafleur and others possessed of a colonialist mentality' (Ward 1984a:33). The conditions were finally present for genuine radical reforms and the possibility of independence at last appeared a little closer; as Nucci argued at the time, 'one must accelerate the passage of history' (Dornoy 1984:270).

The conservatives of the RPCR (and the PNC) were aghast at the new developments; in only one year a Socialist government had come to power in France (with Communists in the cabinet), an indépendantiste trade union (USTKE) had been formed, rural Melanesians were occupying land and making more vocal demands for a clear timetable for independence and the RPCR had lost power in New Caledonia. With 40 per cent of the votes in the 1979 Assembly elections, the RPCR was the best supported party, hence there were strong demands for the resignation from the Assembly of those who had defected from the RPCR and claims that the new coalition was undemocratic, since the majority in the influential Government Council were now the FI, which had been supported by scarcely more than a third of voters, alongside the FNSC which had been elected on a quite different platform from their present one. Legal objections were combined with reaction to the increased speed and apparent arbitrary nature of land reform; beneath the objections was a minor but more positive note of support for the Europeans in the bush. Characteristically the first real reaction was violent; a week after the Government Council changed hands a new organization, the Comité de liaison pour la Défense des Institutions (CDI), organized a march of six thousand people to the High Commissioner's residence calling for new elections. A cordon of riot police broke up the march and tear-gas was fired. Worse was to come when, a month after the new Council was elected, during an Assembly debate on land reform, about sixty masked young men, wielding clubs, most of them members of MOP and dignified in the local press as 'commandos', invaded the Assembly, yelling 'resign' and assaulting FI and FNSC members. Several were

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6 In May 1982 a new indépendantiste trade union was established, the USTKE, a breakaway union in support of Kanak independence, with a slogan 'factories, tribes, the same struggle' and which was able to retain the support of some French, Wallisian, Vietnamese and other workers, in part because of a number of successful strikes (cf. Gabriel and Kerbel 1985:156-9).
arrested and given short gaol sentences; the longest, of 45 days, was given to Henri Morini, the leader of the invasion. Outside the Assembly right wing demonstrators hurled stones at the garde mobile, who dispersed the rioters with tear gas, though there were subsequent brawls and vandalism by right wing supporters and young Melanesian opponents. The same day, 22 July, was also marked by a largely successful general strike in Noumea, called by the CDI, AFC, RURALE and the Dominique Canon Support Committee (another right wing group protesting against the arrest of Canon who had been charged for the murder of Declercq). It was becoming difficult to distinguish who were the custodians of 'law and order'.

A more formal protest against the FI-FNSC alliance was the resignation of the RPCR deputy to the French parliament, Jacques Lafleur. The resulting by-election in September, in Noumea and the west coast, was fought between him and an independent candidate, Michel Jaquet, whose sole purpose may well have been to ensure that the election was actually contested. Lafleur, who was assisted in his campaign by the visit of Chirac, received 91 per cent of the vote. Though the FI and FNSC presented no candidates and called on their supporters to abstain, Lafleur's vote increased substantially (from 16,289 votes in 1981 to 23,345 in 1982) indicating that many previous FNSC supporters had chosen to vote for Lafleur, in protest against the FNSC's alliance with the FI. Though most Melanesians abstained, some perhaps under duress, the strength of the vote for Lafleur enabled FI leaders like Yeiwene to describe the election as 'a racist vote, a vote against Kanaks' (PIM October 1982) while Lafleur, who had intended the election to 'let Caledonians have a say about the future' (PIM October 1982) claimed the 'results were clearly an acknowledgement of the political manipulation being practised by the French government... the existing legal majority, FI plus FNSC, does not represent the realities in the territory' (PIM October 1982:15-17). Chirac remained long enough in Noumea to forecast that the land reform program would lead to 'divisions and disorder', attack the Australian Foreign Minister for his 'scandalous' and 'unacceptable interference' (PIM October 1982) in New Caledonian affairs (an 'interference' which supported land reform and deplored violence) and call for a referendum on the future of New Caledonia. In the aftermath of the by-election an RPCR motion called for the Assembly to be dissolved and new elections held; the Assembly rejected the motion and tension, violence and divisions mounted further.

Stung into action by the variety of new developments the RPCR were forced to hold a party conference in June 1982, the first since the formation of the party five years previously. Unused to doing other than reacting, or standing on its principles of association with France, it never managed to come to terms with the need to formulate economic and social policies; it remained immobile as parties around it changed rapidly and was criticized
for inactivity and indecision (e.g. Pophillat 1984:25-7). Within the RPCR two groups coexisted with different views over the need for either departmentalization (with New Caledonia becoming much more closely tied to France as a department), or for greater autonomy, such different views and options that the RPCR, like the FL, was united in opposition rather than in support of a positive program of activity. The slogan on the masthead of the RPCR journal, 'one does not submit to the future, one makes it', was apparent only in stubborn opposition to change. Belatedly some members of the RPCR had become reformist; late in 1982 Jean Lèques was claiming that the RPCR had planned the first land reforms in New Caledonia and only lack of finance prevented more rapid implementation: 'we do not object to the land reforms, but only the manner in which they were implemented and the lack of security for the land owners' (New Zealand Herald 25 October 1982). But there was still little interest in reformism as the RPCR concentrated on opposing the French government. Indeed the next RPCR congress was not held until April 1985, long after some of the most dramatic changes in New Caledonia's political history.

Lack of interest in reform within the RPCR had already caused Melanesians to withdraw from the RPCR. Though some prominent Melanesians were deserting the RPCR in favour of neutral or indépendantiste positions, many were still firmly opposed to a Kanak independence. In response to concern over the possibility of a racist Kanak independence FI leaders consistently drew attention both to their policy that independence would be like that of Vanuatu or Fiji, with people of any race able to take out Kanak citizenship, and that the old UC slogan 'two colours but one people' was still appropriate. Melanesians in the organization, including the old Melanesian UC deputy, Michel Kauma, opposed the withdrawal of power from New Caledonia and specifically objected to land reforms that redistributed land to clans, so preventing individual land tenure and 'the entry of Melanesians into the modern economy' (NC 18 December 1981). These themes were taken up by Ukeiwe, speaking at an RPCR meeting in Lifou:

A large part of the Melanesian world, perhaps even the majority, is not in favour of a racial independence. It is simply attached to its customs, its freedoms and desirous of participating in the emancipation of New Caledonia, in friendship with France... France has given us extraordinary riches: democracy and freedom. It is that which permits us to be what we are today and we have chosen freely... France is not money; France is liberty, democracy and the guarantee of respect for customs (NC 21 December 1981).

The response of three Lifou chiefs, who had previously declared that the French flag was obscuring the sunshine, was that Ukeiwe had mocked custom by holding a political meeting on clan land without the permission of the chief and would no longer be tolerated on Lifou. Within Melanesian society deeper divisions
were forming; it was not only Europeans and Melanesians that faced each other over a vast chasm.

Most Europeans and Melanesians retained the objective of a multi-racial territory, with justice and equality for all, although land reform was consistently difficult to incorporate into this view. As Peter Hastings observed: 'the notion might have been more palatable if the history of white colonialism has been less condescending and more accepting, if the Polynesians had not been used by the French as political mercenaries and if there had been inter-marriage between French settlers and Melanesians' (Hastings 1982a:24). Although there were still three RPCR members of the Assembly, as political debate degenerated into violent dissent, it became increasingly apparent that European RPCR leaders were at worst racist and at best rarely more than patronizing. Opposing Kanak socialist independence Lafleur stated late in 1982: 'one of the main problems with the Melanesian is that his intellectual process is slower than ours' (Islands Business November 1982:27). The diversity of Melanesians became 'the Melanesian' and for the right wing, the ungrateful 'lazy native' was no mere stereotype but reality; Laroque, in response to Dijoud's proposals, stated how much France had done for the Melanesians. Even Marie-Paule Serve, who had abandoned the RPCR because of its rigidity, spoke of the need for 'Melanesians to become adults with the same rights as us' (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:58). Laroque argued that 'Melanesians know all that has been done for them' (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:58) but have remained poor and uneducated. A colonized people were blamed for being the inadequate and ungrateful victims of that colonialism. In this perspective independence was laughable and reformism counterproductive. Within the RPCR there were many with more extreme perspectives; they were far from a minority.

In the bush feelings were much the same; similar sentiments were expressed by Henri Mariotti, the Mayor of Farino, who was ready to call out a militia to oppose the 'Kanak, racist and socialist' (Bole-Richard 1983) independence movement. Other RPCR politicians were scarcely more subtle; at the same time Lafleur stated that 'the majority of Melanesians don't want to work' while Laroque admitted that most Europeans were somewhat racist whereas Melanesian chiefs were 'almost all inveterate drunks' (Bole-Richard 1983), a criticism which might easily have rebounded on himself. In half a century European attitudes had scarcely altered. Indeed, these attitudes and values are held by Europeans born in New Caledonia and with considerable experience of Melanesians and race relations; for the bulk of Europeans, resident in Noumea and with minimal contact with Melanesians, it was all too easy to echo and elaborate the views of their political leaders.

Such views were shared by the press. By 1982 there was only one daily newspaper in New Caledonia, the right wing "Les
Nouvelles-Calédoniennes, which habitually supported the RPCR and gave generous and uncritical coverage to conservative policies while distorting, criticizing and often ridiculing the sentiments of indépendantistes. On land issues, for example, Guiart had written that land at Pandalai (Pouembout) should be returned to its traditional owners who had been dispersed in the previous century. Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes first despatched Guiart's decisions as being 'as unequivocal as those of God the father' and, more significantly, commented: 'How can a professor argue that Melanesians, born to parents and grandparents originally from Pouembout and living from fishing at Belep, be motivated to cultivate this land, even if by chance it was returned to them? This is the kind of thought that we lowly people can't understand' (NC 27 January 1982). Though Guiart was a constant target for the newspaper, and for most conservatives, its attitude to land reform reflected its attitude to independence - something to be trivialized and derided at all times. Though French government-controlled television and radio gave a more balanced coverage of events their role was never as influential as that of Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes.

Not only was 1982 a complex year in politics, it was also a disastrous year for the SLN with working hours cut and many workers laid off, a situation which resulted in promises of French financial support to minimize the crisis. This situation naturally enabled the RPCR to emphasize the virtues of maintaining the strongest possible ties with France and Dick Ukeiwe demanded to know how those who sought independence would prevent such economic and social catastrophes. Objections by the FI and PALIKA to increased fares on the domestic airline Air Calédonie were likewise regarded as fiscal irresponsibility (NC 5 November 1982). The FI regretted unemployment but argued that the SLN itself was a major colonial imposition, wholly directed from Paris, that had contributed little to local development and had set up no unemployment fund; it argued that the SLN should leave New Caledonia and that future mining activities should be taken over by New Caledonia to ensure that its future development did benefit the local economy (NC 23 September 1982). Such economic problems enabled more conservative commentators to argue that pressures for independence were solely a function of employment issues. Jean-Pierre Doumenge, after a brief return visit to New Caledonia, concluded that 'it is a fact that the "turbulent young", aged between 15 and 20, having abandoned their studies too soon, find themselves without work and for want of anything better, struggle in militant separatist groups' (Doumenge 1982:464). It was an overly simplistic view; Machoro was still stressing that first among the demands of indépendantistes 'is the highlighting of injustice and second the ability to decide what we ought to do in our own country' (Bole-Richard 1983) and land issues continued to be given the greatest priority. Economic problems certainly heightened discontent.
Even without conservative pressures the FI-FNSC alliance was fragile. The FNSC, despite their belief that the long-term interests of small settlers, their principal support base, were best served through dialogue and alliance with the FI, were rapidly losing support to the right. For the FI there were also dangers in taking office because of the support this implied for Emmanuelli's reformist program; the composite parties of the FI continued to be distinct and potentially capable of secession, while PALIKA remained opposed to collaboration with Nucci and the parliamentary process (Ward 1984a:34-5) in New Caledonia as much as in France. Leaders of the UC, like Tjibaou, placed greater faith in countries other than France to effectively support the independence movement, notably in a mission from the South Pacific Forum countries to President Mitterrand, than in the activities of the alliance. Moreover the alliance had come together to support devolution of power when, in several critical areas, power had shifted to Paris; ironically this shift was structurally similar to that sought by Lafleur soon after the 1981 elections, when he requested department status for New Caledonia, so that it would be administered directly from Paris. A new constitutional status, that gave New Caledonia greater autonomy, had become essential. The first tentative proposals, offering greater autonomy (especially in mining and energy) were welcomed by the FNSC, but the FI wanted nothing less than a definite commitment to independence and a firm timetable for its achievement.

As Melanesian discontent mounted the Socialist High Commissioner, Nucci, already reviled by the right wing, who had plastered many walls with slogans such as Nucci la valise (Nucci, pack your bags and leave), began to lose support among the indépendantistes and, in October 1982, he was recalled to Paris before the end of his anticipated term. The FI meanwhile, in response to the September election of Lafleur, mounted a tougher line and a land claim was made for Nouméa, in keeping with growing pressure for the unconditional return of all land (Chapter 9). Nucci was replaced as High Commissioner by Jacques Roynette, who arrived in New Caledonia in October to be greeted at the airport by demonstrators from yet another new political party, Front Calédonien (FC). In the climate of the times the new party was an extreme right wing party, formed by Justin Guillemand, an RPCR member of the Assembly, who was also a settler, organizer of RURALE and a previous supporter of the PNC. The FC with settler support, and including both Algerian pieds-noirs and recent French migrants, opposed independence and land reform and began a process of mobilizing rallies in support of stability; they proposed a similar statute for New Caledonia to that of Corsica, a statute which would have given New Caledonia effective department status (NC 30 June 1983). A month later, when Kanaks had occupied the land of a European family at Baco (Kone), 300 kilometres north of Nouméa, and set up barricades, Guillemand attempted to visit the family but found his way blocked. He criticized the 'nonchalance of the authorities', described French law as being ineffectual in

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New Caledonia and called on party leaders to be 'vigilant and aware of the dangerous political situation which exists' (PIM January 1983:15). It was a recipe for increased violence and confrontation.

At the November 1982 congress of the UC, the FI resolved not to participate in the preparation of a new statute, without a prior commitment to independence, and demanded a restriction on the franchise to exclude recent migrants from France, Polynesia or elsewhere. In the French parliament Pidjot put forward a private member's bill limiting voting rights in New Caledonia to those with at least twenty years' residence and the UC Congress set a new date, 24 September 1984, as the target for independence. In response to the land occupation at Baco and the militancy of the UC Congress, the RPCR also took a harder line and called on the population 'to remain vigilant and to mobilize themselves for the defence of their liberties' (NC 18 November 1982). The FC which, by the end of 1982, had effectively captured most of the members of the already dying PNC, took the strongest line against the actions of indépendantistes, which included threats to freedom of movement and employment through the taking of hostages, the construction of barricades, bans on fishing in lagoons and the theft and killing of animals, but argued that such 'provocations' must be responded to 'blow by blow', especially by the broussards who must retain their land at all costs (NC 6 December 1982). Not surprisingly, like the PNC, the FC also had no Melanesian support and, also like the PNC, they were closely linked to the Amis des Etats-Unis (Friends of the USA), a social organization, with more than a thousand voting members, formally interested in increasing social and economic ties with the United States, the construction of a war memorial and the establishment of an American consulate in Noumea.

In the lonely and now thinly-populated centre the President of the FNSC, Aifa, made a plea for greater tolerance from both the RPCR and the FI, arguing that in a confrontation the FI would lose everything (NC 22 December 1982) though Stanley Camerlynck (FNSC) reserved his strongest criticism for Lafleur: 'Lafleur's tactics have always been to try to run this country with money, the media and fear. He has always cultivated fear, fear of the Kanak people... He used to give our country a bad image. When you disagree with him he crushes you. But his nasty colonial days are over' (Islands Business November 1982:27). Much as Aifa and others may have wished, tolerance, alongside compromise and respect, were words that had already disappeared from local politics.

The Lemoine statute

If 1982 had ended in tension, discord and conflict, the new year began immeasurably worse with an attack on the gendarmerie at
Touho, followed by the murder of two gendarmes at Koinde, near La Foa. At Touho young Melanesians stoned the gendarmerie, injuring a gendarme, but were fought off with tear gas, an action blamed on PALIKA in an attempt to destabilize New Caledonia (NC 8 January 1983). At Koinde village, a French military post during the 1878 revolt, a long-term dispute over unpaid compensation for timber and the pollution of rivers caused by a sawmill had stopped operations at the mill; gendarmes moved in to reclaim the equipment but the departing police convoy was attacked with rocks, Molotov cocktails and other missiles. Police replied with tear gas and resulting Melanesian gunfire killed two gendarmes. Eventually six Melanesians were arrested. Like all such disputes it was open to various and widely different interpretations (Fraser 1983c:13-14; Guiart 1983c; Ounei 1985:7; NC 11 January 1983). For Machoro, 'all the injustices which have been done to the tribes at Koinde and Ouipoin are legal. There are laws to protect lumbermen, but there are no laws to protect Kanaks from pollution. Isn't that colonial-style legislation?' (Bole-Richard 1983). Tension in New Caledonia increased further after the two incidents, the carrying of arms was again banned and the political situation became more intractable as bridging the now gaping chasm of opinions appeared more and more improbable. Though Kanaks and right wing activists continued the war of words it was increasingly confined to Noumea where direct action and retaliation were less likely and life was largely unchanged.

In the following months tensions relaxed and anxieties over the country's future were somewhat reduced as an uneasy calm descended. Municipal elections were held throughout New Caledonia in March 1983; of the 32 communes more than a third were won by the FI or broadly related groups and six by the RPCR. The RPCR won convincingly in Noumea, where the elections were the most overtly political, gaining 74 per cent of the vote. Three of the five FI parties ran a list of candidates in Noumea, and the LKS ran a separate list but did not reach the five per cent required to elect a candidate. Nor did any of the other five parties, which included Avenir Jeunesse Calédonienne (AJC) (Caledonian Youth for the Future), the PNC and the Wallisian and Futunan party, Uvea mo Futuna. The FI team (FULK, PSC and UC), were led by FULK's James Wright who also accepted the political nature of the campaign; both he, and Henri Bailly, who led the LKS list, argued that a vote for the FI would show the willingness of non-Melanesians to 'take the hand proffered by Kanaks to construct the country together' (PIM April 1983:21). Few hands were forthcoming; as Roger Laroque, once again elected RPCR mayor, proclaimed: 'Noumea, like the rest of the interior, is absolutely hostile to any idea of independence' (PIM April 1983:21). At Thio where the right wing mayor, Galliot, narrowly defeated the FI, there was a violent demonstration with damage to property and a number of injuries. It was the almost predictable aftermath of another election where an indépendantiste triumph through the ballot box was as distant as ever.
Early in 1983 Emmanuel had been replaced as Secretary for the DOM-TOMs by Georges Lemoine and it was he who introduced a new statute to New Caledonia and defined the principles under which there would be political evolution and a greater degree of autonomy. The principles took French recognition of Kanak interests a little further; Lemoine asserted yet again that France would not stay in New Caledonia against the wishes of the majority of the people, but would enforce peace and insist on the political situation evolving through the correct legal and constitutional channels. Lemoine also recognized the dual legitimacy of the Melanesian people and 'of settlers who are genuine residents of New Caledonia' (Ward 1984a:38). Three basic issues were stressed: 'increased responsibility for territorial politicians, the responsibility of the French state in its work of emancipation and the insertion of the territory in its geographic environment, the South Pacific' (Fraser 1983a:21). More power was to be constituted in the Government Council (to be renamed Territorial Government) with the President being elected by the Assembly; the High Commissioner was no longer to be Governor of the Territory but would be the representative of France and head of all public services.

The changes were seen by Kanaks as no more than cosmetic; even before Lemoine's announcement the UPM had rejected any mere offer of internal autonomy and FI leaders soon issued a communiqué that stated firmly that they were elected on a platform of Kanak socialist independence and, for them, autonomy was a question of the past; if France could offer no more than autonomy they would establish a provisional government of the Kanak National Liberation Front and withdraw from all government institutions. On the other side of the gulf, the RPCR was no more impressed; they pointed out that elections would have to be held in New Caledonia before they would participate in any discussion of autonomy (elections which were certain to return them to power) and declared that they would oppose any form of secession or independence by whatever means possible (Fraser 1983a:21-3). As was now usual no common ground existed.

Just as predictably, after the new proposals had failed to satisfy either side, the war of words was again transformed into more violent confrontation and the promise of more to come was never far distant. A major demonstration in April 1983 of a thousand FI and PALIKA supporters set a new theme: 'Mitterrand - say clearly whether Kanak independence is to be found at the point of a gun' (Fraser 1983b:15); FI leaders noted that any progress towards recognition of independence claims had always followed successful demonstrations, land occupations or road blocks, which had temporarily ceased after the FI-FNSC alliance. The FI threatened to establish a government-in-exile in Vanuatu and its leader, Tjibaou, made passing reference to the use of force. Such references were not lost on the outspoken Laroque, RPCR Mayor of Noumea, who noted that if the FI were to speak of force the RPCR
would be obliged to respond in the same way. The AFC staged their own larger march demonstrating that if power was to emerge from the barrel of a gun it would be heavily biased towards conservative forces. Within weeks a Kanak PALIKA supporter, Louis Poitchily, was shot and killed by a European at Temala (Voh) after a minor dispute. In retaliation Kanaks burnt down five buildings in the village and in Noumea an FI march held a sit-in in front of the French High Commission, protesting against what they called 'yet another assassination'. Once again feelings intensified as did concern over the extent of widespread gun ownership in New Caledonia and hence the potential for individual violence or a violent uprising. In any armed struggle the right wing would have enormous supremacy in fire power if not in ability to mount a guerrilla war. It is a measure of the extent to which words had become war-like that by mid-1983 these thoughts could even be contemplated.

Lemoine visited New Caledonia in May 1983 to explain and discuss his proposals and more than half the adult population of the country turned out to demonstrate their feelings; at least two-thirds of them opposed independence, though the predominantly white population of Noumea has always ensured that right wing demonstrations were the largest. Lemoine elaborated his proposals to the Territorial Assembly (NC 21 May 1983) and these were followed by lengthy round-table discussions at Nainville-les-Roches, just outside Paris, which included representatives of the FI (all members of the UC), the RPCR, the FNSC, and one independent member of the Assembly. The UPM rejected the invitation to attend the meeting, arguing that it would only consider autonomy as a step to independence and that the most important struggle for independence now lay outside the Assembly, in direct action, since the French government could no longer be trusted (NC 2 July 1983). Seemingly a breakthrough, in its attempt to stimulate discussion and debate, the Nainville conference initially offered some prospect of a more peaceful future. The meeting issued a final communiqué that attempted to balance the wishes of all groups; the document expressed the desire of the participants to end the colonial situation (fait colonial) by recognizing the equality of Melanesian civilization and by incorporating Melanesian custom into future institutions through a second assembly, primarily of traditional Melanesian leaders. It affirmed the legitimacy of Melanesians as the first occupants of New Caledonia with an

innate and active right to independence, the exercise of which must be made within the framework of the self-

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7 Gun clubs are common in the suburbs of Noumea and in the bush most Europeans and many Melanesians have shotguns; Burck has claimed that in 1981 there were around 140,000 guns owned by Europeans (PIM January 1982:13). In 1983 there were nearly 25,000 registered guns in New Caledonia (Bole-Richard 1983) and many more were owned illegally. By 1985 even Russian Kalashnikov rifles had found their way into local European hands and smuggling is continuous and extensive.
determination provided for and defined by the constitution of the French Republic, self-determination open equally for historic reasons to other ethnic groups whose legitimacy is recognized by the representatives of the Kanak people (NC 25 November 1983; cf. Gabriel and Kermel 1985:130)

and that such a move to independence would occur when the New Caledonian people recognized the necessity.

The FI were generally pleased by the outcome of the discussions; they welcomed the reference to the 'active right to independence' and became somewhat more confident that independence was on the way. They did however argue that if France was serious about its proposals for a movement towards independence it should list New Caledonia with the United Nations Committee on Decolonization. However when the text of the statute was later finalized, providing for internal self-government to be in force for five years till 1989, when there would be 'an act of self-determination', that is a referendum on independence, there was bitter resentment that once again references to their legitimate rights had quickly become simply rhetoric. For their part the RPCR declined to sign the document, because they were unwilling to recognize any 'colonial situation' and because they received no guarantees on electoral reform or the date of the next elections; the RPCR spokesman, Assembly member Jean Lèques, argued that independence was 'not on the way because it is impossible to go against the will of such an immense majority. New Caledonia is, and will remain, French. We are and we remain intransigent. There is no question of changing our position' (PIM September 1983:37). Ukeiwe expressed support for decentralization but not for any political autonomy: 'We note that all of France's former territories who were given statutes of internal autonomy then went on to independence - to leave the French Republic. We want to be the window of French culture in this part of the South Pacific' (PIM November 1983:15). The FNSC did sign the communique and promised to be the 'guardian of the spirit of Nainville, [that of] dialogue and consensus' (PIM September 1983:37), a task that rapidly became impossible as conservatives and nationalists remained far apart.

Another election, for New Caledonia's representative in the French Senate, in September 1983, produced further support for the conservative cause and again demonstrated Kanak disunity. Ukeiwe, of the RPCR, defeated the outgoing Senator, Lionel Cherrier (FNSC), who was supported by three of the FI parties (UC, FULK and PSC). Eloi Machoro, for the UC, had urged support for the FNSC, to reduce the possibility of an RPCR win, and to demonstrate that the FI were not racist. However, at the last moment, two of the FI parties (the LKS and UPM) supported their own candidate, a former priest, Kapea Nepamindou, who finished a firm third, and PALIKA abstained. The LKS leader, Naisseline, argued that to support the FNSC would play into the hands of the French
government in its plans for autonomy. Ukeiwe unfailingly emphasized that the election demonstrated support for New Caledonia remaining French; 'one stays with the liberty, security and peace of the Republic, which permits the peaceful co-existence of all races in New Caledonia' (PIM November 1983:15). The Senate election gave further support to the RPCR's view that Assembly elections were urgently needed so that the massive opposition to independence could again be demonstrated, and the legitimacy of this opposition be recognized in Paris. Kanaks were again divided; Machoro, angry at the split with the LKS and UPM, claimed that 'UC could only count on itself to achieve Kanak socialist independence' (NC 4 October 1983). All indépendantiste parties agreed on the necessity for the transition to independence outside the existing electoral system but differed on the means and ends.

Leaders of the UC, still the largest party in the FI, drew up their own statute for New Caledonia. The new statute no longer demanded independence in 1984 but set out a timetable incorporating a referendum in 1984 and independence in 1985 after two years of autonomy. The statute proposed electoral reforms which would limit voters in the referendum to Kanaks and all other residents of New Caledonia who had one parent also born in the territory; this then became the Kanak definition of 'Caldoche' (NC 22 July 1983; 21 November 1983) or 'victims of history'. This reform would have effectively excluded virtually all the relatively recent Polynesian migrants; they and others would be invited to remain French citizens or adopt Kanak nationality. The LKS, though in support of the FI's political objectives, appealed for greater FI unity to develop clear policies on economic planning, agriculture, housing, education and tourism (NC 15 February 1983) and the UPM argued along similar lines stressing the need for a more cooperative form of development (NC 10 November 1983). Beyond demonstrations and land occupations the FI had rarely contemplated development policies though the annual UC congress in November 1983 gave considerable attention to economic policy (Tjibaou 1983; Chapter 16); the actual achievement of independence was a sufficiently elusive objective.

Lemoine returned to New Caledonia in November 1983 and found the territory as divided as ever; when he addressed the Assembly on the statute and the plans for autonomy only FNSC members and the Government Council were there to listen. The major innovation was that New Caledonia was to be divided into six regions, each having its own council consisting of Melanesians (three-quarters of them members) and representatives of various regional social and economic interests, an attempt to reduce the influence of Noumea. The RPCR boycotted all talks, arguing that Lemoine had refused any previous dialogue with them and would not even respond to queries. The FC, which had been more comprehensively ignored by Lemoine, called for a general strike and demonstrations during his visit. It subsequently called for an immediate referendum on independence, though without any proposals for electoral reform.
The FI, with its own statute, was not interested in proposals that excluded electoral reform and timed the referendum for 1989; Tjibou observed, 'our people are frustrated. Lemoine hasn't realised the urgency for us of attaining freedom. Belonging to a country of colonisers, he can't appreciate being colonised' (The Age 5 December 1983). After Lemoine's departure opposition to the new statute intensified. At the end of 1983 the annual congress of FULK regarded the statute as nothing more nor less than 'a treaty of occupation' and the congress moved that the FI no longer refer to 'the independence of New Caledonia' but to 'the independence of the Kanak people' (NC 20 December 1983). The FI threatened to boycott the 1984 Assembly elections unless there was a clear promise of electoral reform and a referendum by the end of 1984; the French government rejected their proposed electoral reform as unconstitutional. On the other side of the chasm Lafleur warned that if the elections did not take place, the RPCR would disrupt events like the South Pacific Conference and the South Pacific Festival of Arts, both scheduled to be held in Noumea towards the end of the year; the RPCR feared that France would postpone the elections in an attempt to keep the FI-FNNSC alliance in power. The FC regarded the statute as a diabolical plan of French socialists and communists in collaboration with the 'fanatical racists of FI' (NC 19 July 1983) and also promised economic pressures and boycotts in support of new elections. Voices of moderation and the spirit of dialogue and consensus had all been lost; impatience, prejudice and fear had become the principal guides for the practice of politics.

Violence periodically resurfaced. In May magistrates were forcibly prevented from hearing a case on the island of Mare, and had to return to Noumea. In November 1983 Jacques Violette, leader of the PSC and member of the Territorial Assembly, had his car destroyed in a bomb blast, though no one was injured. A month later a group of gendarmes and riot police were ambushed at the Melanesian village of Tieti (Poindimie) when they attempted to arrest youths on burglary charges; some were slightly injured by stones and they replied with tear-gas and departed. In January 1984 a symbolic land occupation at Voh took place without violence, despite an angry demonstration in Noumea and although heavily armed Europeans and Melanesians faced up to each other (Association Fraternité Calédonienne 1984:116-28). Stepping up the campaign of direct action, the FI called a day of mobilization for 24 March; fifteen European farms were occupied and symbolic houses (cases) constructed on the land. Lafleur denounced the 'usual backpedalling of the French administration' and claimed that the land occupations were 'Marxist terrorism' and that the FI wished to install 'Kanak Marxist Independence' (PIM April 1984:7; May 1984:30). Although he and Ukeiwe called upon Caledonians to retaliate by occupying the homes of FI leaders the order was later cancelled. The FC likewise promised direct action from their members to restore 'law and order'. The FI demanded that Algerian settlers, former paratroopers and 'other fascists' should be
repatriated with similar malcontents, and PALIKA called for a Kanak Revolutionary Socialist Independence. Though violence hitherto had often been unpunished, the prospect was steadily increasing that, on both sides, it would become more systematic. The increase in land occupations heralded the return of the FI towards direct action in support of independence; electoral success was impossible, electoral reform was excluded and any vestiges of hope in the Mitterrand government had disappeared, as Kanak demands were ignored and the socialist government increasingly became almost as conservative as its predecessors on a range of domestic issues. Locally the predicament of the French government was colloquially regarded as *le cul entre deux chaises* (a bum between two chairs), as nationalists pressed for independence and conservatives stalled for time.

The birth of the FLNKS

Since May 1981 the French Government has succeeded in putting the *indépendantistes* into power, without at any stage promising them independence; it has undertaken a widespread land reform without actually decolonizing the country; it has proclaimed the necessary recognition of Kanak cultural identity, while leaving in place a system of schooling which denies this identity, and perpetuates the underschooling of Melanesians. Halfway through the life of the present French government, its policy in New Caledonia is still burdened with many ambiguities (Bensa 1984:115).

Loss of faith in the possibility of any significant reform in the foreseeable future had forced frustrated and impatient Kanaks into more militant positions, and led to the re-establishment of land occupations. A campaign of destabilization, first discussed at the UC's 1982 congress, was well underway. As Tjibaou argued: 'destabilising the colonial power means first of all occupying the land, then the institutions and we proceed from there' (Bole-Richard 1983). Direct action provoked conservative reaction as European settlers became angry and intolerant; one FC member warned of 'regrettable incidents' (PIM June 1984:30) in response to further direct action. The FI argued that many European settlers would have liked to negotiate land claims with Kanaks but were prevented from doing so by hardline right wing leaders (PIM April 1984:7). It was in this worsening climate that Lemoine made his final visit to New Caledonia in April 1984; his visit generated boycotts and demonstrations but little dialogue or progress towards anything other than further confrontation. The FI, FNNSC and RPCR all rejected the statute of autonomy, the FNNSC largely on technical grounds and the RPCR because they argued that it introduced racism into New Caledonia's institutions and would lead to civil war. The FI continued to demand a referendum and informed Lemoine that if the French government imposed the statute of autonomy, the FI would boycott the anticipated elections,
withdraw all FI politicians from territorial institutions and form a new, more militant organization, the Kanak National Liberation Front.

In this worsening political situation yet another new political party emerged in May 1984 and, symptomatic of hardening attitudes, it was the Fédération de Nouvelle-Calédonie du Front National, a local version of the extreme right wing Front National (FN), led in France by Jean-Marie Le Pen, on a strongly racist platform. The local party, led by Pierre Guillemand, in anticipation of a visit by Le Pen to New Caledonia, was aimed at 'maintaining the French presence in New Caledonia and struggling against Marxism in every form' (NC 26 May 1984). Le Pen took unusual interest in New Caledonia for a French politician, discovering there a receptive audience for extremist views. He opposed the new statute and the prospect of any evolution towards independence. Initially the FN attracted a few dozen members but support grew steadily during the year.

In mid-June elections were held for French representatives to the European Parliament and New Caledonian electors were presented with a choice of five French lists: a joint conservative list (Simone Veil), the Communist Party (Georges Marchais), the Socialist Party (Lionel Jospin), a radical ecology group and, finally the FN of Le Pen. The FI called for a Kanak boycott of the elections, in support of their claims to independence and in rejection of 'foreign elections' (NC 9 June 1984). Ukeiwe, for the RPCR, called for extensive voting, the first widespread opportunity since 1981 to demonstrate New Caledonian support for 'remaining in Europe and in the free world' (NC 6 June 1984) and for the EC, which had provided aid to New Caledonia for infrastructure and education (NC 12 June 1984). The boycott reduced the participation rate to 41 per cent (compared with 52 per cent in the previous European elections of 1979); in Belep not one vote was recorded, in the Loyalty Islands and the East Coast the turnout was only 15 per cent and 19 per cent respectively, compared with 56 per cent in Noumea. Kanaks had responded to the boycott request. In France the conservative list of Simone Veil gained 43 per cent of the votes, the Socialists 21 per cent, the Communist Party only 11 per cent (its worst result in a national election since 1932), and the FN 11 per cent. By contrast in New Caledonia the conservatives gained 75 per cent, the socialists only five per cent and the Communists a dismal two per cent, compared with the FN's 16 per cent. In Noumea the FN, described by the FI as a 'pro-Nazi' party (NC 9 June 1984) and supported by the FC, gained 20 per cent of the vote, a vote in reactionary opposition to French socialism. This reaction was also apparent in the description by RPCR leaders of white politicians in New

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8 By contrast in French Polynesia Simone Veil's list gained 63 per cent of the votes and Le Pen received only four per cent. In Wallis and Futuna the FN presented no list and the conservatives gained 83 per cent of the vote (NC 19 June 1984, 30 June 1984).
Caledonia who supported independence as 'demagogues who incite racial hatred' (NC 27 July 1984), an improbable description for a declining number of individuals who, largely on moral grounds, increasingly found themselves in an exceptionally difficult position. By contrast the FN had few qualms about incitement of racial hatred and Naisseline regarded the FN vote as a clear demonstration of the strength of white racism. Another election could be seen as a referendum on New Caledonia's future.

At the end of June the mandate of the Territorial Assembly ended, bringing to a close the two years of the FI-FNSC alliance. In some respects the Assembly was already impotent. French interventions, and decisions of the FI Government Council, had rapidly run into two principal difficulties. Decisions were not implemented by a public service that was hostile to Melanesian aspirations, while the better access of the right wing to local radio, television and especially the press resulted in a strong bias against both the French government and Kanak aspirations (Bensa 1984:113). Almost symbolically the last day of the Assembly saw it reject an FI proposal for a general social security cover as the RPCR voted against the proposal while the FNSC abstained from supporting their former colleagues (NC 1 July 1984). It was a critical time for the FI; the next territorial elections only promised disappointment, French support was inadequate and more direct action appeared to offer the only viable political strategy. Within the FI there was some regret that despite the achievements of the brief period of joint government, such as the introduction of income tax, the resort to reformist 'management' had hindered the movement towards political independence while Kanaks were becoming increasingly isolated, without support in New Caledonia or France and with no more than expressions of support from elsewhere.

In France the Lemoine statute passed a critical second reading in parliament in May 1984, with the Socialist and Communist Parties in support. The RPR(F), the French conservative party associated with RPCR, opposed the bill, their spokesman claiming that the Socialist Party wanted a Kanak, socialist New Caledonia, in fact 'an Australian New Caledonia' (PIM July 1984:5). Consequently, with the demise of the alliance and second reading of the autonomy bill, the July congress of the FI, convened to discuss future strategies, was an extraordinarily important event in the politics of New Caledonia. The French parliament having expressed its support for the statute of autonomy, four of the five parties within the FI decided to boycott and obstruct forthcoming elections for a new Territorial Assembly and withdraw their members from all government institutions in order to set up their own provisional government.

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9 By then probably less than five per cent of support for UC came from non-Melanesians (NC 28 July 1985) although Tjibaou has claimed between seven and 10 per cent (Tjibaou 1985a:1591).
As the leader of the UPM, Edmond Nekiriai, argued: 'We've adopted a parliamentary strategy over the past three years but now we must go beyond that and the French government must know it. We've called on other races to join us in the independence movement but we can see there's been almost no-one' (PIM September 1984:25; cf. NC 12 July 1984). This expression of isolation was echoed by Machororo who said that because France would not decolonize New Caledonia, Kanaks must do it themselves. However, they remained willing to receive support from any quarter, and Cuba and the Soviet Union were mentioned, and threatened, as possible sources of assistance. The FI was coming much closer into line with the more militant and socialist PALIKA, which had long argued that religion, sport and alcohol were diverting Kanaks from recognizing that 'independence will not fall from the sky through the good will of Mitterrand, other Pacific countries, the United Nations or the good God; it can only be achieved through the struggles of Kanaks and exploited workers. Without a struggle there will be no independence' (Kanak 89, 12 November 1983:2). On Lifou, the New Caledonian Kanak independence flag was raised for the first time at an official ceremony marking the anniversary of de Gaulle's 1940 call for a free France. The new flag, whose blue, red and green stripes represented the sky, blood and land, with a decorated Melanesian house-pole surmounted on the risen sun, was raised during a speech from the FI mayor of Lifou, Edouard Wapae, where he recalled how Melanesians had fought for France on the side of freedom and liberty, the same reasons why 'children and grandchildren of these old soldiers are tired like them of waiting for vain promises and are losing confidence in the governments of France' (Islands Business August 1984:14). It was one more sign that the FI was becoming more militant and that a new crisis was looming.

In one respect the FI had become even more isolated since the LKS, the second largest party in the FI, decided to withdraw from the alliance, arguing that there was an inadequate joint program on social and economic matters, that the FI continued to function primarily as five separate parties and that none of them had effective grass roots organization. Naisseline argued that the FI existed only 'by reference to non-Kanaks, such as the RPCR, the French Government or the South Pacific Forum' (PIM September 1984:26; cf. NC 3 August 1984; Gabriel and Kermel 1985:162-7). Following their own congress the LKS stated that it would participate in the elections (NC 28 August 1984), because the FI boycott would suggest the potential lack of democracy in a post-independence New Caledonia. The decision to secede from the FI and contest the elections was denounced by other Kanaks as capitulation to France's autonomy plans; the secretary of the UPM, Guy Tamai, denounced the LKS as 'traitors' to the Kanak cause. It was an important and unfortunate split for the FI, fragmenting the unity of the indépendantistes, and separating two of the most important ideologues, Naisseline and Tjibauou. Within the FI a new name for the group was proposed; FLNKS (Front de Libération
Nationale Kanake et Socialiste) emerged and, through direct action, contributed to the most dramatic, and violent, period in the country's contemporary political history.

At the final reading of the New Caledonian autonomy bill, in August 1984, Pidjot voted against it, arguing that it 'sweeps aside the rights of the Kanak people [and] plays into the hands of the most reactionary forces in New Caledonia' (PIM September 1984:5-7). Lemoine appealed to the FI not to boycott the forthcoming elections as they had promised, if the statute became law, and later made the seemingly remarkable observation that 'rejection of the draft statute by the two main political forces - the RPCR and the FI - in New Caledonia, forces who are no longer talking to each other, is an indication to us that we are on the right track' (PIM December 1984:7). But, by then, only the French government and the declining FNSC were on that particular track; elsewhere the impasse was acknowledged. Indeed one element that had contributed to a hardening Kanak line was the growing realization that the few positive proposals of the French government would not be successfully in place before new elections were held in France, and the steadily increasing probability that, with the decline in French popular support for Mitterrand's government already apparent, the prospects of a more conservative parliament in 1986 were increasing. And the Socialist government itself was becoming more conservative; one manifestation of this was the arrival of Régis Debray in Noumea in 1983, once the most prominent theoretician of revolutionary change in Latin America, now the emissary of a government that merely sought order. Even in April 1984 Le Monde journalist Alain Rollat argued that, because of the assumption that the government would fall, 'the leaders of the main conservative movement, the RPCR, have shown moderation in their attitude to the [French] Government's plans' (PIM June 1984:7). A different perception of this 'moderation' ensured a more direct approach by the FI which believed that French promises of a 1989 referendum would be forgotten long before then; after all the Socialist government of François Mitterrand had forgotten its pre-election promises. At the final French parliamentary debate on the new statute for New Caledonia only 17 of the 488 deputies turned up to vote; it was the last time that New Caledonia had such a low profile in France.
Chapter 14

The fight for Kanaky

From north to south and from east and west, men, women and children, a people have risen. Thunder strikes and the wind of liberation blows; in every valley and mountain a flaming torch will bring down the government. Kanaky has risen, Kanaky will win (Louis Uregei, speech given to the Annual Conference of the Socialist Workers Party, Sydney, 7 January 1985).

The emergence of the FLNKS and its opposition to the anticipated territorial elections heralded an escalation in conflict as the most important pro-independence group abandoned the unbalanced struggle for constitutional change, ignored the French government and embarked on direct and violent action to secure Kanak independence. Within months the whole countryside had been plunged into turmoil, the existence of New Caledonia finally settled into French public consciousness and for a few long weeks New Caledonia was in the centre of world news.

The FLNKS began to withdraw from French institutions, not only from the territorial government but also from preparations for the South Pacific Festival of Arts, scheduled to be held in Noumea in December. Initially withdrawal was the sole response to French inertia but as the date of the elections, delayed more than once, drew closer the possibility of a boycott combined with the declaration of a Kanak provisional government became a more positive move. FULK was one of several parties which argued that a Kanak provisional government must be established before the right wing declared a 'Rhodesian-style neo-colonial independence' (NC 4 September 1984). The foundation congress of the FLNKS, held at Noumea in September 1984 during the 131st anniversary of French 'occupation', was thus marked by new optimism; much of the discussion concerned the future economy and constitution of the new country, and a charter for the FLNKS was drawn up (Appendix 1) as the congress set out its program for the election boycott and the establishment of a legitimate government for an independent state. A regional congress was planned for November to elect a provisional government with a president, prime minister and six ministers, all to be installed on 1 December. Apart from the LKS all the indépendantiste parties attended the FLNKS congress, including PALIKA who, though observers, soon threw in their lot
with the FLNKS, who they correctly saw as moving towards their own more radical position (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:170). The new union USTKE also took part along with the Comité de Revendication des Terres de la Côte Ouest, the West Coast Land Claims Committee, and the small Groupe des Femmes Kanakes Exploitées en Lutte, the Group of Kanak and Exploited Women in Struggle, and all became a part of the FLNKS. Though such diverse groups had differences of opinion there was a basic unity about the new program of direct action. Direct action centred on the electoral boycott which was aimed at ensuring that at least a quarter of all votes would be prevented, so that the future Assembly would be unrepresentative and hence could not be recognized as legitimate in France; this would then lead to a more direct move towards establishing a 'legitimate' government. The congress again stated that anyone could become citizens of a future Kanak state and, for the first time, it was decided that independent New Caledonia would be named Kanaky.

Not long before the FLNKS congress, direct action had taken a new form. At different times Kanaks had threatened, or promised, that if France would not assist New Caledonia to gain independence, they would be forced to seek support elsewhere. In May 1983 Tjibaou had attended an international socialist conference in Algiers where he stated that 'our claim for independence will only progress with the mobilization of Kanaks... one cannot wait for the colonizer to decolonize willingly' (Le Monde 23 April 1983). Speaking for the FI in May 1984 Naisseline had argued for independence, 'with a socialist France, if she wishes... if foolishness occurs it will push us into the arms of the Russians... and the Russian economic system certainly does not please LKS' (NC 9 May 1985). Earlier there had been frequent claims, for example from Ukeiwe, that Cuba and Castro himself were supporting Kanak independence; in January 1981 the French weekly Le Point stated that 'some Kanak militants have done courses in Havana' (PIM April 1981: 21) and the indépendantiste Jean-Louis Dion, is reported to have claimed Cuban and Chinese support (Desjardins 1985:175). All this inevitably also suggested ties with the Soviet Union but none of these rumours were given any substance until August 1984 when Uregei visited Libya, accompanied by 17 Melanesian youths who remained there for six weeks' 'training', a training seen on the right as 'courses of terrorism', provoking Neoere to refer to 'Kadha-FI' (NC 14 September 1984), but which appeared to be of little real value. The visit itself stirred up immediate reaction; the youths were briefly held by police on their return and an FN deputy to the European Parliament claimed that New Caledonia 'would be quickly

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1 The Groupes des Femmes Kanakes Exploitées en Lutte was formed by Suzanne Ounei and others in 1982 in frustration at the inability of any of the indépendantiste parties to take women's issues seriously though each of them had a women's section; as she observed, 'even in the LKS it was the husbands who formed the women's sections and women's activities were limited to sewing and making cakes for the party' (Kanaky Update 1985 2(9); cf. Steele and Mann 1985).
transformed into either a Soviet base or an Australian colony' (PIM November 1984:29). Even the LKS argued that the voyage to Libya, alongside the election boycott, threatened to plunge New Caledonia into the same situation that had earlier occurred in Algeria (NC 2 October 1984). For the FLNKS, as Machoro claimed, Kanak demands had been systematically rejected for years by the South Pacific Forum hence 'we're entitled to seek help wherever we can' (Islands Business December 1984:17); there were no longer any unrealistic expectations of regional support.

In a last-ditch effort to persuade FLNKS leaders to participate in the elections, and not sabotage French proposals for movement towards a referendum in 1989, the French Minister for DOM-TOMs, Lemoine, returned to New Caledonia and, at meetings boycotted by the FLNKS, pursued the theme of foreign intervention, grossly over-simplifying the FLNKS stance. He told a meeting at Canala: 'I have the feeling the choice has become very simple, even for those who want independence - there are those who want independence with France, others who want independence with Libya... take the responsibility and choose' and, on the following day at Mare, told Kanaks they 'must choose between Jesus and Marx' (PIM December 1984:28), later claiming that the FLNKS had established contacts in Moscow with the Soviet Politburo. He also warned that the FLNKS was now in a position from which escape was no longer possible, having rejected the democracy that their fathers long struggled for. Such directives were not well-received by Kanaks, who spray-painted his army helicopter with graffiti: 'Lemoine liar' and 'you have raped our land and you have come without authorization'. His visit coincided with a series of strikes, organized partly by the USTKE, and within two days of his departure the FLNKS mounted a roadblock south of Poindimie, disrupting the principal annual sporting event of New Caledonia, the Tour de Calédonie cycle race, and provoking a right wing roadblock at Bourail. On the same day a hotel at Poindimie was attacked by a group of 20 young PALIKA Kanaks who rampaged through the hotel and left the owner and his wife injured; the FLNKS and PALIKA denounced the acts as wanton vandalism. French gendarmes later arrested village youths, being attacked with stones and fishing spears and retaliating with tear-gas, the LKS Mayor of Poindimie was ambushed and injured and in Noumea Molotov cocktails were thrown at the houses of two FLNKS leaders. In reaction FLNKS leaders at Oundjo (Kone) set up a roadblock and called for the cancellation of the prestigious Tour de Calédonie; the race was abandoned though French authorities said they were determined not to respond to 'provocation employed to create a climate of extreme tension before the forthcoming Territorial Assembly elections' (PIM December 1984:29). In turn right wing groups in La Foa mounted a roadblock, in Noumea an FC demonstration lasted for two days in front of the French High Commission and RPCR leader, Lafleur, argued that New Caledonia was reaching 'an insurrectional state', warned that cancellation of the race was 'capitulation to a minority' (PIM December 1984:29) without firm action by the
forces of law and order, and in turn demanded the cancellation of the Kanak football cup final. That Marie and Poindimie, both LKS strongholds, were points of confrontation was no coincidence. Direct action had very obviously begun and, with it, the pattern of conservative reaction and over-reaction; the fight for Kanaky had begun in earnest.

The 1984 elections and the active boycott

On Sunday 28 October the three-week election campaign officially began with 348 candidates from 11 parties contesting the 42 seats, and with the army and gendarmerie doubled in size as French reinforcements arrived to clamp down on any violence. A day later the 'trainees' returned from Libya and a couple of days later, on behalf of the FLNKS, Yeiwene confirmed that the boycott would be an 'active boycott' with bombs, roadblocks and the occupancy of town halls to directly prevent the elections, rather than simply boycott them. The election campaign was underway.

As usual several new parties formed in time for the elections. The first of these, formed in mid-October, was Ensemble pour l'Avenir (EPA); for once EPA was not only an acronym but also a Lifou word for the knotted vine of solidarity that old warriors fastened around their waists. The party was founded by the former Melanesian RPCR deputy, Franck Wahuzue, with another former RPCR deputy, Marie-Paule Serve, around support for the Lemoine statute as a first step towards the evolution of a multi-racial society where there would be greater social justice and autonomous economic development, under the slogan Ensemble Pour l'Avenir (Together for the Future). Central to the EPA was both support for the old demand that Wahuzue formulated, during his organization of Promotion Mélanésienne, of the necessity for a Conseil des grands chefs to ensure adequate recognition of Melanesian custom in the future, and the rejection of ethnic discrimination. The EPA rejected the notion of 'victims of history' (NC 13 October 1984, 25 October 1984) and argued for its uniqueness as a primarily Melanesian party seeking more widespread support. A new centre party, with a platform reminiscent of the early days of the UC, had arrived much too late.

A second new party also appeared in mid-October, founded by Michel Jaquet, Lafleur's opponent in the 1982 west coast by-election. The new party, Liste Pour la Calédonie (LPC), broadly supported the Lemoine statute 'with all its imperfections', also rejected the idea of 'victims of history' and set out a program of social and economic objectives (NC 15 October 1984, 13 November 1984) that offered no new directions and was scarcely different from that of the RPCR. Similarly in the centre was the Avenir Jeunesse Calédonienne (AJC) which also accepted the statute and sought to work for economic and social change in the years between the election and the eventual referendum, in a manner that would
ensure that New Caledonia remained French. It too 'energetically rejected' independence, opposed socialism and communism, favoured a multi-racial Caledonia and, in a very detailed program, made no separate mention of Melanesians (NC 27 October 1984) but, appropriately, produced the most youthful list of candidates.

The old-established centre-party, the FNSC, was in poor shape for the elections after substantial loss in support following its alliance with the FI in the Territorial Assembly. Though it gained a number of UC dissidents, such as the old Melanesian leader Gabriel Paita, who were alarmed at the drift of the FLNKS towards violence but no more impressed by their perception of LKS socialism, this scarcely compensated for the loss of its historic support. For the elections the party became the Union Pour la Liberté dans l'Ordre (ULO), a direct reference to the old UICALO that had begun the process of Melanesian emancipation almost forty years earlier. It was the only party that fought on the basis of its previous achievements in the Government Council, such as falling inflation and a larger territorial budget, and on the necessity to continue the program formulated for 1984-86. It consequently sought to increase its influence at the centre, based on its historic status and experience; Gaston Morlet argued that 'the party that established dialogue at a difficult time must be present at these elections when everyone talks of dialogue' (NC 16 November 1984). The ULO was one of only four parties to provide a list of candidates for each of the four electoral divisions, running Melanesians as leaders of their lists in both the east and the Loyalty Islands.

Uvea Mo Futuna was also a centre party, aimed at better integrating Wallisians and Futunans into territorial structures and firmly opposing independence. The party argued that by electing its own members the interests of Wallisians and Futunans would better be served than in the past when there were Wallisian RPCR members. Participation in the election reflected the growing strength of the community, the concern that Wallisians and Futunans might suffer most in future and hence the need to establish themselves politically. The leader, Kalepo Muliava, argued that it was Wallisians and Futunans who were the real 'victims of history in New Caledonia...We have genuinely contributed to the construction of this country and we intend to remain here. It is no longer possible for us to return to Wallis and Futuna' (NC 16 November 1984). In a similar vein was another new party, Entente Territoriale pour le Progrès, (ETP) which was predominantly Tahitian, and sought a similar participation in New Caledonian affairs. Both parties only ran lists in Noumea and the south, their sole population concentrations.

Towards the right of centre was another small new party, Alliance Territoriale, established within weeks of the election. It opposed the old-fashioned nature of contemporary politics, which paternalistically served to protect privileges, emphasized
youth and strongly opposed independence: 'death follows independence', one leader declared (NC 13 November 1984). It had minor Melanesian support and a number of Melanesian candidates; one of these, Firmin Gorohouma, led their west coast list. His opposition to independence included familiar economic complaints: the small size of New Caledonia, a probable decline in French aid and thus unemployment and less adequate services compared with 'the best standard of living in the South Pacific' that then existed (NC 16 October 1984). Without any traditional support base the new party had little chance of success.

On the right, the FC, now led by Claude Sarrran, stood in the elections under the name *Renouveau de l'Opposition en Calédonie* (ROC), Renewal of the Caledonian Opposition, and clearly expressed its opposition to the hardening line of FLNKS leaders, specially Machororo, and to the 'socialism' of developing countries and the United Nations. The FC was also strongly opposed to the LKS which since it was participating in the elections despite supporting independence, had become 'the ally of Roynette, Lemoine and Mitterrand' (NC 19 September 1984). 'Canaque independence is not inevitable. It is a political and economic monster that must be fought with determination since it will lead to the elimination of non-Kanaks. It must be demonstrated that a minority cannot impose its law on the majority' (NC 29 August 1984). Its election manifesto firmly opposed any form of independence, the Lemoine statute, communism or 'any form of totalitarianism' and socialized medicine but was in favour of less administrative checks to economic development and assistance with the cultural activities of all the different cultures and traditions in New Caledonia. It favoured the 'progress of Melanesians in the modern world' through their ownership of private property (NC 27 October 1984). Sarrran correctly viewed the FC as being on the right of the political spectrum, beyond the RPCR which, he argued, 'had moved towards the centre' (NC 27 October 1984). The FC saw the future of New Caledonia as being that of a 'decentralized region' with much closer ties to France. Despite its vocal support for *broussards*, it only mounted a list in Noumea and the south.

In the same part of the political spectrum the FN was fighting the election under the name *Paix, Fraternité, Liberté* (PFL), Peace, Fraternity and Liberty, and with a list headed in the south by Roger Galliot, once a UC member and now mayor of Thio. Many of its concerns were also those of the *broussards*; they declared themselves 'Caledonians first but always French' and opposed the left, the centre parties ('who don't know which way to turn') and foreign interference (especially from the Soviet Union) while supporting the liberalization of controls on economic development. Galliot rejected the terms 'fascist' and 'racist' widely used for Le Pen's FN and the New Caledonian party had, for the first time, a Melanesian standing in second place on the list for the south. François Neoere too had made the long transition from the UC to become Secretary General of the FN. For him
communists, 'the barbarians of the modern era', were the principal enemy who harassed poor countries after they gained independence so that Kanak socialist independence was no more than a 'strategy of the left to subject Melanesians to a totalitarian regime of Russian imperialism' in opposition to Christianity (NC 6 November 1984, 13 September 1984). The FN was the only party other than the RPCR, to be closely tied to a French political party.

The RPCR in its 30 page L'Avenir Ensemble (The Future Together) published its plans for the future of New Caledonia after its anticipated achievement of 'the massive defeat of the majority surprisingly thrust upon the territory in June 1982'. It naturally supported free enterprise, private property and individual freedom. On land reform it demanded that land repurchased 'must be improved and could not be transferred for a number of years', and that agricultural development was crucial for a movement towards food self-sufficiency. It devoted a substantial part of its program to Melanesian issues, emphasizing the need for better rural education, more kindergartens where 'young Melanesians could learn French as soon as possible' and the necessity to 'improve the image of Melanesians amongst employers and develop the concepts of savings and individual property' which would 'demystify tribal land claims in favour of more effective land development' whilst 'respecting European property' (NC 26 November 1984). There was no mention of Melanesian culture; integration and development could thus only effectively be achieved by rapidly drawing Melanesians into the 'modern world'. The program was a familiar one, slowly tested in the years of power and guaranteed to ensure that all French institutions remained firmly in place.

The LKS fought alongside the tiny Parti Socialiste (under Jean-Paul Caillard) to consolidate 'the voice of the left and work for a constructive decolonization' (NC 22 October 1984). The LKS argued that independence was not something to be constructed on the back of the people but was for the people; 'it was not slogans but something to be sat down with and discussed' (NC 23 October 1984) and, with reference to the incidents in their strongholds of Mare and Poindimie, the 'FLNKS is turning the countryside towards anarchy, destroying in three days what our ancestors took thirty years to build... Everyone speaks of independence but forgets the Economy. We want to build this young nation; to do that we must put the horse before the cart' (NC 23 October 1984). To the FLNKS, the LKS had chosen 'Rhodesian-style independence since, in 1986, after the next French elections, the Lemoine statute will be replaced by another and the 1989 referendum will take place without any electoral reform' (NC 24 October 1984). PALIKA claimed that the LKS simply sought 'to look after their seat in the Council of Government and the Territorial Assembly. Behind all this is a thirst for power and the desire to install neo-colonialism in New Caledonia' (Kanak 111, 1 November 1984:3). By contrast the LKS went as far as to equate the FLNKS with the RPCR,

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both seeking power and control over the resources of the country, but neither interested in constructing a new society. The LKS leader, Naisseline, noted how politics was increasingly based on 'skin colour and the logic of violence' (NC 10 November 1984) and that the LKS 'had chosen to move towards a referendum and not guerrilla warfare' (NC 16 November 1984). The LKS thus fought on a program of peace and the necessity to work within existing institutions towards preparations for economic independence followed by the construction of a new state with the support of all those of good will; its emphasis remained on achieving a negotiated independence through changing attitudes. In that respect, in a territory where attitudes had hardened and become inflexible, it had become idealistically optimistic. There was then reason to see the LKS as a new centre party, the 'Kanak card' of Lemoine (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:167).

With the exception of Yeijwene's threat of an 'active boycott' the election campaign was peaceful; little was heard from the FLNKS, although three days before the election one of its leaders, Andre Gopea, led an occupation of a sawmill at Ponerihouen. The other parties held public meetings and press conferences almost entirely in Noumea. There was no real debate as the only issue was that of independence. Only the LKS and EPA argued that it was inevitable, but were prepared to negotiate its arrival, and every other party was strongly opposed. Only the RPCR had any long-term support base (apart from the localized support for the LKS), as support for the FNSC (ULO) had largely withered away, though the FN (PFL) and the Front Calédonien (ROC) had established a vocal presence. The Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes dutifully recorded the statements of all the minor parties though few were sufficiently different from the RPCR to be newsworthy and their number certainly confused some electors. Each party had much the same official time on radio and television. Election day arrived with everyone expecting the RPCR to win convincingly throughout New Caledonia with some interest attached to the performance of the other parties and the extent to which the boycott would succeed.

Only in the last two days before the elections did it become clear that the boycott would really be 'active'; FLNKS militants erected three roadblocks on the east coast road near Houailou and Ponerihouen, which gendarmes quickly removed. A house was burnt down west of Houailou and Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes warned that the FLNKS intended 'to make fear with fire' (NC 17 November 1984). The warning was appropriate; some 41 of the 107 polling booths outside Noumea never opened for voting, demonstrating the widespread support for the boycott, how the 'hard line' of the FLNKS was not only that of a few militants and how the actions of a relatively small party could seriously disrupt the electoral system. Though Molotov cocktails were thrown in Noumea and Mont Dore on the eve of the election, heavy rain and the patrols of police, gendarmes and the CRS preceded a calm election day.
Table 19  Territorial assembly election results, November 1984

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<th>Electorate</th>
<th>Participation rate</th>
<th>RPCR</th>
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**West**

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**East**

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<td>225</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hienghene</td>
<td>1,242</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pouebo</td>
<td>1,230</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12,507</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>1,537</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>131</td>
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</table>

*(5.6%)*(18.1%)* *(7.0%)*(3.9%)*

| Loyalty Islands<sup>d</sup> | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Mare | 3,059 | 44.1 | 402 | 928 | n.a. | 7 | 12 |
| Lifou (and Tiga) | 5,224 | 9.9 | 418 | 78 | n.a. | 7 | 9 |
| Ouea | 1,821 | 15.1 | 198 | 39 | n.a. | 1 | 32 |
| Total | 10,104 | 21.2 | 1,018 | 1,045 | n.a. | 15 | 53 |

*(48.0%)*(44.0%)* *(0.7%)*(2.5%)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
<th>Seats</th>
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<tr>
<td>RPCR</td>
<td>27,851</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>LKS</td>
<td>2,879</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFL(FN)</td>
<td>2,379</td>
<td>6.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>ULO</td>
<td>1,748</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>LPC</td>
<td>954</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROC(FC)</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>AJC</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Ouea Mo Futuna</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETP</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance Territoriale</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Others are AJC (726), Uvea Mo Futuna (566), ETP (269), ROC/FC (732), LPC (712) and EPA (826).

<sup>b</sup>Others are LPC (200), Alliance Territoriale (30) and EPA (185).

<sup>c</sup>Others are LPC (42), Alliance Territoriale (23) and EPA (66).

<sup>d</sup>Others are EPA and Alliance Territoriale.

Outside Noumea there were fires at a Hienghene hotel, government offices were burnt out at Touho, a gendarme patrol was fired on at Hienghene, ballot boxes were stolen on Lifou and the Sarramea town hall was burnt down on the eve of the election. Otherwise it was not until election day that the active boycott commenced. In many areas barricades were constructed preventing access to polling stations; disputes over their construction and destruction led to stone throwing and tear-gas attacks, creating an atmosphere which firmly discouraged voting and led to several polling stations closing early. Even where voting had taken place, as at Lifou, ballot boxes were stolen and burnt. There were numerous arrests of militants, including Nekiriai and Gopea, the UPM leaders, at Poya, and at Ponerihouen. Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes proclaimed 'the elections of violence' and across the whole of the front page was a photograph of Machoro destroying the ballot box at Canala with an axe, as election officials calmly looked on (NC 19 November 1984). The right wing bogeyman, long vilified, had finally struck. The photograph portrayed everything that conservatives feared most. Reaction was immediate; by the end of the day the FN had demanded the dissolution of the 'terrorist' FLNKS.

Though the actual election results soon faded into insignificance they were not without importance and did place the RPCR in firm control of the Assembly. Obviously the boycott had been enormously successful; in Poum, Poutobo and Belep not one vote was recorded and, in Belep at least, the town hall never opened and FLNKS militants sailed over to Poum to contribute to the disruption there. Although the overall participation rate fell from around 62 per cent in the 1981 elections for the French parliament, which was a normal New Caledonian rate, to 50 per cent, there were enormous variations. In the most conservative parts of the country it actually increased; in a series of communes on the west coast - Noumea, Mont Dore, Dumbea, Bouloupari, Farino, Moindou, Bourail and Koumac - conservatives rallied to the RPCR and swept it into power with a resounding majority. There was no question that the election demonstrated the strength of opposition to independence in European areas, and the support for it in Melanesian areas, primarily through solidarity with the FLNKS but also through some degree of intimidation. Conservatives claimed that a decline of little more than 10 per cent in the participation rate from previous elections showed that the FLNKS represented only 10 per cent of the population. Lafleur soon complained that 'this 10 per cent terrorises the rest of the Caledonians', criticized the 'shabby Machiavellianism' of French government proposals but was confident in the future: 'and we don't have too long to wait... in two years we'll be rid of the socialists in Paris' (Islands Business December 1984:14). On the east coast and in the islands there was a different story; only in Mare, Poindimie and the Isle of Pines was there a participation rate greater than 30 per cent and, in each of these communes, the LKS led the field (Table 19). Apart
from these successes, which enabled them to have six members in the new Assembly, their electoral support was limited, and younger LKS militants continued to drift away to the FLNKS. However the LKS actually performed well in comparison with 1981 and the absence of FLNKS candidates enabled them to gain votes in some areas. If the success of the LKS was limited the centre parties virtually disappeared without trace; the FNSC (ULO) was reduced to a single member, Jean-Pierre Aifa, doing well only in its old strongholds, Bourail and Pouembout. It had paid the price of supporting the FI. For the FNSC it was admitted to be a disaster and it argued that the 'criminal acts' of the FLNKS had forced widespread support for the RPCR; only the few Europeans not in the 'RPCR cul-de-sac' had voted for it, leaving only the polar opposites of the FLNKS and RPCR (NC 21 November 1984). The FN (PFL) were much more successful though only Galliot was elected. Despite their much vaunted support for the brousards the two extreme right wing parties gained little support outside Noumea and both were gravely disappointed with the results. Of the other parties, only Wahuzue's and the LPC gained even two per cent of the total vote, far from sufficient to gain a voice in the new Assembly.

The political success of the active boycott surprised everyone: the French government, who had never believed that the FLNKS would actually deprive themselves of the vote since it believed this would marginalize their position even further; the RPCR, which assumed that the FLNKS were poorly organized, that the elections would be undisturbed and, in any case, regarded FLNKS participation or lack of it as irrelevant since they would undoubtedly win; and the LKS and even the FLNKS, who to a greater extent than they thought possible quickly brought the countryside to its knees. For the LKS it was particularly embarrassing; just before the elections they had declared that 'from the morning of 19 November Eloi Machoro and the FLNKS will no longer be anything... We are extremely optimistic that from then on we will lead the Kanak independence movement' (Le Monde 18 November 1984). They, above all, were forced to eat their words and eventually attempt to build new bridges with Kanak militants. Several weeks later however they were claiming that 'they did not wish to marginalize the FLNKS, as Dick Ukeiwe hoped... but we are against the terrorist logic... and independence with Ravel and international capitalism' (NC 4 December 1984). In France even the French Communist Party was taken by surprise and, after L'Humanité recorded 'electoral confusion', it refrained from commenting further for several days despite its customary opposition to the excesses of colonialism. The elections forced almost everyone to reconsider their actions and attitudes.

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2 Bill (Gaspard) Ravel was a prominent New Caledonian businessman, owner of the shipping line SOFRANA who, they had long claimed, was giving extensive financial support to the FLNKS.
Despite the violence of the boycott the election of a new Assembly, where 34 members (13 of them Melanesian) were members of the RPCR, seemed to offer the possibility of maintaining the colonial order in accordance with electoral democracy. Indeed the FLNKS pointed to the success of the boycott and saw the new government as a 'Rhodesia-style' administration resulting from colonial occupation. The conservatives who thought that order could be established were quickly to have their views wholly destroyed for the elections were simply the start of two months of violence across the whole of New Caledonia, as incident provoked reaction, and counter-reaction escalated into greater violence and discord. The RPCR elected Ukeiwe the new President of the Territorial Assembly and, in the Assembly, business continued as normal. Outside Noumea disturbances continued. FLNKS supporters kept road blocks in place, preventing the transport of people, food and other supplies, and occupied the institutions of the government: town halls and gendarmeries. Action was greatest around Thio where activists, led by Machoro, effectively isolated the small town and established a state of siege. Farm houses were burnt down, fences broken, cattle killed and many settlers harassed and effectively driven away, especially from the east coast. The isolated and sporadic nature of much of the violence, in effect an incipient guerrilla war, prevented direct reprisals from the security forces, who responded with restraint, much to the disapproval of the right wing, who preferred their own aggressive version of law and order.

For the rest of November and December incident followed incident as the success of the boycott offered the FLNKS the promise of further gains from further disruption. The columns of *Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes* soon became a chronicle of misery: burnt shops, cars, offices and houses, gendarmes and Melanesians injured, barricades erected and traffic movement on the east coast almost non-existent. Europeans erected barricades on the west coast to prevent Melanesian mobility and the first 'refugees' began to move into Noumea, from Lifou and the east coast. Though most incidents were far from Noumea, a barricade was briefly erected by the FLNKS at Conception (Mont Dore) within three days of the election. Within four days of the election life in the bush beyond Kone on the west coast and Houailou on the east coast had become difficult; newspapers were no longer getting through and some provisions were running short. Already the hotels of the bush were in trouble; the Yate hotel, owned by a former French foreign legionnaire, was later burnt down. At Lifou the administrator of the Loyalty Islands subdivision was held captive in his office for over a week. The LKS refused to participate in the election of the speaker of the Assembly, because their sole objective was independence and, rather curiously, criticized those FLNKS leaders who were not engaged in direct action at the barricades; in response, one of them, Jean-Louis Dion who, according to Naisseline, had 'promised to die on the Noumea barricades' (NC 22 November 1984), argued that he was committed
'to struggle with the colonized and exploited and not from the comfort of an institutional armchair' and that, if Naisseline would only look at the barricades, the Kanak strikes, land occupations and the occupation of town halls, he would see that 'the values of Kanak men and women are there' (NC 23 November 1984). For the moment the FLNKS, never having achieved such power, was wholly triumphant and inflexible.

Through all these incidents the mining town of Thio quickly achieved prominence. During the election it had been relatively quiet, apart from disputes between Kanaks and Wallisians, and despite the arrival of FLNKS militants from Canala. Because of its large non-Melanesian population Thio achieved a relatively high participation rate; it also produced the largest vote for the RPCR on the east coast and the largest vote for the FN outside the Noumea area (Gabriel and Kermel 1985:188). Its mayor, Galliot, the only European mayor on the east coast, a landowner at La Foa, mine owner and businessman with one of the largest fortunes in New Caledonia, was elected the sole FN member; the potential for confrontation was obvious. Within three days FLNKS militants occupied the police station for eight hours, a truck was blown-up, houses were burnt and destroyed, all public offices and institutions ceased to function and all the shops had closed. A day later the gendarmes were evacuated and a siege was in place. Apart from a flow of refugees Thio was isolated; Machoro was in control and RPCR demands for his arrest had been ignored. The task would have proved difficult. Machoro declared that the barricades would not be lifted until the election results had been cancelled, the Lemoine statute rejected, Roger Galliot deposed as mayor of Thio and the FLNKS recognized as the sole legitimate government in New Caledonia (NC 24 November 1984). Such conditions were not met and the siege intensified. Large quantities of explosives were stolen from the SLN works; Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes claimed to recognize the 'benefits' of Kanak training in Libya (NC 26 November 1984) and Kanaks confiscated some 250 guns from local households. In an attempt to escape the barricades Thio's butcher died crossing the flooded Thio river; and became the first European 'martyr'. An attempt by Ukeiwe to visit Thio with Polynesians who had fled the town was discouraged (NC 14 December 1985) and only military helicopters brought in supplies and ferried out occasional refugees. The Kanaky flag flew above the town hall; Thio had become symbol and substance of the independence struggle and a measure of French humiliation. The last bastion of European settlement on the east coast had fallen.

One Australian journalist captured both the gravity of the situation in Thio and the dramatic and almost farcical contrasts between the bush and Noumea:

The guards at the barricades wore Rastafarian breadlocks, Che Guevara badges and Bob Marley T-shirts and .303 rifles
slung menacingly over their shoulders. Behind them, on the long narrow bridge that led into the 'liberated' town of Thio a sign read 'Independence or death - either way we will win'. Beside the palm-fringed beach someone had scrawled 'Vive Gaddafi' on a wall. And somewhere else, 'capitalists keep out'. On the other side of town the encircled European capitalists stayed behind closed doors... In the tourist playground of the South Pacific such scenes of insurrection are bizarre. Paradise lost. A few kilometres from Club Med, the Noumea casino and the pert bare breasts of Australian girls on Anse Vata beach, a classic colonial confrontation is drawing towards a bloody climax (Mellor 1984).

Conservative journalists, predominantly those from France visiting the South Pacific for the first time, managed to see in all this images of a stone-age people mounting a rearguard action in confronting a modern society. For Thierry Desjardins of Le Figaro

The situation in New Caledonia is explosive. The French government knowingly leaves 40,000 whites and 100,000 others at the mercy of a handful of savages who are ready for a massacre... It is almost as if the Canaques are heating up their cooking pots ... At the barrages one would have thought one were witnessing a stone-age horror film. All were armed to the teeth, with filthy looks, bloodshot eyes and perhaps a little drunk (Le Figaro 29, 30 November 1984; cf. Desjardins 1985:192).

The conservative French press never managed to get over its themes of 'primitive' and 'cannibal', despite the parallel assumptions that most Melanesians wisely wished to remain French; the cover of Desjardins' book even described 'the descendants of cannibals passionately tied to France'. There was a mixture of racism and paternalism somewhere 'between Mein Kampf and Tintin in the Congo [whereas] the clear western political language of the indépendantistes (sovereignty, socialism, abolition of colonialism, etc.) was ignored in favour of "the last of the Mohicans" archetypal of wildness' (Bensa 1985:1727). Conservative journals like Minute, Valeurs Actuelles, Paris Match and Paris Soir also consistently minimized the number of militant Kanaks, linking Kanaks with forces of international communism and terrorism and arguing for the use of military force against these terrorists.

Away from Thio, whose geography contributed to its isolation, disruption was nowhere so extensive though there was widespread violence. More houses, trucks and shops were burnt, an aircraft was held at Belep, and the Poum, Ouegoa and We (Lifou) gendarmeries were occupied. The house of Joseph Tidjine, Minister of Culture in the new RPCR government, was burnt down at Poum. Even the Noumea market was closed for fear of demonstrations
though, apart from isolated gunfire at nearby Conception, where riot police and civilians were injured, violence never reached well-guarded Noumea until the end of November when the Wallisian Cultural Centre was burnt down and there were isolated bomb blasts. The South Pacific Festival of Arts was quietly cancelled. The navy managed to get provisions to Poindimie though three-quarters of New Caledonia was temporarily without radio and television. Noumea remained largely untouched; the bush was another world. The month ended with the first violent deaths; a European town councillor and a Kanak militant being killed near Ouegoa which became transformed into a 'fortified village' with Kanaks arrested and Europeans evacuated. For Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes, New Caledonia had been 'thrown into a nightmare' (NC 1 December 1984). The bush was plunging towards apparent anarchy.

By the end of November, after an astonishing fortnight, the pattern of chaos and disorder was taking on its own rhythm and structure. Many rural centres were effectively dead; Ouegoa, Kaala-Gomen and other places were virtual ghost towns and Europeans had fled from east coast towns like Ponerihouen and Thio. Kanak or European barricades prevented easy movement throughout much of New Caledonia. Destruction of property continued. Alarmed at the news filtering out of Thio and Ouegoa the urban politicians of Noumea had demanded action from the French government and the army and a 'Chain of Solidarity' had been created to ensure that supplies reached the beleaguered rural areas. Tourist numbers had already fallen by around 20 per cent as the scale and novelty of disorder was elaborated in the Australian and New Zealand press and no new bookings were made; riot police took their places in the hotels.

In this violent climate the FLNKS held its promised congress, a week after the election, and duly elected a provisional government for the Republic of Kanaky. Tjibaou was declared President, Yann Celene Uregei the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yeiwene the Minister of Finance and Gopea became Minister of the Interior; Machoro was later appointed Minister of Security. Since the FLNKS were now boycotting the local media the event went almost unrecorded in the newspaper, now more strident than ever in its opposition to the FLNKS and direct action. A new group, the Mouvement Populaire Calédonie (MPC) on 18 Novembre, called for a general strike against the provisional government and 'terrorist violence' (NC 29 November 1984) and for one day Noumea became almost a 'dead town'. Ukeiwe warned that if the French government continued to be derelict in its duty then the RPCR would take over responsibilities for security. Meanwhile the FLNKS, satisfied with the disruption of the election, continued and expanded the well-organized process of destabilization; regional committees were in place to organize local events and on 1 December 1984 the Kanaky flag was symbolically raised at Conception to mark the
establishment of the provisional government of the Republic of Kanaky.

As Kanaky was proclaimed so New Caledonia appeared in the modern world. For the first time the whole population of France learnt of its remote territory in the Pacific and from there and elsewhere journalists and television crews flooded into the country, ready for a hot summer. The French government had been placed in a difficult position; it remained committed to the Lemoine statute that virtually no one wanted, rejected the 'active boycott' of the FLNKS and had no time for their Republic of Kanaky but found it equally difficult to recognize the legitimacy of the RPCR government elected by only half the population. It was also unwilling to act firmly against the now obviously widely-supported FLNKS. The French Senate sent its own mission to New Caledonia and held a lively debate; the Corsican RPR(F) senator, Charles Pasqua, long a strong supporter of the RPCR, demanded of Lemoine, 'what are you going to do about an illegal indépendantiste government opposing the authority of the French Republic?' (NC 27 November 1984). The right wing weekly Minute proclaimed across its front page 'Treason in New Caledonia. The High Court for Mitterrand. 150,000 French in danger of death' and called on Mitterrand to draw a lesson from the personal popularity that Mrs Thatcher had gained from the the British war in the Falklands (Minute 1 December 1984). The new Secretary General of the opposition RPR(F), Jacques Toubon, declared in parliament:

If New Caledonia is today in a state of insurrection, the government carries the responsibility. Through its errors since it took office in 1981, in giving way to ideology, it has taken the side of the indépendantistes. Town halls and gendarmeries occupied and looted, properties burnt down, an administrator held hostage and no one to rescue him. And what is the government doing? It holds discreet meetings with indépendantistes! By its equivocations the government must take full responsibility for this shameful situation (Colombani 1985:134-5).

But official reaction, still stunned by the crisis, was only to send military reinforcements and a low-key mission to see what could be done to accelerate movement towards a referendum. Belated recognition that without the support of the FLNKS there could be no peaceful progress, brought an angry response from Gaullists in France and the RPCR in New Caledonia. Elsewhere New Caledonia had received unusual attention; the Australian Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden, though refusing to recognize the provisional government, described New Caledonia as 'one of the last vestiges of colonialism in the South Pacific', only provoking President Mitterrand to comment that in Australia, 'if the problem of the native peoples does not exist any more - if there are some Aborigines left - it is because they have not been killed'. Elsewhere there was no support for Kanaky, other than from
Vanuatu. As Tjibaou noted: 'the relations with other South Pacific countries are at a dead point - I think they're afraid of supporting "terrorists"' (PIM January 1985:14). Perhaps, more accurately, there were few outside New Caledonia who both understood the issues sufficiently clearly and were willing to take sides over what promised to be a long-running dispute.

The Pisanî plan

The French government was forced to take more direct action to resolve the continuing crisis. President Mitterrand sent Edgard Pisanî to be a special government envoy and new High Commissioner to replace the discredited Roynette. Pisanî, a former Commissioner in charge of development in the EC, now a Socialist though once Minister of Agriculture under de Gaulle, was appointed at the start of December and arrived in New Caledonia on 4 December 1984. Charged with establishing 'order and dialogue', there could be no more difficult assignment; to Rollat of Le Monde it was a 'mission impossible' (Le Monde 4 December 1984). Pisanî delicately began the task of opening discussions and conducting negotiations and there were some hints of a possible return to the normality that he called for. The President of Kanaky, Tjibaou, commented 'we envisage calming the situation. We have mobilised to show our determination for our claim for independence and to obtain discussions with the government' (PIM January 1985:14), and the release of 17 Kanak 'political prisoners', arrested during the elections, offered possibilities for some dialogue. On the same day the Mayor of Pouembout resigned in protest against the 'slack administration' that provided no support for peace and the FC refused to meet Pisanî. A bomb exploded at Tjibaou's house in suburban Noumea and on Lifou the houses of Ukeiwe and the Melanesian RPCR mayor, Paouta, were both burnt down. Furthermore, the arrival of Pisanî virtually coincided with the single most violent and brutal incident recorded in New Caledonia in the present century.

In a climate of fear and hatred violent conservative response was almost inevitable; 'many of the settlers have for years been openly spoiling for an excuse to take up their own guns. They retaliated and the shooting started' (Ward 1985:29). On the evening of 5 December, 16 indépendantistes, returning from an FLNKS meeting at Hienghene to their village of Tiendanite in the upper Hienghene valley, were ambushed by settlers. At that meeting Tjibaou had told them of the FLNKS decision to moderate its campaign of boycotts, blockades and land occupations to engage in discussion with Pisanî and the French government; at much the same time Pisanî had appealed on television for an end to violence. Ten men were killed in the ambush and four seriously injured; two of those who died were Tjibaou's brothers, Louis and Tarcisse. The massacre wiped out a quarter of the adults in the small Tiendanite tribe, a tribe that long before had been pushed
far into the valley by settlers on their land (Douglas 1985:21-25). Land remained inseparable from politics, now in its most violent form.

President Mitterrand offered his condolences to Tjibaou, and he was given an official police bodyguard, both developments that seriously concerned Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes (NC 13 December 1985), which reiterated its concern that Mitterrand had never expressed any sympathy for the broussards. To the FC by this time the adjectives 'socialist' and 'revolutionary' were mere synonyms for 'terrorist' and 'bloody'; for them the 'paroxysm' at Hienghene was solely the fault of the French socialist government and its local representatives (NC 10 December 1984). There was no concern for the victims or their families. Tjibaou himself commented that French authorities would never bring the murderers to justice. After the funeral he recalled the revolts of 1878 and 1917, in which his grandmother died: 'thanks to our dead our people have achieved a nationalism which is most important... only military intervention can break up our movement' (Sydney Morning Herald 12 December 1984). But Tjibaou refused to sanction violent reprisals, announcing that his personal loss would not divert him from his earlier commitments towards moderation; FLNKS roadblocks were lifted. Though Tjibaou gained much respect for his dignified response, there were other perspectives. As the Quotidien de Paris stated, long after the later death of Machoro and the Hienghene massacre, with reference to Tjibaou: 'in Clemenceau's time six bullets would have been enough for this false preacher' (Le Quotidien de Paris 24 January 1985). It was the kind of view that was widely shared in New Caledonia and endorsed by the local newspaper.

Within days eight settlers were arrested, including Maurice Mitride and several members of the Lapetite family. Despite the unambiguous evidence of the ambush, and its unparalleled violence, in Noumea Mitride and the Lapetites 'quickly assumed the popular status of victims or even heroes, and a committee was formed to raise money for their defence and support' (Douglas 1985:23). European demonstrators demanding their release even attacked riot police outside the Palais de Justice. The press made little mention of the plight of the Tiendanite tribe, but focused on the extreme provocation that rural settlers endured, their concern for the future, and the fact that the attackers were 'mixed race' and not Europeans, so downplaying the racial element in the attack. Bronwen Douglas elegantly summarized the genesis of the conflict:

Key elements in this spasm of settler violence were long-term apprehension about the relentless and effective demands of Melanesians for restitution of clan lands; hatred of the FLNKS and shock and confusion at its successful demonstration of a capacity to destabilize and control rural areas; a sense of desertion by French authorities in Noumea and Paris. More generally the episode contrasted the
selective, controlled and intensely psychological violence of the FLNKS strategy with the readiness of at least some settlers to employ large and powerful arsenals with extreme brutality (Douglas 1985:24).

Slowly the Hienghene massacre disappeared from newspaper headlines though, as the captured settlers languished without trial in gaol, their support fund steadily grew, passing CFP 1 million (A$85,000) by the end of the year (and CFP 2 million in March 1985), and Pisani began his task of drawing up a formula for the future of New Caledonia.

The FLNKS lifted its barricades and, after three weeks, Thio too was again united with New Caledonia, though the mine remained closed and, throughout New Caledonia, sporadic violence continued in the aftermath of the Hienghene massacre. European migration from the east coast, where there was considerable fear of reprisals, continued, especially from Hienghene, Touho and Yate. Even Bourail was almost a dead town and further north there was little sign of economic activity. Melanesians were continuing to flee from Lifou where FLNKS leaders were arrested. However direct action was again escalating in Thio; Machoro had occupied a petrol store there and a gendarme had been injured (NC 19 December 1984; 20 December 1984). At Bourail there were right wing barricades spearheaded by Justin Guillemard, after three people were killed when a shop was blown up, an incident blamed on the FLNKS as four Melanesians were arrested (NC 21 December 1984). Jean Guiart's son was captured by right wing militants at the Bourail barricade and held until gendarmes could release him two days later (NC 24 December 1984) and well-armed right wing vigilante groups defended most west coast towns. Meanwhile Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes maintained the rage by constantly recording the status of injured settlers and publishing a series of virulent letters. Once again confrontations were both extreme and violent as the New Caledonian economy ground towards a halt. On New Year's Eve three bomb explosions, for which the 'National Committee against Independence', a group primarily of pieds-noirs, claimed responsibility, rocked Noumea as New Caledonia passed violently into 1985.

In these circumstances not only was it physically difficult for Pisani to hold discussions with political leaders but from either side his mission was viewed with such extreme scepticism that cooperation was minimal. On the eve of Pisani's arrival Lionel Jospin, Secretary-General of the French Socialist Party, had suggested a double electoral college for the eventual referendum, with a Melanesian and a European college, a proposal denounced by Lafleur as the introduction of apartheid and by the FLNKS as nothing more than an old formula for making Kanaks a minority in their own land. For the conservative opposition in France, Senator Charles Pasqua and deputy Michel Debré raised the possibility of impeachment of President Mitterrand on charges of
high treason and Philippe Malaud, leader of the small Centre National Indépendant et Paysan party, who also demanded that Tjibaou be arrested, declared that when the Socialist government fell from power he would demand that 'all those who helped to sell off a French territory against its population's manifest wishes be brought to trial' (Le Monde 29 December 1984). He was later to criticize Pisani's foreign birthplace, with the implication that such a treacherous plan could never have been produced by a true Frenchman (Colombani 1985:140), claiming that Pisani, in some quarters 'the Maltese Falcon', was actually born in Malta and not in Tunisia, then a French colony. For the first time the situation in New Caledonia was fomenting deep and seemingly irreconcilable divisions not only in New Caledonia but also in France.

After a month of intensive activity Pisani announced in January 1985 his proposals for the future status of New Caledonia (Appendix 2). In the bush the worst had been feared and in several small towns Melanesians and settlers alike stocked up, fearing violence and siege conditions in response to the plan (NC 5 January 1985), while several RPCR Assembly members had established a Comité de Crise et de Soutien au Gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, Crisis Committee for the Support of the New Caledonian Government, to oppose the plan as soon as it was announced. The principal elements of the Pisani plan were for eventual independence in association with France, with France retaining responsibility for all matters related to foreign affairs, defence and internal security and with French residents in New Caledonia being given a special status. Kanaks would achieve full sovereignty over the land, though Noumea would have a special status, with its own authority; Pisani believed that Noumea might become a 'free port' something like Singapore or Hong Kong. There would be firm guarantees for all other ethnic groups who wished to remain in New Caledonia after independence. Those who wished to remain French citizens would be given 'privileged resident' status, and there would be guaranteed leases to land. A referendum on the whole question of 'independence in association' would be held in July 1985 with voting restricted to those who had lived in New Caledonia for at least three years. If there were a positive vote for independence in the referendum then New Caledonia would become independent on 1 January 1986. Immediate reactions to the proposals were not as discouraging as many had anticipated but the events of the next few days were soon to shatter any illusions that Pisani may have harboured over the prospects of any real dialogue on the plan.

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3 The proposed restriction of voting to those who have lived in New Caledonia for at least three years was based on other French colonial precedents; Pisani had considered periods of six or even ten years that were more in line with Kanak demands but rejected them as too radical for the French government to accept. The Pisani proposals would exclude about 5500 people, including around 3500 military and government officials, most of whom were Europeans who could have been expected to vote for the RPCR, though Melanesians would remain in a minority. There was no precedent for a longer residence period.
The proposals attempted to reconcile three often conflicting interests: Melanesian claims to independence, the rights of the Caldoches and French strategic interests. Consequently, stripped of the rhetoric and hyperbole, Pisani's proposals were far from radical; 'association' with France covered almost all spheres of life, the economy was to remain in the same hands and all changes would be hedged in with loose conditions to be subsequently defined. Above all a strong French military presence was to be maintained. So the proposals offered no more than limited sovereignty for New Caledonia, with a future economy tied to the EC where the role of private enterprise, in tourism, mining and fisheries was expected to be prominent and where French citizens might continue to play an important role primarily in the specially constituted Noumea area. The plan offered little freedom to a new state to choose its political and economic future; it was primarily, and perhaps inevitably, a neo-colonial solution that had very little to offer those who sought a Kanak socialist independence. Though in a month Pisani had come close to comprehending many of the critical issues in New Caledonia it was perhaps still too soon and too painful, and politically impossible, for a man so imbued in the French tradition to acknowledge that the Kanaks did not necessarily relish the French language, culture or administration, let alone the military presence or French control of the economy. For the FLNKS, Hnalaine Uregei declared 'the plan represents a neo-colonialist caricature of independence ... No independent and sovereign state, particularly one so young, could accept its sovereignty in such mutilated form (Uregei 1985:47)'. Nevertheless the FLNKS maintained dialogue with France in the context of the plan solely because the plan had one positive aspect; it did propose a timetable for independence. The concept of independence in close association with France that the FLNKS rejected had been envisaged in the 1958 Gaullist constitution as an option for French African colonies then in the process of gaining their independence (Grimal 1965:390; Chapter 15). At the time of Pisani's proposal it had never been used, other than in Monaco, having been rejected throughout Africa. This essentially Gaullist design for the future proved equally stillborn in New Caledonia.

On the other side of the divide the proposals were far too radical to placate conservative opponents for whom anything other than cosmetic change was anathema. The RPCR, uninterested in any kind of independence, had no positive comment on the plan; any plan that even considered independence was a retrograde step. Roger Laroque rejected it out of hand. Intransigence was aimed at deferring any change until after the French government changed. In France, the RPR(F) opposition called for a campaign against independence and the FN leader, Le Pen, predictably saw the Pisani plan as a humiliating victory for Moscow. Wider interest in New Caledonian affairs in France was less out of any particular concern over the situation and fate of the remote colony but in recognition of the growing possibility that New Caledonia would
become an important election issue in 1986, and particularly one where the Socialist Party could be placed in some difficulties. Constant right wing criticism of Kanak 'socialism' and the threat of instability were combined into the argument that developments in New Caledonia constituted a threat to national integrity and, above all, to French interests in the South Pacific. In this criticism the RPR(F) found a soft spot, since neither in the Pisani proposals, nor in other French actions in the South Pacific, was there any indication that France intended to reduce its presence in the South Pacific (Chapter 15). Despite widespread opposition the proposals should nevertheless have become a basis for negotiation and discussion; renewed violence ensured that they never really did.

The death of Machoro

No more than three days after Pisani introduced his proposals a new wave of violence gripped New Caledonia. A seventeen-year old European, Yves Tual, was killed on his family property at Nassirah (Bouloupari). Accounts of the incident inevitably vary but it appears that he disturbed Melanesian intruders around his property and in panic sent a hail of gunfire towards them and died in the return fire. The Tual family were however close relatives of the FN leader, Roger Galliot, who was using their property as a base to rally militant settlers to carry out a counter-offensive against Thio. His death sparked off a night of right wing rioting and looting in Noumea; houses and cars were burnt and shops were looted. At the gates of the heavily guarded High Commissioner's residence Guiart's house was burnt down; the offices of the USTKE, the car rental business of André Dang, supposedly a Vietnamese supporter of the FLNKS, and Lenormand's pharmacy were also burnt down. Before that there had been an outburst of racist slogans on the walls of Noumea: Noumea ville blanche (Noumea white town) and A Mort Les Viet (Death to Vietnamese). For the first time Noumea had effectively been engulfed in violence.

Just one day later Elie Machoro, and another FLNKS militant from Canala, Marcel Nonaro, were killed by police in a stake-out of a lonely farmhouse, at Dogny near La Foa. Of all the violent deaths in New Caledonia that of Machoro was much the most controversial. He had long been a marked man, detested by all conservatives in New Caledonia as the most determined and violent proponent of Kanak independence. The 38-year old former school teacher, Thio militant and Minister of Security in the Kanaky government had sometimes seen himself both as Atai and Che Guevara; like his historic heroes and his immediate predecessor, Pierre Declercq, his death was equally violent. His last message was reported to be 'only the struggle counts; death is nothing' (L'Avenir Calédonien 929, 7 February 1985:2). Dogny, where Machoro died, was the launching point for Atai's 1878 rebellion.
Police had surrounded a house containing Machoro and about thirty-five other Kanaks and called upon them to surrender peacefully; initial police and news reports claimed that Machoro and Nonaro came out of the house firing and though the intention was to shoot them in the shoulder and disarm them their rapid movement resulted in them being shot in the chest. Subsequent reports suggested, more credibly, that the two men had emerged from the surrounded farmhouse to bargain with the police but were shot down by a crack marksman of the same unit that Machoro embarrassed at Thio. FLNKS spokesman Louis Uregei claimed, 'the only people fired upon were the two leaders. It was a premeditated plan to assassinate our leaders' (Islands Business February 1985:25). In Noumea, where right wing Europeans were still rioting, the news that Machoro had died, announced to the crowd by Laroque, was greeted with cheers and elation; the rioters stopped pelting police with stones, and cheered and celebrated with bottles of champagne. An immediate response from Pisani was the declaration of a state of emergency, with a dusk-to-dawn curfew initially from 7 pm to 5 am, the first time that a state of emergency had been declared in a French territory since 1961 when de Gaulle assumed emergency powers in Algeria. Military forces in New Caledonia were considerably strengthened.

Furious debate raged over the deaths of Tual and Machoro; Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes constantly referred to 'the death of Machoro and the assassination of Yves Tual', right wing slogans proclaimed with delight, Machoro ordure tu est mort (Machoro garbage, you're dead), and part of the quay at the Baie de la Moselle was officially proclaimed the Place Yves Tual. For Kanaks it was a violent reminder of both the constant risks that dogged their leaders and the fact that the forces of law and order were rarely neutral. The Provisional Government of Kanaky issued a lengthy statement commenting on the official version of the events (NC 14 January 1985), arguing that Pisani had previously sanctioned the murder of Machoro and hence that

as far as Kanaks were concerned the Pisani proposal is jeopardized; it has the smell of blood on its hands... It is with regret that France, whether it is governed by the left or the right, whether it is in Indochina, in Algeria or in New Caledonia, has only been able to discuss decolonization, with the smell of gunpowder and/or corpses (Kanaky Update 2(1), 1985; see also L'Avenir Calédonien 929, 7 February 1985).

Although the murderers of Tual were eventually found there was no enquiry into the death of Machoro and the marksman who fired the fatal shots was quietly sent back to France.

Questions over why Machoro and other militants, who were jailed, were near La Foa were never adequately resolved. There were widespread theories that La Foa was about to become the next
Thio; a new right wing weekly, *Combat Calédonien*, declared that 'the death of Machoro is a miracle for the people of La Foa' (*Combat Calédonien* 3, 15 February 1985:6) and later published a 'black list of the white collaborators of FLNKS' around La Foa. The conservative French newspaper *Le Figaro* added to the rumours by claiming that documents found on the body of Machoro contained plans for a foreign-backed uprising. Rather later *Le Figaro* journalist Desjardins continued to claim that the FLNKS were about to launch a two-pronged attack on La Foa and Bouloupari, take over Tontouta airport and then Noumea (Desjardins 1985:207). Such unlikely plans were never authenticated, but fuelled conservative vigilance against the FLNKS; however the death of Machoro reduced the probability of violent struggle, left a gap at the heart of the FLNKS and emphasized Pidjot's recognition that 'in any civil war we will be the greatest losers' (*Le Monde* 12 December 1984), a universal belief in New Caledonia.

After the death of Machoro FLNKS leaders broke off all negotiations with Pisani and the French administration and fears of a violent civil war reached a second peak after the election violence of November. Security forces doubled with the introduction of paratroopers and riot police and what the French Prime Minister described as an 'infernal cycle of violence' slowly began to reduce its ferocity. By then New Caledonia had become 'an abyss of racial hatred and violence' (Ward 1985:30). The violence was again sporadic and the influence of the FLNKS in the countryside declined, a result of the death of their most dynamic leader. His death marked the end of attempts to establish dialogue and the withdrawal of Tjibaou into a two-month mourning period. Reduction in violence was emphasized by the growing power and presence of the military; already by the start of 1985 there were more than 6300 representatives of the forces of 'law and order', one for every ten Melanesians. A different version of 'law and order' followed the organization of European militia groups in the small towns of the west coast. As Europeans were being mobilized the FLNKS began to lose ground, literally and metaphorically.

Into this violent cauldron Mitterrand launched one of the gambles of his political career; a spontaneous decision to visit New Caledonia that, to many, heralded the opening of the campaign for the 1986 French elections. The visit, to reinforce his support for Pisani's initiatives, lasted for no more than ten hours on 19 January 1985 and took him no further than Noumea, and a brief visit to Poindimie and a Melanesian tribe at Kouaoua. Predictably he was met by at least 20,000 opponents of independence, whom he avoided; French flags decked Noumea, pedestrian crossings had been given extra red and blue stripes

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4 Many Melanesians in the Thio area, like Nonaro, are descendants of Melanesians forced out of the La Foa and Bouloupari areas in the nineteenth century (Guiart 1985a:viii) hence the temptation to forcibly reclaim lost lands may have been quite considerable.
while banners proclaimed 'One Algeria is enough' and, in English, for the benefit of the world's television stations, 'Mitterrand don't sell the South Pacific to the Russians'. Mitterrand did manage to meet Tjibaou, who took a portrait of Machororo to the meeting, in a bid to get the FLNKS back to the negotiating table. He met only Tjibaou, strengthening conservative perceptions of Tjibaou's privileged status. The President returned to Paris with some degree of optimism; 'the threads that were almost cut have now been restored and the dialogue will continue' (Islands Business February 1985:23). He also stated that Noumea would be reinforced as a military base to maintain the French role in the South Pacific. Less than twenty-four hours after Mitterrand returned to Paris, having announced that the Thio nickel mine would reopen after two months' standstill, saboteurs caused more
than A$3 million worth of damage and dashed such plans. Soon afterwards the Kouaoua mine was also sabotaged by members of the FN to discredit the FLNKS. In New Caledonia there was no sign of Mitterrand's dialogue. Moreover as the political crisis hit Noumea so the economy plunged further downwards and there was a new flight of capital out of the territory. Lack of confidence in the economy and fear of a block on transfers had led to CFP 53 million (A$450,000), some eight per cent of local reserves, departing to either France or Tahiti in less than two months (NC 10 January 1985). The crisis in the mines emphasized this depression though, simultaneously, Mitterrand commented on the necessity for reconstruction and a greater self-reliance and even argued that France's 'guilt' lay in giving New Caledonia such a dependent economy rather than in any more ill-defined 'colonialist tyranny' (NC 31 January 1985).

More than 2000 'refugees' had moved into Noumea from the troubled countryside; most were Europeans, but there were Tahitians and Wallisians, especially from Thio, and some Melanesians, mainly from Lifou. There were few Europeans anywhere on the east coast, as the FLNKS mounted pressure on many settlers, with more houses burnt and land occupied. The tower blocks of the Noumea suburb of Saint Quentin, largely empty after the nickel boom, gained new occupants for an indeterminate future. Funds once scheduled for the South Pacific Festival of Arts provided compensation payments for the refugees. For the turbulent three-month period between 18 November and 18 February damage to private property was estimated at CFP 1775 million (A$13.5 million); almost a quarter of all the damage was at Thio and more than 20 per cent at Hienghene (Map 15). Five predominantly Melanesian communes were virtually untouched: the Isle of Pines, Belep, Mare, Ouvea and Canala, while on the west coast, Noumea, Noindou and Farinò escaped serious problems. There was almost continuous violence in deeply-divided Lifou and, at the end of February, an FLNKS demonstration prevented Ukeiwe's plane landing there. When a more lasting peace arrived elsewhere disputes continued in Lifou.

Even after the death of Machoro, Tjibaou gave his tentative support for negotiations on the Pisanî plan, though he criticized it as a 'French plan for French people' (Islands Business February 1985:23) and stated that Pisanî had no right to determine a Kanak future. His support was hedged with unspecified qualifications and with the promise that if the referendum vote went against independence, the barricades would be rebuilt and destabilization continue until the provisional government declared its own independence at the start of 1986. By contrast the RPCR believed that the French government was thrusting independence upon them and Lafleur argued that 'the Pisanî plan is dead even before it was alive' (Islands Business February 1985:23) and doubted that there would be a referendum. The LKS leader, Naisseline, warned that the referendum would be unacceptable to Kanaks unless there
were changes to the voting franchise. By the end of January it was evident that there was little support for Pisani’s proposals and this view was echoed in the results of a survey conducted by the conservative French weekly *Paris Match* on a sample of 640 adults (about equal thirds being European, Melanesian and others) in Noumea and the bush. Overall only 28 per cent favoured the proposals, 66 per cent preferred to stay a part of France (including 34 per cent of the Melanesians) and only 25 per cent preferred 'independence in association'. However 50 per cent of the sample nevertheless felt that New Caledonia would be independent within a decade and only 29 per cent felt it would still be French; 60 per cent of the sample would stay there after independence (including 40 per cent of Europeans and 51 per cent of the Polynesians and Asians, though 10 per cent of Melanesians said they would leave). Though there are doubts over the uncertain survey methodology (NC 1 February 1985) the rejection of the plan by two-thirds of the population was scarcely unexpected.

By March it had become readily apparent that the Pisani plan was 'regarded by all and sundry as pie in the sky' (*Uregei* 1985:46). The French government, despite Mitterrand's visit, never wholly approved of the plan and the timetable had quickly been postponed in the aftermath of renewed violence. For the socialist government there were real prospects of future electoral losses if any proposals were imposed on New Caledonia. The right wing had never had the slightest interest in the plan; the principal French conservative leader, Chirac, had already stated that if and when the RPR(F) achieved power he would ban the FLNKS. For the FLNKS the future was pessimistic; it appeared that 'in the heads of Mitterrand and his socialists there is a machiavellian calculation taking place and that is to stall and leave the problem in the hands of the right in 1986' (*Uregei* 1985:48). Few in the FLNKS had thought in different terms even after the election of Mitterrand four years earlier. In Pisani’s view, 'we must manage the revolutions we cannot avoid' (*The Age* 23 January 1985); to assist, encourage or even sanction were always improbable. Faced with opposition from either side the French government distanced itself from the Pisani plan, though retaining the principle of independence in association with France; it also postponed any prospect of a referendum until after the French national elections in 1986 hoping to put the onus for action on the shoulders of the opposition.

Throughout the first few months of 1985 the RPCR maintained a position of absolute intransigence. None of their leaders ever officially held a meeting with Pisani. Dick Ukeiwe, who had several times demanded his recall to Paris, refused to meet him while 'the corpse of independence' lay between them. Late in January however, on behalf of the RPCR, Ukeiwe proposed as an alternative to the Pisani plan, that there be a Caledonian Federation of two principal regions. For the first time there was some evidence that Ukeiwe, who had hitherto taken an extremely
hard line, even addressing an anti-independence rally a day after the Hienghene massacre, was bowing to pressures from other Melanesians in the RPCR to move towards some minimal reformism. Although it was the first sign of even trivial concessions from the RPCR, at much the same time, early in February, Ukeiwe and Gaston Flosse, the conservative President of French Polynesia, signed an alliance linking the two territories together in support of France, an accord rejected by the main French Polynesian indépendantiste party, Ia Mana Te Numaa, and condemned by Pisani as a violation of the French constitution. For the FLNKS, and for most Kanaks, Ukeiwe was nothing more than a Kanak de service (a Kanak lackey) but by February 1985 it was widely apparent that he was more respected than any other political leader in New Caledonia. Though a sample survey recorded that 46 per cent of Melanesians found that Tjibaou inspired the most confidence, compared with Ukeiwe's 23 per cent, some 58 per cent of Europeans (and also Polynesians and Asians) were most confident of Ukeiwe. Laroque inspired only 23 per cent of their support and Lafleur only five per cent (NC 1 February, 1985), an unusual commentary on the European determination to remain French and the concern that any European politician might ultimately be a mere carpet-bagger. Crucial to RPCR strategy, especially after the November 1984 elections, was to ensure that Ukeiwe was in the forefront of activities. Not only was he the President of the new government but he was usually the principal spokesman in Noumea and in Paris, where he fulfilled the image of the 'good Melanesian' under his close mentor Charles Pasqua (Colombani 1985:45). For the RPCR it was essential to demonstrate that Melanesians would play a prominent part in the future of New Caledonia and in the new government there were four in the Government Council. Even in the most conservative ranks the theme of 'good Melanesians' was constantly played; in Le Figaro, Desjardins later recorded that the 'son of the Great Chief, Naisseline, Fervent Gaullist, Nidoish Naisseline, head of the LKS, convinced indépendantiste, but respectful of the institutions of the Republic, has been the principal victim of the sabotage of the elections' (Le Figaro 1 December 1985). Nonetheless most Melanesians no longer 'respected the institutions' and were ardent supporters of the FLNKS.

The FLNKS held its first Congress of 1985 at Nakety in February and drew up a program for continued destabilization, land occupations and the growing movement towards cooperative forms of self-reliance, especially on the east coast. In these policies the FLNKS was drawing closer to the program that the LKS had drawn up in mid-1984; for the FLNKS action had preceded policy. A rapprochement between the two parties ought to have been possible but was largely denied by personal rivalries. The Congress witnessed a slow movement from what now seemed limited further achievements of direct occupation, either of land or of towns, towards a more long-term program of self-reliant economic development, focusing on agriculture and education, that would not only continue the progress of movement away from the colonial
system and its institutions but would destabilize colonial economic interests. The FN dubbed such proposals the 'Plan Guiart' (NC 24 January 1985). Soon after the Congress the FLNKS ordered the large commercial company Ballande to leave Lifou and take their business elsewhere (NC 27 March 1985) and established an informal taxation system for SLN trucks in the Thio region (NC 20 April 1985). However the most direct opposition to the colonial system came in plans for a Melanesian boycott of the new school year and the establishment of Kanak schools.

Despite the death of Machoro right wing violence continued to mount, initially involving demonstrations against the Pisan Kurfeu (which prohibited any demonstrations) and leading up to the notorious 'Thio picnic' of February 1985, with the right wing provoking their own violent confrontation. Two months earlier the FC had demanded that the French community 'must speed up its mobilization and its defence since Kanak terrorism will increase' (NC 14 December 1984); RPCR leaders had made vague references to 'the spirit of resistance' but did not generally believe that the situation necessitated violent guerrilla reprisals along the lines of the OAS (Organisation Armée Secrète) in Algeria though it certainly supported European barricades, which were mobilized by Justin Guillemand, the RPCR member newly returned from the FC. Within the RPCR, leaders like Roger Laroque were in favour of more violent action; after the occupation of Thio he returned to an old theme: 'I am ready to organize a militia; if the Thio incidents recur we will give the people of Noumea arms and ammunition to defend the town against terrorists' (Le Monde 9 February 1985). Laroque was increasingly isolated from others like Ukeiwe and Lafleur who disapproved of the Bourail barricades; as one resident of Noumea observed: 'Lafleur wishes to live in a future Caledonia; Laroque seeks to die in the Caledonia he has always known' (Le Monde 28 December 1984). If that were his wish it was later granted. The RPCR generally sought to postpone all issues and for them violence was more rhetoric than the reality sought by the extremist FC which preferred direct confrontation. The FLNKS too were not interested in direct confrontation, other than to pursue their variant of a scorched earth policy, though one of Tjibaou's supporters, fearing a long struggle, commented that 'if one day we must plant bombs like the Corsicans then we shall do it' (Doutrelant 1985b:28). So far bombing has remained a right wing activity in New Caledonia.

In mid-February the FC decided to organize a 'picnic' at Thio to demonstrate that 'law and order' would prevail throughout New Caledonia and to show solidarity with European inhabitants of the sole 'white town' on the east coast. On 17 February around 400 members and supporters launched a motorcade from Noumea to Thio and 170 people, who claimed to be previous Thio residents, were allowed to proceed to Thio; Kanaks from the tribe of Saint Philippe, who lined the streets to prevent the convoy passing, were dispersed by the police using tear-gas and grenades, leaving
several wounded, including Machoro's sister, Françoise, one of the many women now prominent in demonstrations. The FLNKS denounced police brutality; Leopold Joredie, Machoro's successor, pointed out that whereas the FLNKS has acceded to a request to negotiate, white settlers were being protected while they continued to provoke Kanaks. In the aftermath the regional police commander, Captain Saffray, was recalled to France for having allowed the motorcade to cross the mountains into Thio in defiance of Pisani's orders, and five leaders of the FC including Sarran, were ordered by Pisani to leave New Caledonia, a move which contributed to his vilification by the right wing. The leaders, only one of whom was born in New Caledonia, refused to leave and went into hiding for several months. RPCR leaders offered them safe passage to Tahiti, but were rejected and, perhaps reluctantly, supported 'their cowboy ventures' (Doutrelant 1985b) rather than lose further support to the FC and the FN. A massive Noumea demonstration in support of the picnic organizers, and in opposition to Pisani, suggested that the RPCR's support was at least pragmatic.

During the next few months the worst excesses of violence died down though tensions remained high. French security forces conducted strip searches in several tribes and in the Noumea jail, Camp Est, over ninety Kanak prisoners, including Machoro's brother Louis, went on a hunger strike in protest against the differential treatment they claimed was afforded to Kanaks and Caldoches involved in disturbances and to demand the status of political prisoners. At the start of March Kanak roadblocks were again set up in many parts of the country; electricity lines were blown up, houses burnt and at one road barricade at Pouebo a French police officer was killed by an axe blow, for which a young Kanak was later arrested. There were further violent outbursts. Near Houailou two Kanak youths stoned a car, killing the European driver, a school teacher, who was the last European to die in the independence struggle. A resultant strike paralysed Noumea for a day and a secondary school was badly damaged in a bomb explosion but by the end of April there was more than a hint of a return to the mid-1984 situation; the nickel mine at Thio was ready to open again and cruise liners were intending to return.

Though Pisani's dreams and illusions lay shattered, and both his handling of the 'Thio picnic' and his decision to send the élite gendarme unit GIGN to 'neutralize' Machoro suggested that he was losing his touch, there was some evidence that as the economy worsened some rural Caldoches were shifting away from a hard-line stance. Significant numbers of businessmen and farmers saw independence as inevitable along with a recognition of Kanak sovereignty. Some Melanesians within the RPCR, including members of the Territorial Assembly, were stunned by the months of violence, and were attempting to re-establish dialogue with militant Kanaks. As one Assembly member said, 'I'm a Kanak after all. I believe in Kanak sovereignty but I want to see France put the country on the economic rails' (Fraser 1985). Such views were
few and far between and were heresy within the mainstream of the RPCR. In the FLNKS, and more obviously within the LKS, there was opposition to variants of the 'scorched earth' tactics that sometimes degenerated into social banditry and sheer hooliganism; there too a minority was concerned. As one older Melanesian wrote to Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes, 'previously I supported Tjibaou but now he has chosen the opposite road from that of the church: racism, treason, lies and dishonesty' (NC 21 March 1985). But, on either side, there were few real converts to the no-man's land of the Pisani proposals.

The Fabius Plan

At the end of April there were the first signs of a possible new solution to the impasse although the proposals were scarcely novel, containing key elements of the Lemoine statute, Pisani's proposals and the RPCR proposals launched earlier by Ukeiwe. The French Prime Minister, Laurent Fabius, presented to the Council of Ministers a series of measures which deferred any referendum to
1987 but proposed the division of New Caledonia into four regions each with its own Regional Council; the four regions (Map 16) were also to be constituencies for a new Congress, composed of all the regional councillors, to replace the Territorial Assembly. The new Councils were to have responsibilities for economic planning and rural development, including primary education, housing and land reform (Appendix 3). Though soon christened the Fabius Plan it largely originated in Pisani's proposals and his attempts to build on earlier schemes.

After a series of plans and proposals engineered by Dijoud, Nucci, Lemoine and Pisani, all of which appeared to speed up the movement towards independence, the Fabius Plan represented a slowing of the pace, a decision naturally welcomed by conservatives. Most significantly, postponement placed the burden of responsibility for independence in New Caledonia in the hands of a future, perhaps non-socialist, French government. Fabius regarded deferring the referendum as a 'gamble on reasonableness' that would follow more than two years of accommodation to the new Regional Councils; it was still readily apparent that, without substantial change to the electoral laws, there would be no easy constitutional transition to any kind of independence. Though Kanaks criticized the Plan as being yet another proposal without electoral reform, the nature of the regions constituted a kind of electoral reform by creating or gerrymandering, as conservative critics suggested, large areas in which the FLNKS might reasonably expect to gain power. Thus the initial proposals gave 18 members to the Noumea (Southern) region, nine each to the Northern and Central regions and seven to the Loyalty Islands. One major difference from the Lemoine statute was the legislation of direct relations between the French government and the Regional Councils, so giving a much greater authority to France through the High Commissioner. By the time that the initial proposals had gone through the drafting committee they had been characteristically modified to give greater powers to the Congress, and more members to the Noumea region, so weakening the strength of the outer regions.

The main difference between the Fabius Plan and the RPCR plan was that the Fabius Plan did not divide the Grande Terre from south to north, as the RPCR plan and the French parliamentary constituencies did, divisions which gave conservative Europeans an effectively permanent majority over Noumea and the west coast, much the richest part of New Caledonia, and gave indépendantiste Melanesians an equally certain majority in the east and the Loyalty Islands. The RPCR plan had proposed a 'Swiss solution': a federation of two regions within New Caledonia, the west coast and the east coast plus the Loyalty Islands, each with its own assembly responsible for such issues as economic development, environmental management and social welfare. One of Lafleur's aides was even willing to concede that the eastern region might be named Kanaky (Doutrelant 1985a:28). The two regions would however
be subordinate to a congress formed by members of the regional assemblies and New Caledonia would be an integral part of France. There would be no delegation of responsibility from France which would retain control of its existing functions, including the finance of communes so that at each level there would be no increase in autonomy. Only the new regions and the proposal for a New Caledonian Senate, to cover some 'traditional' issues, were new, as in most respects the proposal (RPCR 1985) was surprisingly similar to the Lemoine statute that the RPCR had earlier rejected. The Fabius Plan amalgamated Lemoine's two northernmost divisions into the North, and the two central divisions into the Centre, though Yate was detached from Lemoine's southernmost region and added to the Centre. In a country of some twenty-eight Melanesian languages no regional divisions could ever be satisfactory but, by building on Lemoine's proposals, the Fabius Plan came much closer to older Melanesian divisions (cf. Anon 1984) than the RPCR plans.

The plan inevitably produced mixed reactions. Despite the obvious divide and rule nature of the RPCR's own proposal Lafleur described the new plan as amounting to the partition of the island, with the Loyalty Islands and the north of the Grande Terre being handed over to the FLNKS. Both the RPCR and FLNKS recognized that the Centre would be the only closely contested region, and there was therefore conservative criticism of its shape, the most artificial of all, and the inclusion of Yate, which was only linked to Thio and La Foa through Noumea (NC 27 June 1985). Demands to include Yate in the Noumea region were more strongly motivated by the desire to ensure control of the electricity supply from Yate to Noumea (and the nickel refinery at Doniambo), and urban water supplies, while simultaneously reducing FLNKS strength in the central region. Inclusion of the Isle of Pines in the central region was also rejected by some Melanesians as being unrelated to traditional divisions (D'Epenoux 1985). The RPCR's national congress at the end of April, the first for three years, firmly rejected the Plan and Lafleur threatened an 'active boycott' of the regional elections on the basis that the allocation of seats was a classic gerrymander and hence undemocratic: the North, Centre and islands were to have 25 seats for some 61,000 people and the South (Noumea) was to have 18 seats for 85,100 people. There was also criticism that New Caledonia was simply too small to be divided. Ukeiwe called for unity, warned that the party had reached the 'ultimate phase' of its struggle and demanded a 'fight to the end' (NC 29 April 1985); Lafleur regarded the Plan as 'solely for the FLNKS through close collaboration between the government and FLNKS' (NC 2 May 1985). Other RPCR leaders, such as the Vice-President of the Territorial Assembly, Yves Magnier, welcomed the proposal as being at least something beyond the present stalemate.

After an initial negative response, the FLNKS was slow to respond officially but eventually Tjibaou welcomed the opportunity to participate in the elections since they could be 'an
instrument, properly used, which will allow us to build an irreversible movement towards independence. The regions will allow us to construct Kanak socialist independence' (NC 13 May 1985). By contrast, Uregei argued for FULK that the Plan was 'a trap, a poisoned gift to prevent Kanak socialist independence. The Kanak people have left French institutions since 18 November 1984 and now have their own institutions: the Kanaky government. To return to French institutions will set back that progress' (NC 20 May 1985). FULK thus called for a boycott of the elections; the UPM President, Nekiriiai, described the plan as 'too much of France and not enough of Kanaky', a refrain that was increasingly familiar. However, by the end of the third FLNKS congress at Hienghene in May, there was unity though support was certainly not enthusiastic; the FLNKS opposed the Plan because of its 'neo-colonial logic' but recognized that it did constitute some gain from their struggles. They continued to distrust the French government's plans, especially those for further militarization of New Caledonia. In some hearts too, disappointment over unresolved negotiations and discussions, misery over the deaths of a disproportionate number of Melanesians, recognition that direct action would not guarantee independence and fatigue, all contributed to a less idealistic vision of the future of an independent Kanaky and a more pragmatic recognition of the necessity to negotiate if not necessarily compromise. The basis of more positive support was that they would win at least two of the new Regional Councils and so be in a strong economic and political position to demand full independence. Of all parties, the LKS was the most supportive of the new Plan, stressing the potential it gave to more equitable rural development and welcoming progress through the ballot box. Nonetheless in some quarters within the FLNKS there was even enthusiasm; Yeiwene argued that 'it will be like Vietnam. We'll first take the north, then the centre, then attack Noumea' (NC 28 May 1985) but there was no real thirst for any form of battle. Like their opponents the FLNKS still preferred the ballot box.

Fears of constitutional change almost inevitably provoked violence and, early in May, right wing opponents led by Morini used stones and grenades to attack a peaceful, if outlawed, demonstration of two hundred Kanak indépendantistes in Noumea. Outnumbered French riot police were unable to contain the violence and the Kanaks were pursued into Vallée du Tir, the suburb where the Kanaky government had its offices. The mob of several thousand were joined by Laroque and Lafleur but were unable to take the building by force. Had they pierced the lines of riot police there would have been many casualties. Eventually riot police dispersed the crowd but, by then, one Kanak, Celestin Zango, had been killed and dozens injured. Marc Coulon described it as 'the most scandalous day in Caledonian history... Apartheid was insufficient, it was necessary to massacre them' (Coulon 1985:219). Less than a week later there was more bombing in Noumea; the Court of Justice and a predominantly Melanesian high
school were badly damaged and in Noumea harbour the yacht of the ORSTOM scholar, Jean-Marie Kohler, was sunk. Kohler, whose accounts of contemporary Melanesian society are unusually perceptive (Chapter 8), regarded the bombing as 'a symbolic act designed to intimidate me and prevent the publication of my current work' (NC 15 May 1985). Despite FLNKS commitment to negotiations it was now the turn of conservatives to maintain the rage and they were not afraid to seek confrontation. Following a complaint from Ukeiwe that Tjibaou had 'attempted to violate the integrity of the national territory', by going to Paris as the head of a provisional government and presenting the flag of Kanaky there, a Paris court imposed a fine of 10,000 francs (A$1700) and gave Tjibaou a suspended one-year prison sentence (NC 25 May 1985). The white backlash was a clear reaction to the Fabius Plan, where the Territorial Assembly, the principal white power base in New Caledonia, would disappear and be replaced by a congress where control was no longer assured. Any prospects of Pisani achieving consensus had long disappeared.

A month later a new and dangerous element entered the scene. Though all the minority ethnic groups in New Caledonia were almost wholly opposed to independence, they had rarely done anything more than vote appropriately, join in demonstrations and write to the newspaper. Early in 1985 however a number of Wallisians had been organized into an RPCR 'security force' or private militia. At the end of April 35 Wallisians, who had gone to Mare to prepare for a meeting of the Government Council, along with Morini, now the RPCR security chief, were held captive for 48 hours by FLNKS members who considered their visit a provocation (NC 30 April 1985, 1 May 1985). There were also disputes between Melanesians and Wallisians at Ponerihouen, where FLNKS Kanaks claimed that Wallisians had recently been hired as agricultural workers while local Melanesians were ignored, and other Wallisian labourers, or guards, were reported to be stationed on several other properties, where direct occupation was feared. These included the hotel at Touho and Lafleur's property at Ouaco. Technically Wallisians were recruited under the Milliard Plan, passed by the Territorial Assembly in March, to combat youth unemployment, though arguably to enable the RPCR to recruit a private militia (Filloux 1985b). The potential for the resort to violence was apparent even among some Australian residents in New Caledonia (Elder 1985:5-6). The import of arms, and the growth of private militias, suggested that this was not far from the thoughts of many of the right wing. Indeed the dismay with which Kanaks met the death of Machoro and the despondency that subsequently settled in Melanesian areas suggested that a crude military analysis had considerable validity. Early in June police investigations led to the discovery of bombs and ammunition accumulated by the extreme right, and several representatives of the Crisis Committee for the Support of French Caledonia, an organization of pieds-noirs founded in January, were arrested. Meanwhile Morini, who was widely held to be responsible for instigating and organizing the
May riots, was arrested for stealing documents from Lenormand's house (NC 12 June 1985). At the end of the month a chain letter, with a hit-list of 50 individuals headed by Pisani and Tjibaou, was circulating in New Caledonia initiated by a self-styled and anonymous group calling itself Forces Calédoniennes Libres. The only long-term resident journalist from outside France, Helen Fraser, finally left after three years in Noumea, harassed by death threats and assaulted on two separate occasions. Though the May riots eventually turned out to be virtually the last serious incident of the year, at least in terms of fatalities the FLNKS were seriously concerned that the country was close to civil war and that, six months after the crucial elections, the right wing were now armed and organized and independence was no nearer. Nevertheless work resumed in Thio at the start of April and three months later the six-month long state of emergency in New Caledonia finally ended.

By then the balance of violence had comprehensively shifted; as the Melanesian Pastor, Waiur Welepane, argued, Kanak violence was relatively slight despite the frustration of FLNKS activists, tired of inconclusive discussions and negotiations, and 'the constant provocations of Kanaks by the gardes mobiles, who attack not with rocks but with tear-gas and batons and guns... We Melanesians have no real material means to do battle; the French have the guns and the radio and the press and the helicopters. We have only our heart and our will' (Kircher 1985:19). There was a growing sense of helplessness in the face of greater aggressiveness from the right wing, whether settlers or recent arrivals, French or Wallisians. This helplessness contributed to some discord within the FLNKS, where personality differences, regional and religious loyalties and power disputes could not always be smoothed over in the absence of real progress. Further friction developed between the LKS and FLNKS; Naisseline had accused the FLNKS of being 'fascist Kanaks', seeking to impose their rule throughout the Melanesian regions, especially the Loyalty Islands. Conversely, the LKS were regarded as having sought the 'easy road' while weakening the cause of Kanak unity. In Lifou the friction led to some violence, eventually resulting in LKS militants going on a hunger strike (NC 24 May 1985). In every way Kanaks were withdrawing from confrontation with the right wing and, more positively, seeking to build a more appropriate rural economic structure.

The May riots finally led to the LKS withdrawing from the Territorial Assembly where it had vainly attempted to provide some opposition to the RPCR, and so provide one arena for dialogue within New Caledonia. Finally it rejected working in the Assembly 'beside those who choose to break down and dismiss Kanaks' (NC 10 May 1985) though, by then, a number of prominent LKS members, like Suzanne Ounei, alarmed at its silence, had already left to join the FLNKS. The LKS was not the only political party to experience problems. The only other non-RPCR member of the Territorial
Assembly, Aifa of the FNSC (ULO), resigned and was replaced by Gabriel Paita, once a major supporter of the UC. Under Paita the FNSC changed its name to the Parti Fédéral Kanak d'Opao (OPAO) and the newly named party took for its slogan 'the land, the people and the institutions', an old theme of the UC before its radicalization. It supported a multicultural independence in association with France (NC 6 May 1985) and chose OPAO, the name used for New Caledonia in the 1844 treaty, as a more neutral name than Kanaky or New Caledonia. Fragments of the FNSC, now largely unimportant, continued outside the Assembly, but like OPAO were also now in favour of independence in association with France (NC 27 June 1985; PFK and FNSC 1985). In July one more political party, the Mouvement pour la République Pluri-Ethnique de Nouvelle-Calédonie, was established in virulent opposition to communism and in support of economic development. Even Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes, often starved of news, ridiculed its flag and relegated the non-event to an insignificant page. The party disappeared without trace.

The release of the Fabius proposal virtually coincided with the return to Paris late in March of Pisani, to be replaced by a new High Commissioner, Fernand Wibaux, then French Ambassador to Lebanon and former Ambassador to Chad. His previous postings seemed appropriate to the task ahead, though his message of 'order and dialogue' was an exact replica of that of Pisani. Pisani's departure was greeted with jubilation by most Europeans, and coincided with the arrival of a new tee-shirt range in Noumea with slogans ranging from Va de Metro Pisanas (Back to France Pisani-arse-hole) to Mars 1986 ça Oui (March 1986 - the French elections - yes, please). Kanaks, who had lost faith in Pisani, especially after the Thio picnic and later when he suspended the FLNKS Mayor of Ponderihouen (NC 16 March 1985), were more non-committal. Pisani himself had visited the tribe of Saint Philippo (Thio), shortly before his departure, where the FLNKS spokesman, Petro M'Boueri, told him: 'We believe, and we still dare to hope, that your visit to Thio is part of what you call the decolonization process... Tell President Mitterrand that the Kanaks of Thio are still on a war footing, and if they are tricked again the combat will continue. Tell Mr Mitterrand that time is running out' (NC 23 March 1985). In his reply Pisani stated that there had been no intention to kill Machoro. 'I salute Machoro. He died in combat and he deserves respect... I bow before his mortal remains' (NC 23 March 1985). It was a statement that brought the strongest possible condemnation from the right wing. As Pisani's time in New Caledonia drew to an end he thus found himself increasingly isolated both from the right wing and from conservative Melanesians. Like Lemoine before him he had become the 'pig in the middle'; in one of his final statements before leaving he criticized evenly both the right wing and the independence movement: 'they are not able to accept any positive solution. They don't have the future of Caledonia in mind, but rather a revolutionary or reactionary dream, but in between, which
represents about 80-85 per cent of the population, we have, at
different levels, acceptance' (PIM July 1985:70). In practice the
acceptance was trivial though he pursued his dream to the end.

Pisani returned to France to be appointed Minister for New
Caledonia in the French government, a new appointment, though with
precedents decades earlier when there were Ministers for Morocco
and Algeria. Pisani continued to pin his faith on the emergence
of a 'third force' in the central parties, believing that the
regional elections would be evenly balanced between the RPCR and
FLNKS, a belief which had doubtless shaped the construction of the
regions and the number of councillors, and hence that OPAO and the
LKS would play a critical future role. As late as September he
believed that the LKS leader, Naisseline, would become President
of the Loyalty Islands region. On both counts he was to be
disappointed. Above all he was committed to 'independence in
association with France', arguing that because this had not
occurred during French decolonization in Africa, 'Africa was now
paying for it dearly' (NC 25 July 1985; Chapter 15).

Mitterrand's promise that Noumea would be strengthened as a
military base was emphasized by a visit to New Caledonia in May by
the Minister of Defence, Charles Hernu, aboard the nuclear-powered
submarine Rubis, with a promise to base a similar submarine there,
alongside Jaguar fighter-bombers and more French troops. He
declared: 'the retreat of French soldiers from New Caledonia is
non-negotiable. France is there for another twenty, thirty or one
hundred years' (NC 11 May 1985). This brought strong FLNKS
opposition; as Yeiwene, the Kanaky Minister of France, declared:

We are totally against the presence of any military base in
our country. We are in the Pacific, we are a pacifist
country, we have no enemies. Any problems of defence can be
resolved by a regional defence system with the other
Melanesian countries. We cannot accept the presence of such
a base which threatens the other countries in the region. I
think that the fact that France will establish a nuclear
base in New Caledonia will oblige other countries in the
Pacific to understand that the nuclear problem and the
question of independence are part of the same struggle (NC
13 May 1985).

As the French government stepped up its military presence,
and as the RPCR organized and armed its private militias, so the
FLNKS withdrew from the most violent action and sought to develop
a more self-reliant Melanesian society and economy in the rural
areas, in preparation for the Regional Councils and eventual
independence. The start of the school year in March produced an
effective Melanesian boycott of the education system, with more
than 70 per cent of school children absent in some of the
predominantly Melanesian regions, and the start of a Melanesian
school system which would ignore 'trains, snow and our ancestors,
the Gauls' (NC 3 March 1985) to concentrate on Kanak languages, environment, technical needs (in agriculture and fishing) and cultures and teach French only as a second language. At Houailou and Ouvea French schools were burnt down and barricades constructed to stop children and teachers reaching French schools; the LKS too opposed the French education system and demanded the withdrawal of French teachers from We in Lifou (NC 12 March 1985) and the FLNKS demanded their withdrawal from the Neavin valley, Houailou (NC 30 March 1985). By the end of March several Kanak popular schools (Ecole Populaire Kanak) had been established, especially in the Xaracuu linguistic area around Canala and also on Lifou and Ouvea, with instruction in Melanesian languages. At the end of May the FLNKS lifted its boycott of French schools, though retaining the 46 popular schools that were continuing successfully, and which, in September, had almost 1500 pupils (Anon 1985a). Nevertheless without adequate teachers, materials and appropriate curricula, much remained to be done.

In an economic sense the prospects for more self-reliant development in the regions beyond Noumea were limited but the destruction and abandonment of many rural businesses thrust self-reliance on to the more remote parts of the east coast. By June some 45 per cent of all businesses outside Noumea had been closed, many permanently, and unemployment had increased. Cooperative shops were emerging, in a bid to cut out European traders, and Kanak trading was restricted to the more sympathetic Noumea businesses, in an attempt to destabilize other businesses (Tjibaou in Le Monde 27 April 1985). However destabilization also affected Melanesians; at Goro, south of Yate, a variety of sources of income - including fishing, mine employment and tourism - had long disappeared, causing much resentment among conservative Melanesians (D'Epénou 1985). Greater self-reliance was encouraged by the legislation of the RPCR controlled Territorial Assembly, which cut taxation levels (so favouring businesses and more affluent income earners), reduced grants for educational and technical training and for the Melanesian Cultural Institute but subsidized building and other industries, cut back airline services to Melanesian areas such as Belep, cancelled a plan to construct a hospital at Poindimie and provided equipment grants primarily to Noumea and the west coast. In five months 'the politics of Ukeiwe had accentuated inequality' and, as even the RPCR deputy Henri Wetta conceded to his brother-in-law, Tjibaou, it gave good grounds for renewed demands for independence (Filloux 1985a) and contributed to the successful establishment of Kanak economic ventures. In a different sense Kanak control of the bush was important; as one member of PALIKA argued, 'Noumea needs the bush to live. It would only be a matter of preventing nickel ore being mined again at Thio and Kouaoua, sabotaging a number of power lines and water pipes to create a climate of panic in Noumea' (Le Monde 20 February 1985). In the run-up to the September regional elections fears of FLNKS political control in the central area that supplied water and power to Noumea provoked
dismay in Noumea; though there was no hint that such measures were
seriously contemplated by the FLNKS the threat was enough. Physically the
majority of the east coast and much of the Loyalty Islands were
controlled by the FLNKS; outsiders required a *laissez-passer* to travel to
many areas, and risked being obstructed by occasional barricades, while
those who were not FLNKS supporters had little choice other than to
give in or depart under the threat of constant harassment. Settlers and 'loyalist'
Melanesians, especially from Lifou, continued to move away as New
caledonia fragmented into separate antagonistic regions. Dick
Ukeiwe, for example, was still unable to travel to his home island
of Lifou. As divisions worsened the Fabius Plan offered some
prospect of legitimizing regional differences and creating greater
stability.

**Regional elections, Regional Councils and regional economies**

The Fabius Plan was almost unanimously rejected by the New
Caledonian Territorial Assembly in June. By then the LKS had left
the Assembly and Paita of OPAO was the only one of the 31 members
to vote in its favour. RPCR opposition was inconsequential. In
the French parliament the Plan had an easier passage than in the
New Caledonian Assembly because of the large socialist majority;
the conservative and centre opposition parties, and also the
Communist Party, all opposed the bill. French conservatives
remained firmly attached to the 'domino principle'. The Senate
slow ed the progress of the Plan, sending a delegation to New
Caledonia, which recommended modifications. The opposition were
opposed to the structure of the Regional Councils, as they did not
give equality of representation, because of the government's
avowed wish to compensate for historic socio-economic disparities,
and they were also concerned over the freedom of the ballot (*Le
Monde* 31 July 1985). In Paris Ukeiwe continued to oppose the
Fabius Plan in the Senate; 'creating four regions would be
creating an automatic apartheid regime' and 'the central
government has too often played the games of the Marxists and
revolutionaries in New Caledonia' (NC 25 July 1985). Opposition
appeals on the number of seats in the Noumea region were twice
referred to the French Constitutional Council which finally ruled
in August that the Plan was acceptable. This was only achieved
after Mitterrand had recalled the French parliament from its
summer recess, after the first rebuff from the Council, and
increased the number of seats in the Noumea region from 18 to 21.
The Fabius Plan became law and regional elections became possible.

A month after the Fabius Plan was approved the first New
Caledonian regional elections were held. Like other recent

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5Divergence in the size of electorates is however also substantial in France. Two
Corsican constituencies have populations of 30,398 and 31,479 while others had populations
of 318,770 and 312,782 (*Le Monde* 13 August 1985).
elections there were no election promises and no campaign that stressed regional or territorial issues since there was only one election issue and only two effective protagonists, neither of which entered into dialogue with the other. Characteristically the LKS made almost the only reference to the previous administration of the Territorial Assembly, pointing to a deficit estimated at CFP 1000 million (A$8.8 million) though the Minister of Finance disputed the size of the deficit (Le Monde 30 August 1985). The electioneering that did occur was largely that of right wing French politicians who appeared in Noumea to support the conservative cause. Moreover the basic result in three of the regions was certain; doubts concerned the Centre region and the extent to which one or more centre parties, including the LKS, might hold the balance of power in some region or in the Congress.

In the North there were clear problems within the RPCR resulting in the party effectively supporting two lists. The official RPCR list was led by Max Frouin from Koumac, a former member of the Assembly, whose aim was to gain the support of the European population, mainly in the northwest. For the east coast a second list, entitled Rassemblement, Progrès et Coutume (Assembly for Progress and Custom), was formed by Wetta, also a former RPCR deputy and brother-in-law of Tjibau. The Rassemblement, Progrès et Coutume list was aimed at Melanesians who were opposed to the FLNKS but unwilling to vote for a largely European list. In terms of gaining votes it was probably an effective tactic despite the attention it drew to racial divisions within the RPCR. Ukeiwe, still unable to return to Lifou, stood for the Central region in the hope that this would increase RPCR support in this crucial area.

Other than the Rassemblement, Progrès et Coutume the only new party fighting the election, and attempting to become the much-heralded 'third force', was Calédonie Nouvelle, led by a lawyer, Jean Leder, in an attempt to capture the 'progressive' wing of the RPCR. The only other parties were OPAO (and FNSC), led by Paita in the Southern region and Aifa in the Central region, now in favour of independence in association with France, and the extreme right wing FN which initially sponsored lists for both the Southern and the Central regions. The list for the Southern region was headed by François Neoeere, now a vocal anti-communist, but only six years earlier an FI candidate in the territorial elections. The RPCR list in the Northern region also contained some with FN sympathies.

Both Chirac and Le Pen arrived in Noumea a few days before the election and studiously avoided each other. Three days later, Le Pen withdrew the FN candidates from the elections in the Centre in order not to split the 'loyalist' vote in this most marginal region; he claimed that it was a reluctant decision 'taken essentially in the higher interests of France' (The Age 28 September 1985) so that New Caledonia would not repeat the history
of Algeria. Alternatively he feared a bad defeat. For the RPCR Laroque argued that even a multi-racial independence in association with France would be a major threat to New Caledonia; 'if independence came I'd call on everyone on my side to defend themselves with arms and violence' (The Australian 25 September 1985). It was an old refrain and it had already been taken up. Tjibaou promised that neither a change of government in France nor renewed violence in New Caledonia could halt the march to independence. The two principal forces were as far apart as ever.

In the prelude to the elections there were several violent incidents, including the shooting of a young Melanesian girl by a French settler near Ponerihouen, which led to his house being burnt down and the reconstruction of roadblocks along the east coast, and the subsequent shooting of a white settler on the east coast. At Thio there was a resurgence of disputes and the nickel mine was closed by roadblocks at the height of the disturbances, which followed attempts by gendarmes to arrest the alleged murderer of Yves Tual. Two weeks later there was further violence there when French RPR politicians were chased from the Saint Philippe tribe and their cars stoned. Before their departure from New Caledonia they promised that 'spring comes in six months' and that they would not let 'Moscow gold buy the strategic position in the Pacific that the people of New Caledonia represent' (PIM October 1985:28). Despite this heightened tension the election campaign itself was calm until a few days before the election when bomb blasts rocked Noumea; the first blast damaged a supermarket; the second, the most violent then experienced in New Caledonia, destroyed two floors of a government office block occupied by the Land Office and ODIL, both organizations concerned with buying back land and initiating rural development in Melanesian areas. Even among indépendantistes the building had been known to be under threat. A third bomb, aimed at the yacht of a prominent businessman and supporter of independence failed to detonate, and was defused, and a fourth exploded at the building housing Radio Djindo, the 'first radio station of Kanaky' and then in existence for barely 24 hours. Elsewhere a bakery largely owned by Lafleur was burnt down. Throughout New Caledonia election day itself was peaceful.

Following a turnout that was by far the highest in New Caledonian history both sides claimed victory. For the FLNKS the result was sweetest; it won power in three regions and, in the end, was a fairly convincing victor in the central region where Joredie, Machoro's successor in the Kanaky government, was elected President. Tjibaou and Yeiwene became President in the North and the Loyalty Islands respectively. Tjibaou claimed that at least 80 per cent of Melanesians had supported independence, and the proportion may well have been higher. Overall 28.8 per cent of the electorate voted for the FLNKS and a further 6.4 per cent voted for the LKS; with the 3.2 per cent that supported OPAO this gave a proportion of 38 per cent in support of some form of
independence, although OPAO were not in favour of a narrowly defined 'Kanak socialist independence'. This was the highest vote ever recorded in support of independence. Though each of the four FLNKS lists was headed by a member of the UC (which constituted about 60 per cent of the strength of the FLNKS) there was wide recognition of the other parties in the coalition and all but the Parti Socialiste Kanaky, as the PSC was now called, had members elected. Not one European or woman was elected to represent the FLNKS, because they took lowly places on the lists, but both the RPCR and the FN had Melanesian councillors and the RPCR supplied the only two successful female candidates. For the RPCR the election as a referendum once more provided firm proof that the electors, this time over 61 per cent, were largely opposed to independence, and though they gained control over the new Territorial Congress, with 25 of the 46 seats, it was a Pyrrhic victory; the whole of the countryside had been lost. The headline in Les Nouvelles-Caïdoniennes screamed at 'the monster of the ballot box' and predicted, perhaps hopefully, conflicts between the Regional Councils and the Congress; Lafleur denounced the electoral system as 'completely mad' and Ukeiwe called for an immediate referendum (NC 30 September 1985). For the French Socialist Party it was 'a triumph for democracy'.

If the RPCR was dismayed by the election result, though confident that this nadir of their electoral history would be rectified in six months' time, it was a catastrophe for the centre parties (Table 20). The mood of the conservative electorate had swung far to the right giving three seats to the FN, its greatest success in its short history; with 14 per cent of the votes in the South it made a considerable advance from a year earlier and gained around twice its support in France. Nowhere did it record better results than in the comfortable European middle-class Noumea suburbs of Anse Vata, Receiving and Faubourg Blanchot. The failure of Calédonie Nouvelle showed that there was no 'progressive' wing of the RPCR to be captured and that a new party had little chance of success. OPAO confirmed this by being effectively destroyed; only in Bourail, the last refuge of the FNSC, did it poll reasonably well, though in only five communes did its actual vote fall below that achieved by the ULO in the 1984 elections. It was a long way from gaining a seat. Lukewarm support for independence had virtually destroyed it.

The elections also demonstrated that the LKS by standing alone again had effectively become a spent force; despite their withdrawal from the Assembly they were overwhelmed in the widespread support for the FLNKS. In contrast to the November 1984 elections, when it ignored the LKS, the FLNKS actively campaigned against the LKS, derided its conception of a future economy, which it regarded as neo-colonial, and criticized its participation in Halte à la Haine (End Hatred), an organization formed in July as a new central force, but supported by conservatives such as Chatenay and Leder. For the LKS 'the
Table 20  Regional election results, September 1985

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Electoral roll</th>
<th>Participation rate</th>
<th>FLNKS</th>
<th>RPCR</th>
<th>FN</th>
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<th>LKS</th>
<th>OPAO</th>
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<td>1588</td>
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<td>74</td>
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<td>217</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>113</td>
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<td>26,615</td>
<td>5263</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>1232</td>
<td>1246</td>
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<td>82</td>
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<td>(45.4%)</td>
<td>(41.9%)</td>
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### Northern Region

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| Loyalty Islands Region |

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<td>1867</td>
<td>2,640</td>
<td>1,867</td>
<td>579</td>
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### Source

violence of FLNKS has slowed progress towards independence' and it has 'set in motion a revolution that it can no longer control' (NC 7 September 1985). But the LKS failed to gain enough support from Melanesians; only in Mare did it achieve a result that ensured a lone voice in the Loyalty Islands and in the Congress. Ironically in only one of the 32 communes did its vote decline from that of 1984 and in several communes it increased substantially, even suggesting some European support for the LKS position. Nevertheless increased support was not translated into seats and, at the first meeting of the new Congress in October, while Ukeiwe was being elected President, Naisseline, the sole LKS survivor, remained 'sulking in Mare' (Le Monde 8 October 1985), the only member absent. Of all the parties the LKS was the greatest loser.

Again the RPCR and FLNKS demonstrated that they were the only two parties that commanded support across the country and the results were strikingly similar to those in the French national elections of 1981. Although the RPCR had its best ever results in many communes, gaining 72 per cent of a huge vote in Noumea, it lost ground in a few northern communes, inevitably to the Rassemblement, Progrès et Coutume, but more generally in Hienghene, Belep and Poindimie. The losses were more than compensated for in the South where it gained many votes. The FLNKS results were very similar to those achieved by the various indépendantiste parties in 1981; consequently there was again a strong correlation between the vote for pro-independence parties (FLNKS, LKS and OPAO) and the Melanesian population in each commune (Map 17 and Figure 6). Over a four-year period there was no significant change in the structure of voting and the changes that did occur were as much a result of changing participation rates as of any real changes of heart. Thus in the foreseeable future only substantial demographic change through differential natural increase or migration, or electoral reform, would alter this kind of result. The prospect of a referendum on a universal suffrage basis opting for any form of independence remains non-existent. Although both parties claimed victory, in this struggle no one could genuinely win.

The proposals within the Fabius Plan (Article 22) giving control of primary education, rural development and land reform to the Regional Councils offered clear directions for the FLNKS to move towards the kind of self-reliant society envisaged for an independent Kanaky, through the Ecoles Populaires Kanakes and the cooperatives. The conditions for three of the Regional Councils to construct a basis for Kanak socialist independence were thus in place after the elections. Beyond that the election results also

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6 The correlation coefficient (0.94) was even higher than in 1981, suggesting a closer relationship between Melanesians and support for independence.
Map 17 Support for the FLNKS and the LKS, 1985

gave the Regional Councils the more challenging opportunity to demonstrate that independence would not be a racist independence and that development could benefit all. The rural Regional Councils have greatest legitimacy in those communes where the FLNKS gained an absolute majority of the votes, especially on the densely-populated but poor northeast coast; there above all the Regional Councils have an opportunity to establish a new form of development. With relatively little time before the French national elections such challenges were difficult to meet; at the other end of the Grande Terre, Noumea, rich, privileged and powerful, had adopted the manner of a town besieged. Never has the contrast between city and countryside been so great.

The RPCR threats to boycott the new Congress were soon forgotten though RPCR and FN members all walked out of the first meeting of Congress rather than listen to a statement issued by Pisani on the reforms required for 'peaceful coexistence'. The principal change was over land reform where new proposals enabled Melanesians to claim any land that did not belong to the French state (or was urban, military or public works land), including land used for nickel mining, though the nickel itself could not be claimed, but would be leased out through the Lands Office. Secure
land titles were nevertheless to be given to all those, whether Melanesians or Caldoches, who had an existing title to land, to ensure the security of all private landholders. Predictably the Congress soon voted against any French attempt to impose new land regulations on them. Other new proposals laid greater stress on the incorporation of Melanesian languages in schools, price support for local agricultural produce that competed with imports, greater support for Melanesian cooperatives and more substantial direct taxation including, for the first time, taxes on Melanesians living on reservations, a reform that Pisani noted was intended to 'integrate the traditional Kanak community into the social and economic system of the contemporary world' (Le Monde 12 October 1985). It was effectively Pisani's swansong for New Caledonia; within weeks he handed the New Caledonian portfolio to Pierre Joxe, the Minister for the Interior. The first indication from the early Regional Council meetings were that the usual strong commitment to public works programs would be maintained, with priority in the North being given to the completion of the
Voh-Hienghene cross-island road (NC 6 November 1985) but any real progress was hampered by the refusal of the Congress to pass the 1986 budget to give the Regional Councils their first funds. Inevitably more difficult questions on the structure of rural development could not easily be resolved.

The reforms that Pisani introduced were directed as much to ensuring that Kanaks were incorporated into the modern economy, and so less able to withdraw into isolation and destabilize the territorial economy, as to a genuine wish for Melanesian economic development. Though Wibaux believed that regionalization alone 'was the remedy for every problem in New Caledonia' (Le Monde 8 December 1985), it left Melanesians with the continued paradox of withdrawing from the institutions to develop a more Melanesian economy and society, less dependent on the global economy, or taking advantage of the new Councils and extra finance to participate more strongly. Just as individual Melanesians in the past had been torn between nickel incomes and rural security, and circulated between different economic and social systems, so Kanaks were now torn between demonstrating their respectability and responsibility, and working within the institutions, or being more radical and solely oriented to independence by rejecting them. Participating in the Regional Councils was one form of incorporation, and it contributed to divisions within the FLNKS. Soon afterwards Yeiwene became interested in developing the Loyalty Islands region to the extent of pressing for more Japanese tourism; PALIKA, claiming that it was impossible to have both tourism and political struggle, warned that 'it is more important to know if the practice of the new institutions will divert FLNKS from its objectives and destroy its unity rather than maintaining and reinforcing it' (Kanak, 110, 30 November 1985). Through the election results Kanaks could have won the battle but moved closer to losing the war. As elsewhere in Melanesia the future balance between Melanesian coutume and more universal forms of social and economic development (Chapter 16) are impossible to resolve satisfactorily.

The most obvious right wing reactions to the regional election results were anger and violence. A week after the elections a petrol station at La Foa, owned by an OPAO election candidate, was bombed. A few weeks later the Lands Office was bombed again, the car of a European indépendantiste leader was blown up, the shop of another destroyed and a petrol-bomb attack mounted by masked men on the FLNKS headquarters; at the start of December a bomb destroyed Noumea's court buildings in the biggest explosion yet recorded in New Caledonia. Ironically the bomb exploded only hours before the French parliament passed a bill granting amnesty to those involved in most of the 'political crimes' committed in the ten months preceding the regional elections. The new Kanaky radio station, Radio Djiido, largely funded by the Australian Teachers Federation and the West German Green Party, had many transmissions jammed and, late in October,
right wing 'loyalist' vigilante groups raided Melanesian bars and night-clubs in Noumea, routing all the Melanesians, many of whom were injured in subsequent violence. At Saint Louis, on the fringe of Noumea, there was more violence between Melanesians and Wallisians and, for all Kanaks, growing concern over renewed attempts to turn Noumea into a 'white city' (Peu 1985). In mid-November Justin Guillemand launched a new group, the Comité d'Action Patriotique (CAP) set up to ensure powerful resistance to any possible further movement towards independence; Guillemand declared, 'we act not to create a private army as a substitute for the forces already in place, but to organise a patriotic reserve' (Sydney Morning Herald 7 January 1986), though, in fact, CAP were well aware of the existence of a clandestine armed group, the Forces Calédoniennes Libres (Free Caledonian Forces), who were probably responsible for blowing up the court and the Lands Office, and who had circulated a secret manifesto urging an expanded campaign of terror and political assassinations, directed against FLNKS leaders and their sympathizers, whether in Noumea or France, and recommending that bodies be fed to sharks 'to increase the impact and anguish of the unknown' (Sydney Morning Herald 7 January 1986). At much the same time Galliot established the Comité d'Action Contre l'Indépendance (CACI), with similar objectives. The threat of violence, similar to that in Algeria a quarter of a century earlier, was close to becoming a reality; the right wing were no longer content to threaten retaliation from the wings. In the midst of this resurgence in violence, on the first anniversary of the dramatic 18 November 1984 elections, Roger Laroque, RPCR Mayor of Noumea since 1953, and proponent of armed militias, died of a heart attack. It could not however be said that his death marked the end of an era.

Despite achieving power in three of the four regions there were still conflicts within the FLNKS, which flared dramatically in Lifou at the end of October, with violent conflict between members of the UC, PALIKA and the RPCR, leaving several injured. An editorial in the FLNKS journal Bwenando questioned whether Lifou, despite being solely Melanesian and with a single language could even be becoming 'with opposing militias, the little Lebanon of Kanaky' (Bwenando 18, 27 November 1985:3). At its sixteenth Congress, in mid-November, UC delegates were concerned that the identity of the UC was being lost within the FLNKS (NC 12 November 1985) though it is much the largest party within the coalition. Hints of discord were largely overcome at the fourth FLNKS Congress, held at Oundjo late in November, which produced a new spirit of militancy and renewed expressions of unity. Nevertheless the FLNKS generally regarded the Councils as only one step in an overall strategy for independence; the UC saw the new Councils as of primary importance whereas FULK saw the maintenance of the Kanaky provisional government as more important (Peu 1985). It was already apparent that Machoro's death, and the disappointments and retaliation that followed, even after successes in the Regional Councils, had weakened the desire for
continued conflict. How long unity and struggle can be sustained, where progress may be limited and economic goals uncertain, remains to be seen.

At the end of 1985 the two large political groups in New Caledonia, with widely divergent interests, continued to confront each other over a gulf as deep as it had ever been. There was no official dialogue between them and no hint of any possible reconciliation. Stalemate followed a year in which every conceivable statement had been made and positions that had been taken were now inflexible. On the conservative side, no real action was possible, as the RPCR essentially waited for the French elections in March 1986 that it hoped would restore its legitimacy and overturn the machinations of the Fabius Plan, Pisani's reformism and the distorted regions. The only action was destructive violence against institutions and individuals that supported or appeared to support Kanak independence. On the nationalist side there was slow progress towards the construction of a form of Melanesian socialism in the regions, under the threat of the cancellation of Regional Councils, a form that might be the basis for life in an independent Kanaky at some still doubtful and distant date in the future. The provisional government of the Republic of Kanaky remained in place, an expression of faith in the future.

The months leading up to the March 1986 French elections were a relatively quiet period in New Caledonia. There was concern within the FLNKS that the minimal gains of the Regional Councils would be obliterated and that the possibility of independence in association with France, which tenuously remained on the socialist agenda, would be cancelled out. In the run-up to the elections the constituent parties of the FLNKS were divided over whether to compete. Differences of opinion maintained existing divisions, especially between FULK and the more conservative UC, which had first surfaced over ties with Libya. Uregei, leader of FULK and Foreign Affairs spokesman of the FLNKS and of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Kanaky, visited Libya in April 1986, with other FULK members, including the former FLNKS representative in Australia, John Peu, to attend a congress of world liberation movements. The FLNKS censured the visit and temporarily suspended Uregei from his official position within the FLNKS. Nonetheless FULK convinced the majority of the FLNKS to boycott the elections on the grounds that 'the French elections are the concern of France not Kanaky' (PIM 57(4), April 1986:21). Agreement to support the boycott, as the FLNKS had previously done in 1985 for the European elections, smoothed over divisions within the FLNKS but could not disguise the deep differences of opinion, in relation to policy and practice, born of frustration over the inability to achieve power. For more than a decade Melanesian attitudes had become more radical; though based on regional differences the pro-independence parties also
reflect the different speeds at which various groups have reached radical nationalist positions.

The elections were effectively fought by five parties. Three of these were extremely conservative: the RPCR, still the most powerful conservative party, the FN (fighting the elections under the name Union Loyaliste) and a new party Verité Fraternité, Vivre Français (Living French in Truth and Brotherhood), led by a Melanesian, François Neoere. In January 1986 Neoere had resigned from the FN, of which he was one of three Territorial Councillors; his resignation followed the circulation of a letter from Le Pen to all members of the FN in New Caledonia urging the replacement of Neoere as Secretary-General of the party by a European. Though no reason was given it was widely assumed that Le Pen found the presence of a Melanesian as Secretary-General of the party inconsistent with its stand on immigration matters. Neoere formed his own predominantly Melanesian conservative party, though following his exclusion from the FN he was largely isolated. For the election the RPCR combined with the FN to fight with a single list of candidates, an indication of both the increasing conservatism of the RPCR and the growing success of the FN after its earlier electoral achievements in New Caledonia had demonstrated considerable support for extremism.

The other two parties which fought the election were broadly in favour of independence, though they continued to attempt to achieve it through the ballot box. The first of these was the LKS, still estranged from the FLNKS though it had maintained its support in its traditional strongholds of Mare and Poindimie. For the election it formed a coalition, the Union des Indépendantistes with the PFK, the remnant of the old centrist party, the FNSC, which having declared its support for independence, had lost most of its largely European supporters and was no longer represented in any of the Regional Councils. The two coalition parties argued that it was crucial for supporters of independence to have a voice in the French parliament, so that this voice be not lost because of the FLNKS boycott, and result in the end of an era in Paris for the veteran FLNKS independence supporter, Roch Pidjot.

The FLNKS boycott proved successful hence the RPCR-FN coalition swept the territory by gaining 88.5 per cent of the vote although the participation rate was no more than 50 per cent. Neoere’s Verité Fraternité, Vivre Français won no more than 2.6 per cent of the vote, mainly in the Noumea area and his home island, the Isle of Pines. Conservative Melanesians, especially in the Loyalty Islands, preferred to continue their support for the RPCR. The Union des Indépendantistes gained 8.9 per cent of the vote, half in Mare and the Noumea area, suggesting that most of that support was for the LKS rather than the PFK. Thus the LKS retained its support in New Caledonia but the FLNKS boycott was too successful for there to be any leakage to this alternative. The detailed election results demonstrated an almost identical
pattern to that of all earlier elections in the past decade, with a massive conservative vote around Noumea and in most other parts of the west coast, and very low participation rates on the east coast, where Melanesians and support for the FLNKS are concentrated. The effect of the boycott was not only that Lafleur was re-elected but also that the RPCR gained a second seat in Paris, that of Maurice Nenou, a Melanesian from Poindimie, on the east coast. Though the FLNKS had succeeded in demonstrating that its support was maintained, it was at the expense of losing its seat in Paris, and thus its sole constitutional representation outside New Caledonia.

In France, as had been widely anticipated, the Socialists were ousted and Chirac became the new Prime Minister. Bernard Pons became the new Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories. Though it had been hitherto assumed that Chirac would not immediately attempt to revert to the situation before the Socialist government's limited reforms, for fear of provoking extreme Kanak reaction, the proposals that Pons announced in Noumea in April 1986 demonstrated that Chirac had done exactly that. Although the Regional Councils remained in place, their funds were effectively frozen by the new concentration of power in the hands of the Territorial Congress (controlled by the RPCR) and the French High Commissioner. This shift of authority removed any possibility of the FLNKS regional governments adopting radical initiatives towards developing real regional economies. Pons also stated that a referendum on independence would take place within a year, without any apparent change in the electoral roll, thus ensuring that Kanak nationalists could not win, and also raised the possibility of further migration to New Caledonia. Once again, a further package of economic measures was proposed that, while formally directed at reducing unemployment by encouraging economic growth, would tie New Caledonia yet more firmly to France. Pons made no reference to any Melanesian demands, either political or economic, specifically abolishing the Lands Office (although a land reform program officially continues) and merely commenting that 'New Caledonia is French because its inhabitants wish it to be', a clear denigration of the historic basis of Kanak nationalism.

The immediate result of these policies was that the FLNKS effectively lost almost all its limited power in the regions, the only places where it had legal and constitutional authority, and was constitutionally reduced to an ineffective minority in the Territorial Congress. Its minor achievements had been lost; the moderate leader of the FLNKS and UC, Tjibaou, argued that a 'new strategy' must be adopted since New Caledonia had moved into a situation like that of Algeria before independence and sought further support in Europe and elsewhere; with reference to the referendum he stated: 'the people concerned by independence are the Kanak people. The French are independent. I don't think it is necessary to consult them or know whether they wish to remain
French or not'. The principal goal of the FLNKS has consequently become that of obtaining international support, within the Pacific region and beyond. Denied legitimacy and power in New Caledonia the FLNKS has been forced to shift its focus outwards.
Chapter 15

A world without colonies

There has been only one peril in the Pacific, the white one (Tom Harrisson, *Savage Civilisation*, London, 1937).

Although much of the South Pacific has been decolonized with tiny states like Tuvalu gaining independence, New Caledonia remains one of the last and largest colonies in the last region of the world to be decolonized. Though New Caledonia is unique, its contemporary status can only be satisfactorily explained in the context of French colonial history, French global strategy and the specific issues peculiar to the French colonies of the South Pacific. In two post-war decades empires that had taken centuries to acquire and consolidate disintegrated; 'nothing in the history of the modern colonial empires was more remarkable than the speed with which they disappeared' (Fieldhouse 1982:395). A combination of factors encouraged colonial demands for independence and these were coupled with the inability or unwillingness of the colonial powers to resist what were increasingly seen as legitimate aspirations.

Independence came first to the largest colonies, usually those where direct rule had proved difficult, where nationalist aspirations were widespread and the task of subduing more sustained opposition was too taxing for the weaker colonial powers that sought to re-establish their own societies and economies in the post-war years. India achieved independence from Britain in 1947, and in north Africa and Indochina, pressures for independence were equally impossible to resist. France granted some sovereignty to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in 1949 but they remained in a loose French Union, until France eventually lost power in Indochina in 1954 after a bitter and bloody struggle. It would not be the last time that the French were to gamble that small groups of nationalists 'would opt for the not insubstantial rake-offs available to them in the French scheme of things rather than risk smashing their febrile political organisation in a confrontation with a sophisticated European opponent whose capability to bring force to bear within the region was growing all the time' (Holland 1985:96-7). It was a gamble which failed and France withdrew from Asia in disarray.
Though independence came first to Asia there were earlier hints that in Africa too there might be possibilities for change; in 1944 de Gaulle called a conference of colonial governors at Brazzaville in the French Congo and, in gratitude for West African support for the Free French struggle, promised: 'There will be no progress unless the inhabitants [of French Africa] benefit materially and morally in the countries of their birth, unless they can raise themselves... to the level where they are capable of taking part in the management of their own affairs in their own homelands' (Hollows 1984). Though de Gaulle was only temporarily in power, it was enough to cause consternation in the colonies. In New Caledonia it was reported to have 'had the effect of a bomb amongst the Caldoches, accustomed to holding the Kanaks under their boots' (Burck 1984:14). Nonetheless de Gaulle had never suggested anything more than an increased role for the people of the colonies which would never manage without France; the conference rejected any notion of autonomy or international accountability for colonies (White 1979:124), and de Gaulle's promises were unfulfilled. However the end of the war led to substantial social and economic reforms and inadvertently set in motion the slow movement to independence.

After the initial phase of decolonization the colonial powers were slowly but effectively thrust onto the defensive by more sustained opposition to colonialism and imperialism from within the colonies, domestic socialist criticism and international opinion, spearheaded by the United Nations, with support from the United States and the Soviet Union. Questions over the inevitability of self-government and independence were replaced by discussion over when this would occur, how complete it would be and to which colonies it would ultimately apply. Though large colonies like Pakistan and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), or protected states like Tunisia and Morocco, appeared destined for early independence, European policy in the decade after 1945 for other smaller colonies was to prepare them for self-government after a long period of transition. It seemed quite unlikely that tropical colonies in the Indian Ocean or the Pacific would gain independence or even substantially greater autonomy in the foreseeable future. In fact this leisurely timetable disintegrated during the 1950s as 'the retreat from empire changed from a measured crawl to an uncontrolled gallop' (Fieldhouse 1982:404). A new wave of nationalism was stimulated by a growth in liberal sentiment within Europe and by the first wave of decolonization which provided models for colonies elsewhere, an early domino effect, and ensured that it was more difficult for European powers to maintain a colonial ideology and a colonial system.

A second phase of decolonization began in the mid-1950s, when Morocco and Tunisia denounced their ties with France, but it was not until the Gold Coast (Ghana) became independent in 1957 that the second phase really began. In Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah
secured independence for a tropical colony with diverse cultures and economies and without internal unity or significant autonomy. The emergence of Ghana opened the floodgates to decolonization; France abolished the French Union in 1958 and gave its dependencies the option of full independence without aid or independence in association with France. In Africa, Guinea became independent in 1958 and in 1960 almost all the massive French empire chose independence. Many British colonies in Africa and Belgian colonies like the Belgian Congo (Zaire) became independent and only Portugal effectively stood firm.

The most serious problems of decolonization occurred in colonies that were to some extent settler-colonies. Britain gave Kenya independence in 1963, and an influential British settler community became merely a tolerated minority, and a year later Malta became independent. 'Since this was against the will of many Maltese it showed that the British were now anxious to wind up the remnants of their empire as quickly as possible' (Fieldhouse 1982:407). Though Britain repudiated the claims of European minorities to rule African majorities the task of decolonization was slowed in Rhodesia, where white settlers held out against African independence, to the extent of eventually making a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) that survived for a decade and a half and 'proved the Achilles heel of British decolonisation' (Holland 1985:236). In South Africa similar forces led to the creation of an apartheid state as the white minority government batten down the whole of its institutional structure against incipient nationalism and survived in lonely isolation. Despite the weight of world opprobrium and limited sanctions it was not until the mid-1980s that internal pressures suggested even the possibility that the settler-colony of South Africa might one day become Azania.

For France the issues were different and difficult in the case of Algeria, where a million pieds-noirs had made it much the most important, and nearby, settler colony, and where France was initially thoroughly opposed to nationalist demands. Like Rhodesians, despite their numbers, the pieds-noirs were a minority in a Muslim territory though, for France, Algeria held a special place since 'two races were living side-by-side' (Grimal 1965:63) in proximity to France. As in New Caledonia the pieds-noirs had been settlers since the late nineteenth century, included a significant working-class and petit-bourgeois element and were sometimes intermarried with the local population. Likewise many 'did not have skills or capital to afford them likely alternatives to their Algerian existence; it was inevitable that they would fight to the last suitcases to retain their privileges if any threat emerged to their status quo' (Holland 1985:164). A nationalist coup in 1945 'provoked a murderous repression' (Grimal 1965:382), widened the racial gap and increased tensions and mistrust. Nationalists were gerrymandered out of the Algerian assembly and the strength of Algerian settler interests and
fragmenting coalitions in the French parliament prevented the formation of constructive responses to nationalist demands. The French bureaucracy was virtually autonomous in Algeria and became tightly interwoven with settler interests to the effective exclusion of liberal policy implementation. Although, as three decades later in New Caledonia, 'for some nationalism was seen in a clear and intransigent light; for others it had more to do with bitterness than with doctrine; for many it was hardly a conscious feeling' (Le Tourneau 1962:383), these diverse aspirations and attitudes were crystallized into widespread revolt in 1954. The French military were massively strengthened to oppose the rebel Front de Libération National but simultaneous reformist policies and greater recognition of Arab culture could not dampen the spirit and purpose of nationalism. Despite widespread increasing and brutal warfare, culminating in the battle of Algiers, the refrain that the revolt was the work of a few fanatics supported by countries which were opposed to France (Grimal 1965:387) was used to justify continued military repression. In May 1958 the French government fell, General de Gaulle came to power and 16 months later offered the Algerian people the choice of three possible futures: independence (called 'secession'), union or assimilation with France or independence in association with France (which would control economic matters, education, defence and foreign affairs), this third solution being the one that de Gaulle himself favoured. The settlers riot ed in opposition to any form of independence and some, alongside dissident French military, grouped into the OAS to conduct terrorist operations in Algeria and France. Meanwhile Front de Libération Nationale leaders established a government in exile in Tunisia and, after almost a year of negotiations, finally achieved a negotiated independence in 1962 with massive support in Algeria, and without either there being 'independence in association' or concessions to French demands. The majority of the pieds-noirs departed to France, a few went to New Caledonia and the most violent phase in French decolonization was finally over.

On the global scale the process of decolonization that was virtually complete by 1965 had only just begun in the South Pacific. Elsewhere decolonization had been so pervasive that the definition of colony could now be called into question, as many remnants of old empires were effectively incorporated into the parent states. France had already claimed Martinique, Guadeloupe, Réunion and French Guiana as overseas departments. The USA retained Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa and Portugal regarded the whole of its empire as part of Portugal. Colonial powers resorted to a variety of legal strategies to incorporate distant lands, often with quite different ethnicity, culture and economic structure, into the heartland. At exactly the same time, many of the European colonial powers were beset with a resurgence of nationalism in their own peripheries, notably in Great Britain and France, as minorities with different cultural traditions demanded greater autonomy and cultural freedom, demands
that brought into question even the notion of a contiguous national state.

Otherwise almost all the colonies that remained in 1965 were regarded as being too small, and perhaps also too poor, to become independent. Although France retained small overseas territories like Wallis and Futuna (and also New Caledonia), Great Britain had much the longest list of dependencies, most of them in the Caribbean, the South Pacific and the Atlantic Ocean. Though Britain granted independence to all but the tiniest of these territories, or those with unusual political problems, France, by contrast, gave subsequent independence only to the Comores (but not the main island, Mayotte), French Somaliland (Djibouti or Afars and Issas) and reluctantly to Vanuatu, and retained close control over its other remote territories. So close was this control that in 1981, after charting the movement towards independence of many smaller territories, Fieldhouse concluded that New Caledonia and French Polynesia 'seemed likely eventually to become Overseas Departments' (Fieldhouse 1982:411) with France exercising even greater control.

The decolonization of the Pacific

A decade after Africa had become almost entirely independent a new political geography of the South Pacific began to be established. New names and new nations appeared on maps as the most distant fringes of colonial empires began to crumble. The larger island groups were generally the earliest to become independent; Western Samoa was first in 1962 followed in 1968 by Nauru, an island of no more than 22 square kilometres, and Fiji and Tonga in 1970. In 1975 Papua New Guinea, the largest of the new nations of the Pacific, with a present population of over three million, became independent and it was followed by Tuvalu and Solomon Islands in 1978, Kiribati in 1979 and Vanuatu in 1980. At the time, it appeared that the independence of Vanuatu might prove to be the thin end of the wedge that would draw to a close French colonization in the Pacific; its achievement of independence in fact ended a lengthy phase of decolonization in the Pacific.

The early colonial history of the South Pacific demonstrates both that the pattern of colonization was dependent upon the evolution of the world economy and that, at this distance from Europe, it gave ill-defined strategic advantages to colonial powers. In political terms what was first the Spanish Lake (Spate 1979) was an arena for commercial conquests, the lure of gold, settlement, and, finally, the salvation of souls. Merchant capitalism found few promising sites in the South Pacific and, at the time of Cook's discovery of New Caledonia, voyages of exploration in the remote Pacific were motivated as much by scientific curiosity as by the lure of gain. Colonization was
largely superficial; though the colonial powers preferred direct rule, the economic rewards were inadequate to justify administrative expenditure over distant, thinly-populated islands and largely empty seas. Except in New Caledonia and in small fragile island territories, the light veneer of colonization was usually not difficult to remove and replace, but demands for its removal were weak.

Although aspirations for independence arrived late in this most conservative of world regions, colonial powers were rarely reluctant to release their meagre colonial ties. With rare exceptions South Pacific colonies had provided no great economic rewards; equally, after the hopes of the first colonists, their possible future strategic significance became insignificant as colonial interests reverted to continents elsewhere. The British above all were anxious to abandon their unprofitable fragments of empire; New Zealand had given an early independence to Western Samoa, Australia had given up its trusteeship of Nauru and, after some Australian thoughts of incorporation of Papua New Guinea as an Australian state, it too become independent. By contrast neither France nor the United States have relinquished even the smallest part of the South Pacific, except under duress; this reluctance is best exemplified in the New Hebrides.

During the 1970s each of the Melanesian entities, apart from Irian Jaya and New Caledonia, became independent. Although Fiji was independent in 1970, the tide of independence otherwise moved east from the largest state of Papua New Guinea towards Vanuatu (the New Hebrides) in 1980. Though Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands moved towards independence largely without rancour and discord, the same was not true for the New Hebrides, where its unusual colonial status as a condominium, jointly administered by France and Great Britain, had always created problems. With the slow but inevitable progress of social and economic development, joint administration was becoming increasingly unworkable to the extent that many, like Father Walter Lini, the first Prime Minister of Vanuatu, referred to it as 'pandemonium' (Lini 1980), and the United Kingdom had become extremely anxious to decolonize, so much so that pressure was placed on France to participate in the decolonization. It was a pressure that France strongly resisted.

Although French commercial and economic interests were substantial the decline of the plantation economy, especially in the mid-1970s, reduced Vanuatu's significance for the French economy, and the French settler population was quite small, being no more than about two thousand in 1979. Despite these limited economic concerns it was readily apparent that not only did France not wish to relinquish the New Hebrides, but that it was actively involved in attempting to prevent decolonization principally because of concern over the impact of decolonization on New Caledonia and French Polynesia (Sawer and Jupp 1980; MacClancy
This opposition to decolonization culminated in the violent events of 1980 when the Nagriamel movement, centred on Espiritu Santo, declared the island to have seceded from the New Hebrides as the Republic of Vemarana (MacClancy 1981), rather like Mayotte from the Comores, while simultaneously there was violent opposition to the new Vanuatu state on the southern island of Tanna. A movement with both religious and nationalist overtones, partly financed by private American business interests, supported by many French interests and condoned by the French administration, was eventually overcome only with some military assistance from Papua New Guinea. Vanuatu gained its independence and many French residents left Vanuatu for New Caledonia.

Even when it was inevitable French acceptance of the independence of Vanuatu was no more than grudging. For all the 'apathy and neglect' (Beasant 1984:150) that characterized the colonial attitudes of both metropolitan powers France was characteristically unwilling to release its tenuous hold and drew from decolonisation one important conclusion. Within months of independence, while emphasizing that New Caledonia would remain French, Dijoud explained:

'The experience of other neighbouring countries shows that when the status of independence is achieved when all the conditions for its success are not present, defiance, gaolings, lasting opposition and much suffering ensue ... The New Caledonia situation has nothing to do with others to which one might look for similarities. I am among those who believe that battle must be done to keep New Caledonia French, battle against any and every threat' (PIM, March 1981:21).

Despite the parallel withdrawal of the United Kingdom from a colony that was only half French, France could extract no honour from the decolonization and, after further disputes with the Vanuatu government, France broke off diplomatic relations with Vanuatu, and suspended all discussions about aid (MacClancy 1984) though both were restored when the Socialist government came to power in France. The misconceived attempt to prevent the decolonization of the New Hebrides focused attention on France's adherence to a version of the domino theory, where the contagion of independence would spread, and its much greater reluctance to decolonize New Caledonia or French Polynesia. That reluctance has become obvious in New Caledonia and the decolonization of the New Hebrides was actually the catalyst to strengthening French resolve to retain control of the remaining Pacific colonies.

The emergence of Vanuatu was an illusory dawn for New Caledonian independence though, apart from French opposition, there were other reasons why decolonization in Vanuatu and elsewhere in Melanesia, created only a limited precedent. The Melanesian population of New Caledonia is much smaller though less
fragmented (linguistically, geographically and culturally) than in the countries to the north. Moreover none of these countries had a significant European settler community and, with the exception of Vanuatu and to a lesser extent Papua New Guinea, the settlers were not strongly opposed to an independence that they regarded as inevitable and that would not conflict with their privileges. The decolonization of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands had been accomplished even in the absence of significant nationalist movements; indeed, in Papua New Guinea, and in the highlands especially, there was some opposition to independence, through fear of regional imbalance and on the grounds that inadequate modern development had been achieved hence the country was not yet ready. The smoothest transition of all was in Solomon Islands where decolonization was a late but inevitable phase in the global British withdrawal. However the colonial history of Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea was quite remote and separate from that of New Caledonia and there were no formal or informal economic or cultural ties between them; though the same was not true of the New Hebrides, which was in many respects a satellite of New Caledonia (Brookfield 1972:144), ties between Melanesians in the two territories were nevertheless few and far between. However, even if the situation in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and, to a lesser extent, Vanuatu was quite different from that of New Caledonia, the recognition of these examples of decolonization did not go unnoticed and, alongside the establishment of a Socialist government in France, was an important impetus to the growth of Melanesian aspirations and activism.

With the conspicuous exception of Irian Jaya, New Caledonia and French Polynesia, all of which are large, even compared with other independent island groups, and have minority movements in favour of independence, there are no independence movements in the Pacific and little prospect that such movements will develop. For very small territories dependent status offers social and economic prospects that would be difficult to achieve in an independent state. In some respects therefore, United States dependencies and the two principal New Zealand dependencies, Niue and the Cook Islands, appear to have a political status that is both similar to the present status of New Caledonia and widely accepted as a long-term proposition. Indeed the Pisani proposals offered New Caledonia a relationship similar to that between the Cook Islands and New Zealand, where there is a close association between the states with New Zealand exercising responsibility for defence and some elements of foreign relations. The Pisani proposals however offered New Caledonia less freedom and, through a treaty which unlike that between the Cook Islands and New Zealand, could not easily be revoked by either state. For the moment decolonization has ended in the Pacific.
Confetti of empire

Rapid decolonization in the 1960s and 1970s left a world that, apart from the South Pacific and other oceans, was largely without colonies. The incorporation of small territories by colonial powers effectively occurred before the rise of nationalist movements elsewhere, though they would probably not have influenced the situation of 'colonialism by consent' (cf. Carr 1984). All currently dependent territories retain this status, because their populations prefer it or have expressed no opinion. Only Great Britain, the United States and France thus remain traditional imperial powers, unless the Soviet Union (in Afghanistan) and elsewhere, Indonesia (in East Timor), South Africa (in Namibia) and others, are regarded as more recent colonialist powers.\(^1\)

Of the remaining colonial powers only Great Britain is still engaged in the now slow process of decolonization. St Christopher and Nevis (St Kitts-Nevis), two Caribbean islands with an area of 269 square kilometres and a population of 46,000, was the last British colony to become independent in September 1983. Apart from the Cayman Islands, with about 18,000 people, and Bermuda, with about 60,000, none of the remaining colonies have populations greater than 13,000 and Pitcairn had no more than 57 at the end of 1983, the smallest populated colony (outside Antarctica) in the world. Even though twenty years ago it was also widely and erroneously believed that larger island groups (like Tuvalu) should never become independent it does appear that, for Britain, the process of decolonization has effectively ended. For the USA too, decolonization appears to have run its course; indeed 'America gave up less than any other western power' (Fieldhouse 1982:412) and continues to strengthen its ties with its unincorporated territories and with the entities from the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

France retains two groups of colonies; the territories and the departments (Table 21 and Map 18). The departments are most closely tied to France, headed by prefects (Préfet Commissaire) like those of French departments, and though they have regional assemblies, these have very limited powers. The territories, like New Caledonia, are generally administered by a High Commissioner together with an assembly that has more substantial powers than those of the departments. Collectively the departments and territories are administered by the DOM-TOMs. Together they

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\(^1\) The definition of a colony is intangible. There is validity in an 'ethnic' colonialism in which a colony is loosely defined as a physically separate entity, now usually an island, with a majority population of distinct ethnicity (and perhaps language and religion) from that of the colonial power. New Caledonia would thus narrowly remain a colony rather than becoming a 'completed' settler colony, like Hawaii, New Zealand or Australia. This definition would however provide scope for the existence of many examples of 'internal colonialism' as in the case of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea.
Map 18  French overseas departments and territories
Table 21  French overseas departments and territories, 1983

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Departments</th>
<th>Population 1983</th>
<th>Area (sq. km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French Guiana (Guyane)</td>
<td>73,012&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>91,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadeloupe&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>328,400&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinique&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>326,428&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Réunion</td>
<td>515,814</td>
<td>2,510</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territories&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Area (sq. km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Pierre and Miquelon&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>6,041&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayotte&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>55,000&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Polynesia</td>
<td>166,753</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
<td>145,368</td>
<td>19,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallis and Futuna</td>
<td>12,391</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>The islands of St Barthelemy and part of the island of St Martin, which is jointly administered by the Netherlands, some 300 kilometres to the north, are also part of Guadeloupe.

<sup>b</sup>France has one other overseas territory the French Southern and Antarctic Lands (Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises) which includes islands like Kerguelen in the southern Indian Ocean. It has a small scientific and military population and is administered directly from Paris. France also has a number of small overseas possessions, such as the now unpopulated Clipperton Island in the eastern Pacific, that are not recognized as components of the French Republic but nevertheless have a 200-mile Exclusive Zone.

<sup>c</sup>1982 figures.

<sup>d</sup>Approximate figure.

constitute the majority of the 'confetti of empire' (Guillebaud 1976) that remain in the world. The argument that 'while most constituents of the old empires had been shunted into the post-

<sup>2</sup>There is no recent detailed account of the DOM-TOMs. The main account that covers most of them is a useful but outdated report (Guillebaud 1976) which partly omits Réunion; a special issue of the journal Hérodote (37-38, 1985) on Ces Iles Ou L'On Parle Français reviews particular issues in each of the DOM-TOMs, except Mayotte, Wallis and Futuna and French Guiana, and has a valuable introduction. A conservative introduction to the Caribbean departments is that of Lasserre and Mabileau (1972) brought up-to-date in a special edition of Les Temps Modernes (April 1983). For French Polynesia, Thompson and Adloff (1971) provide a good starting point but, despite many detailed studies of various aspects of change, there is no worthwhile successor. The other DOM-TOMs are extremely poorly served.
colonial age, there were always enough awkward survivals to keep alive befuddling myths and rhetoric' (Holland 1985:xii) is nowhere more apparent than in this vestigial empire. 'From the man-in-the-street to the politician, French decolonization has been completed' (Guillebaud 1976:17-18) but in a hundred small islands in three different oceans that colonial era is not over.

The Algerian war and subsequent independence dealt a severe blow to the concept of the united and indivisible French Republic; 'having set its boundaries in north Africa, the political class had to accept decolonization as dismemberment, making it more difficult to sustain the myth' (Keating 1985:6). But for conservatives it has been crucial that the myth be sustained; the merest hints of independence in New Caledonia have provoked instant reflection on the enormity of Algerian parallels and one of the strongest opponents of New Caledonia independence is the Corsican-born Senator, Pasqua, who has proclaimed that 'the defence of Bastia begins in Noumea' (NC 16 February 1985), and Chirac, in response to Pisani's proposals, warned of problems not only in the DOM-TOMs and Corsica, but in Brittany and among the Basques. Despite the 'loss' of Algeria, and other parts of Africa, the essential message of this for conservatives was that the remainder of the French Republic must remain inviolate, hence even the independence of the jointly-administered New Hebrides in 1980 was constantly referred to as a 'special case' of joint decolonization that consequently provided no precedent.

The dramatic development of the New Caledonian independence movement in 1984 has had widespread repercussions throughout the DOM-TOMs, though much of the impact has been towards strengthening ties with France, in the face of the possible 'loss' of New Caledonia. However the independence movements in Guadeloupe and Martinique have gained strength from the events in New Caledonia and their claims have become more vocal and violent, so much so that in the French parliamentary debate on the Fabius Plan, Debré accused the government of 'wishing to create in all the DOM-TOMs a conflict situation, an attitude favourable to separatism' and, speaking of Guadeloupe, he accused the government of 'letting the insurrection become mistress of the streets' (NC 14 August 1985). It is no accident that some of the most conservative French parliamentarians are from the DOM-TOMs. In Guadeloupe the Union Populaire pour la Libération de la Guadeloupe organized an international conference opposed to French colonialism in April 1985, attended by parties from all the other DOM-TOMs (except Wallis and Futuna, St Pierre and Miquelon and French Polynesia), aimed at coordinating and reinforcing the solidarity of the people of the last French colonies and informing international opinion on the problems of their decolonization, and specifically designed to press for the inclusion of the DOM-TOMs with the United Nations Committee on Decolonization. For all its novelty, it was a tiny conference and international opinion took little notice though conservatives, like Desjardins of Le Figaro, concluded both that
the conference was a flop and that the only common elements in the
independence movement were their weak support, their Marxist
theories and their fear of universal suffrage (NC 15 April 1985).
Lemoine, Secretary of State to the DOM-TOMs, called the conference
'inopportune and provocative' (Le Nouvel Observateur 5 April 1985)
but it was a storm in a teacup. By far the most important impact
of the 'Kanaky factor' has been maintained demands for closer
incorporation with France, demands that are irresistible in Paris.
The encouragement of migration from and also to the DOM-TOMs,
lavish financial support, including unemployment benefits, and the
construction of a massive centralized bureaucracy, have ensured
incorporation and maintained dependency, especially in the absence
of real cultural or economic nationalism.

France in the South Pacific

If one world region remains characterized by colonies it is
the South Pacific, where a third of French DOM-TOMs remain amidst
other fragments of empire. The loss of so much of its global
empire has given the South Pacific a contemporary significance for
France that was barely evident two decades ago. Even to speak of
France in the South Pacific is to distort a situation where French
international attitudes are global rather than regional; the world
is less likely to be perceived as regions where zones of control
are important than in the international diplomacy of Australia or
even the United States. France on a global scale has retained its
South Pacific presence for the same kind of reasons, on a regional
scale, that the United States retains a similar presence; an
overwhelming fear of communism, and primarily the Soviet Union,
the desire for stability and the maintenance of the 'balance of
power'. French acquisition of both New Caledonia and French
Polynesia in the nineteenth century owed much to the desire for
naval bases that would prevent the South Pacific becoming a
British lake; though ownership of the lake has always been
contested, and Britain has withdrawn, France has maintained and
strengthened its presence. For at least two of three French
territories in the Pacific strategic issues are constantly
present.

New Caledonia is unique and the contrasts between France's
two other territories in the South Pacific are enormous. Other
than their colonial status there is virtually no comparison and,
although both are in Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna retain a
substantial Polynesian culture dominated by hereditary kings while
deculturation has eroded much of eastern Polynesian culture.
French Polynesia, especially Tahiti, is known throughout the world
whereas Wallis and Futuna is unknown even in the central Pacific,
a function of its small size, lack of perceived strategic
significance, non-existent commercial economy and isolation
(Connell 1983). Perhaps nowhere in the world is there an
equivalent situation of 'total dependency' (Rensch, 1983). Of all
the world's colonies Wallis and Futuna must surely be the least known. Ignored in all the standard texts on colonization and decolonization, even those that focus on France, ignored even in French accounts of French colonies, it is no paradox that it is the most loyal of all the remaining French colonies.

French Polynesia by contrast is one of the largest territories in the world although very little of this is land. Though composed of five major archipelagos the territory is absolutely dominated by the central island of Tahiti, the first to be colonized and now home for two-thirds of the territory's population. As in New Caledonia and the Caribbean DOM-TOMs, the capital city and its bureaucracy dominate everything, though here there is one exception: nuclear testing on Mururoa atoll. Nevertheless there are more than sixty occupied islands and substantial economic and cultural variations between Rapa, so far to the south it is outside the tropics, the hazard-prone Tuamotu archipelago, the largest chain of coral atolls in the world, and the mountainous Marquesas. In recent decades, building on images of south sea idylls, Tahiti and nearby islands such as Bora Bora, regarded by some as the most beautiful island in the world, have developed a substantial tourist trade, by far the most important of any DOM-TOM. As in other DOM-TOMs, and as elsewhere in the Pacific, the traditional agricultural economy (heavily dependent on copra production) has declined and given way to employment in the bureaucracy, in nuclear testing and in the service industries that have grown around these core activities. The economy has gone 'from copra to the atom' (Robineau 1984) and in so doing has become massively dependent on France.

In the immediate post-war years demands for autonomy in French Polynesia were led by the first prominent Polynesian politician, Pouvanaa a Oopa. Jailed many times by the French administration in the 1940s and 1950s, and eventually exiled to France, he was sufficiently widely supported to be elected to the French parliament in 1949, whilst his party, the Rassemblement Démocratique des Populations Tahitiennes, won 70 per cent of the votes in French Polynesia in elections in 1951, while advocating a radical policy to transform the territory into a Tahitian Republic (Thompson and Adloff, 1971:41). At the 1958 constitutional referendum Pouvanaa campaigned fervently in favour of independence but, in the end, 64.4 per cent of the electorate voted in favour of remaining with France, a result of the developing realization that 'the islands would be economically vulnerable should metropolitan subsidies cease through independence' (Doyle, 1981:9), a fear that, aided and abetted by French machination, led to the decline of the independence movement in Polynesia which, at its peak in the early 1950s, was the strongest in the South Pacific.

In the aftermath of the constitutional referendum Pouvanaa was jailed for eight years, a new indépendantiste party was
formed, the local assembly solemnly stated that French Polynesia wanted to 'remain an integral part of the French Republic' and France, having lost its nuclear test sites in the Algerian Sahara, decided to move the site to Mururoa atoll because the area was French, and the nearby atolls were uninhabited, away from sea and air routes, and considered to be capable of supporting scientific equipment. The establishment of the Centre d'Expérimentation du Pacifique transformed French Polynesia. Further movements towards greater autonomy were checked, the independence movement declined to a shadow of its former importance and massive French migration changed the population structure (Connell, 1985a) as it was later to do in New Caledonia. There were substantial improvements in infrastructure, thousands of new jobs at much higher wages; the traditional agricultural economy began to disintegrate and massive urban migration followed. Within a decade the economy essentially revolved around French government expenditure, as French Polynesia became the world's first 'nuclear colony' (Danielsson, 1983). The 'French appeal to cupidity' (Doyle, 1981:10) paid off in the decline of the independence movement.

As nuclear testing continued into the 1980s it was increasingly opposed, not only by other Pacific states, but by local Polynesians, many of whom had escaped the material benefits of the program. Support for new indépendantiste parties was greatest in and around Papeete, in part a protest movement against unemployment and inequality. Shantytowns increasingly characterised Papeete and there were 'expanding slum areas, where 20,000 Polynesians live in shocking squalor' (Danielsson, 1983:210; cf. Cizeron and Hienly, 1985) in stark contrast to the tourist image of Tahiti, in a territory where the per capita consumption of champagne is reputed to be the highest in the world (Shears and Gidley, 1985:117). Led by la Mana Te Nunaa (Power to the People), the indépendantiste parties grew in strength, winning three of the 30 seats in the Territorial Assembly in 1982, though being supported by no more than about 15 per cent of the electorate. The intensifying independence struggle in 1984 gained widespread support from Polynesian indépendantistes though the more limited French migration and the minimal loss of land in Polynesia ensure that there are substantial differences between the two independence movements. Independence will only occur in French Polynesia if France abandons its strategic interests in the South Pacific, a prospect unlikely in this century, as France has made it abundantly clear that it will not abandon its nuclear testing programme on Mururoa. Despite increasingly widespread protests over French testing, and over the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior in July 1985, the French military and strategic presence has been regularly re-affirmed.

Strategic issues dominate and define the French presence in Polynesia, and are determined in Paris where France has achieved the strongest global nuclear warfare capacity, after the United States and the Soviet Union, and also has the largest domestic
nuclear energy production in Europe. The major political parties have subscribed to both these ends, there is an unusually weak ecological and peace movement in France (Howorth 1984; Johnstone 1984), France is the world's largest arms exporter and a significant part of this is nuclear technology. Dominating the military program is France's wish to maintain an independent nuclear strikeforce to provide a balance of power in the world, and the world includes the South Pacific. In France there is widespread political and public support for the program, symbolized in the manner in which concern over the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior focused on inefficiency and not on espionage and manslaughter.

The Pacific, 'the ocean of the future', between three world giants, the United States, the Soviet Union and China, and other major powers, is inevitably of global strategic significance in an area of expanding military capacity. Once a remote and empty part of the world, where Britain and the United States could undertake nuclear testing on Christmas Island and in Micronesia, without fear of international disapproval, and their inhabitants could be treated with contempt, so that Henry Kissinger once said of the Micronesians: 'there are only 90,000 of them; who gives a damn?' (Petersen 1975:485), the Pacific has now become part of the world stage. It has gone from 'Spanish lake' to 'American lake' and more recently to a zone of international contention, in which the newly independent states of the region and the independence movements have only a minor part to play; the claim that it has become 'the battleground for the new Cold War' (Shears and Gidley 1985:63) is over dramatic but its steady increase in global strategic significance is apparent.

France, across the whole of the political spectrum, shares the view that the Pacific, for one commentator 'the Mediterranean of the 21st century' (Baumel 1984:52), is of growing concern, economically and strategically, and that France has a duty to be there, alongside other democratic states such as Australia, to share responsibility for the defence and economic development of the micro-states (Spencer 1985:40-2). In this scenario France would be an exporter to the region, a major investor, a guaranteed source of energy and a participant in technological and scientific development. An almost obsessive theme of the benefits of French technology (e.g. Gomane 1983; Roux 1985a:170-3) dominates much discussion of the future of the South Pacific, despite its hitherto disappointing and regressive achievements in the region. The oceans are afforded unusual importance by France, as an area of strategic significance and as a source of potential wealth. After the Law of the Sea Convention was signed in 1982 France had sovereignty over the second largest sea area in the world (after the United States) spread through every ocean. Loss of the Pacific sea areas, it is argued, would 'compromise France's place in the global oceanological competition' (Martray 1985:163) directed at developing mineral and fisheries resources. The
Pacific will be the 'new centre of the world', (Servoise 1985:101) not solely for strategic issues, but because the Pacific is the fastest growing zone of the world economy; the new 'new world' (Servoise 1985) where the Soviet Union is the principal commercial and military foe. For France therefore the Pacific is given both a strategic and economic significance as great as that attached to it by its neighbouring powers.

The enjeu pacifique, loosely the stakes involved in the Pacific, is a constant theme in French strategic writing. Beyond the two superpowers France is the only country in the world that sees a need for a linked military presence in every ocean. As Britain has abandoned the South Pacific France has increased its presence and, as New Zealand has come into conflict with the United States, then France is argued to have an increased role to play (Schlosser 1985). Some conservative strategic analysts, particularly in New Caledonia, suggest that Australian and New Zealand military strength is so thinly spread and so slight that, even with the best will in the world, it could not defend the South Pacific region from external threat (Zeldine 1980:14-15). More recently the likelihood of either Australia or New Zealand, under Labour governments, wishing to exert this will has also been questioned (at least at a rhetorical level). Possible tensions between New Zealand and Australia (Zeldine 1984:59) and between the ANZUS partners provide France with further justification for its regional presence. That in the Second World War, New Caledonia 'played a key role as an American base against the Japanese offensive over a long NW-SE axis that threatened to separate Australia from the United States' (Huetz de Lemps and Huetz de Lemps 1985:31) is recalled in support of a similar future role. New Caledonia is argued to be essential to maintaining communications between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific and, if the United States were forced to leave the Philippines, it would become a front-line defence for the west (Gomane et al. 1983). In support of its perceived strategic role in the Pacific, maintaining a strong military presence in both New Caledonia and French Polynesia is crucial, hence the Pisani and Fabius proposals were closely associated with strengthening the military presence in New Caledonia. With colonies stretched across the Pacific, France's role in communications and surveillance is important and the provision of land bases makes the colonies a potential second cordon sanitaire.

To maintain power, balanced or otherwise, in the region France has bases in French Polynesia, for nuclear testing, and in New Caledonia for a more conventional military presence in the southwest Pacific. Despite its location roughly midway between New Caledonia and French Polynesia no strategic significance has been attached to Wallis and Futuna and there is no military presence there. Even Le Nouvel Observateur in a recent report on French strategic issues in the South Pacific simply excluded the territory from the accompanying map (Le Nouvel Observateur 1
November 1985), yet it certainly represents a fall-back position in case of problems in New Caledonia (Roux 1985a:170) and was a major American military base in the Second World War. Clipperton Island too has not been forgotten as a potential base (Gomane 1985; Leymarie 1985) though it is probably too small to be important. New Caledonia however is important to the French strategic presence in Polynesia, not merely because of the 'domino effect', but because of its naval and air facilities. The French description of New Caledonia as 'the aircraft carrier for France in the South Pacific' has never been more appropriate. However, that Wallis and Futuna is attributed no strategic significance, whereas that of New Caledonia has grown dramatically in the past two years, does demonstrate some correlation with the relative significance of independence movements in the two territories.

The South Pacific is only one part of the French global military presence hence the theme of Kourou-Noumea-Mururoa axis regularly recurs in French assessments of the strategic significance of New Caledonia. It is no coincidence that in France the strategic 'black holes' in the world, where destabilization is most feared, are areas like the Caribbean where there is or has been a French presence (Schlosser 1985). In this perspective 'the current political status of New Caledonia... enables France to take an important place in the path to the heavens and the future race to the stars' (Roux 1985a:169). But Noumea is a minor partner in this race hence the domino principle must be invoked; if France allows New Caledonia to become independent against the wishes of 'more than two thirds of Caledonians of all kinds, this unique and iniquitous precedent would have an obvious chain effect in Tahiti and Kourou giving already active minorities the opportunity to go through the same motions... Indeed, after giving up Noumea, how could Mururoa and Kourou not be given up?' (Roux 1985a:170; cf. Zorgbibe 1985) and without Mururoa and Kourou, it is argued that French technology would quickly become obsolete (Leymarie 1985). If the direct strategic significance of New Caledonia to France is limited then it must have major secondary significance.

French strategic analysts attach greater significance to a Soviet threat in the South Pacific than do American and Australian analysts, whose greater proximity might have been expected to result in the converse. Part of this genuine concern is therefore with ensuring a colonial presence, so that the New Caledonian 'aircraft carrier' and Mururoa can be maintained, to be achieved by stimulating regional fears over a potential Soviet presence and by opposing national liberation movements. Pisani has stressed that whatever happens in New Caledonia,

France will stay in this part of the world ... It is in its interest, it is in the interest of the diverse populations of New Caledonia, it is in the interests of balance in this region and balance in the world that France stays ... The
world is like a house of cards; remove one card and everything may collapse. Look at the Middle East, look at South Africa, look at Afghanistan ... The departure of France would be what? It would be an opportunity for Russia to enter this region. It would be an opportunity for the USA to get into conflict with New Zealand and Australia to prevent New Caledonia entering into the Soviet zone of influence ... Moreover France also has strategic interests in this region and it is normal that it defend them (Pisani 1985).

The specific nature of France's balancing role is necessarily ambiguous yet, whether under socialist or conservative governments, there is no denying French determination to remain and exert some balance of power.

In New Caledonia concern over a Soviet threat is largely maintained by reprinting the most conservative statements from French newspapers in *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*. The FLNKS is constantly linked with Marxist governments and attributed Marxist sympathies and the threat of Soviet intervention is constantly reiterated. France has thus stepped up its military presence in New Caledonia, not only to repress Kanak nationalism, but for longer term strategic reasons. The first French nuclear-powered submarine passed through Noumea in May 1985. The FLNKS have naturally opposed this military build-up, Tjibaou asking 'a nuclear submarine to defend us from whom? Wars are for big nations. We are a small country and don't want to have any part in the wargame of the superpowers' (*Kanaky Update* 2(8), 1985). But France, much like the United States, regards the future of the South Pacific to be more crucial than the future of the Pacific people. The strategic significance of New Caledonia has dramatically increased since 1984.

To further justify the French military presence is a second recurrent theme that at the heart of this 'new axis of the world' (*L'Express* 6 April 1984) there are a host of micro-states, weak and inherently dependent, often with fragile economies and secessionist tendencies, which must be defended against the increasing Soviet presence (Baumel 1984; Zeldine 1980). By the same token an independent New Caledonia would be 'nothing more than a small niaouli leaf blown in the winds of conflicting interests' (NC 13 November 1984). Though New Caledonia's neighbours have not suffered the post-independence upheavals that were once expected, this is a perspective lost in New Caledonia, though the dependent nature of the economy would pose more difficult problems for an independent Kanaky than have been posed elsewhere in the region (Chapter 16). More generally there is a widespread belief, even held by Pisani, that disaster overtook every African country that chose independence, and that this is therefore a certainty in New Caledonia. *Le Figaro* journalist, Annie Kriegel, states that 'liberation movements in Cuba, Vietnam,
Ethiopia, Angola, Nicaragua and Mozambique have done nothing more than allow their countries to collapse into totalitarianism with war and famine a bonus' (NC 19 January 1985) or 'have become free to fill the reports of Amnesty International' or to exterminate their own population, as in Kampuchea (Martinez 1985b:205-7). For conservatives, Vanuatu is led by a 'red pastor' (Baume 1984:50) and worse would certainly follow if Kanaky became a new neighbour to Vanuatu; Giscard has warned that France would have 'the sad privilege of having created the Cuba of the Pacific' (Leymarie 1985:12). These are the apocalyptic models paraded in New Caledonia.

The probability of a socialist Kanaky is slight and none of the metropolitan powers that border the Pacific would want either that or the collapse of an independent Kanaky. As Guiart notes, neither Australia nor the smaller states of the Pacific, wants a 'New Cuba' in the region (Guiart 1985a:xv), and Vanuatu's recognition of Cuba amounts to no more than an annual visit to Vanuatu from the Cuban Ambassador in Tokyo. Walter Lini has ridiculed Australian concerns over Soviet, Cuban and even Tanzanian influences, querying 'is the Melanesian renaissance going to be viewed as a festival of the spirit or a collection of hostile acts?' (Lini 1982:30; Premdas and Howard 1985). This however provokes a second fear in New Caledonia that, to ensure that Kanaky would not become a Cuba, Australia would first turn it into an economic colony and then a political colony. There are therefore widespread fears of Australian neo-colonialism. In France there was an unusually sympathetic response to Britain's war in the Falklands, a measure of the manner in which, for France, 'European defence' is 'largely a code term for the financial, technological and industrial wherewithal for new Falklands wars' (Johnstone 1984:36) in its own remote territories (Leymarie 1985:13) if there were any significant external intervention.

Though the need for a strengthened military base in New Caledonia is accepted and welcomed by conservatives in Noumea, its existence has been argued to create an incentive for other powers, primarily the Soviet Union, who wish to have a military base in the southwest Pacific. The corollary of this is that France must remain in New Caledonia or, even better, 'that the base be totally isolated from the rest of the country, like the American base in Cuba, to provide any real security for the non-Melanesian population' (NC 24 April 1985). The Pisani proposals provided a basis for this Mayotte-like venture. This strategy, plus the continued militarization of New Caledonia, nuclear testing in Mururoa and opposition to liberation movements, may however have had the opposite effect to that intended and contributed to vulnerability in the South Pacific.

By any rational and objective assessment it is clear that France has created the greatest opportunities for Eastern
bloc penetration. French colonial practice encouraged the Vanuaaku Party [in the New Hebrides] to seek whatever help it could in support of its objective of independence, including that of Cuba. Similar intransigence has given the FLNKS a pretext for pursuing regionally unorthodox paths to independence, including the one leading to Libya. In both cases the blame for such adventurism has been attached in many Western circles to the Melanesian people for excessive zeal (and suspected ideologically based anti-Western attitudes) rather than on the French for unwarranted frustration of a legitimate decolonising process (Kiste and Herr 1984:59-60).

This is an extreme view of French destabilization, if shared by conservatives and radicals alike (Santamaria 1985; Guiart 1985a:xv-xvi), in the sense that FLNKS overtures to socialist states have been limited and Melanesian socialism is conspicuous by its absence. Nevertheless the ambiguity and style of France's purported balance of power in the Pacific, a region fringed by conservative democracies, is such that serious doubt must be attached to its present and future role in contributing to the consolidation and stabilization of democracies in the region.

The independence movement in the international arena

Conservatism and blanket opposition in response to demands for greater autonomy (and subsequently independence) in New Caledonia, together with France's proud concept of its strategic and economic future in the world, ensured that Melanesians would turn elsewhere for support for their cause. Though support in the wider world has been substantial, vastly in excess of that from successive French governments, it has never been vocal or overwhelming and has never given New Caledonia prominence in regional world affairs. Moreover external criticism of France's presence in the South Pacific, and the decolonization of the New Hebrides, tended to harden France's determination to remain rather than produce concessions either towards independence in New Caledonia or to a reduction or transfer of nuclear testing.

By the mid-1970s there were the first signs of external support for the independence movement; PALIKA had ties with the Vanuaaku Party in the New Hebrides, both struggling towards the same goals, and newly independent Papua New Guinea had begun to develop pan-Melanesian sentiments. The first Conference for a Nuclear Free Pacific, in Fiji in 1975, expressed opposition to French colonialism (Dornoy 1984:117) though there was no commitment to independence. By 1979 Papua New Guinea had become France's major critic in the South Pacific; the Foreign Minister, Ebia Olewale, threatened a diplomatic offensive both at the South Pacific Forum, and at the United Nations Committee on Decolonization, but the Forum meeting toned down Papua New
Guinea's motion into a bland statement noting the desire of Pacific island peoples to determine their own future (Doyle 1981:23). Papua New Guinea's interest prompted concern in New Caledonia that it intended to construct a federation in the Melanesian archipelago, 'in the name of a myth of cultural continuity', and over which it would be the leader' (Doumenge 1982:465). From more radical groups within the South Pacific support for Melanesians in New Caledonia gradually became more widespread, slowly reaching Australia and New Zealand.

In Australia concern over the French presence has been a function of domestic politics though the independence movement was largely unknown until the late 1970s. In an earlier era Lenormand was seen as a radical, determined to open the gates to communism and allowing the 'rising tide of colour' to submerge the white population of the Pacific; the conservative Australian government was sufficiently concerned to raise strong objections in Paris (Thompson and Adloff 1971:343). Otherwise 'wishful thinking and ignorance of Caledonia affairs have naturally inclined Australians to misinterpret in a way favourable to their aspirations vacillations in French policy' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:343) especially in the belief that either France would decolonize the South Pacific, or, that the French territories would seek closer relations with Australia, or that both would occur. In the 1950s such views led to a rapid deterioration of relations between Australia and New Caledonia and, by extension, with France. Fear of autonomy in New Caledonia ensured that de Gaulle made every effort to isolate New Caledonia from its English-speaking neighbours. In subsequent years Australian concern disappeared and interests shifted elsewhere, primarily to Papua New Guinea. In July 1979 the Liberal Party Minister for Foreign Affairs, Andrew Peacock, expressed some sympathy with the French position and stated that 'France is not the only power in the Pacific with territories and therefore should not be singled out' (Dalton 1981:7). In opposition, the Labour Party was particularly vocal in their opposition to French colonialism (PIM February 1982:31; cf. Ward 1984a:52-5) and, during the most bitter struggles of 1984, the Labour government expressed its general commitment to the New Caledonian independence struggle. Not surprisingly there was vocal opposition to supposed Australian intervention through expressions of support, both in France and New Caledonia, where 'Australian imperialism' and Australian treatment of Aborigines were roundly opposed. In mid-1983 both the RPCR and FC wrote to the Australian Prime Minister accusing Australia of 'shocking and unacceptable interference' in New Caledonian affairs and warning Australia not to 'try and repeat in the South Pacific, Argentina's tragic error in the Falklands' (PIM April 1983:18). Lafleur expressed similar discontents, fearing China and the Soviet Union much less than Australia: 'everyone knows this Anglo-Saxon world is not altogether in favour of France remaining in the Pacific' (The Australian 16 July 1983). By contrast when Australian support became more lukewarm in 1984 Machoro informed the UC
Congress that Australian support for France was motivated 'by fear of problems with their own indigenous people' and that Australia's only interest in New Caledonia was its fear of destabilization on its doorstep (PIM September 1984:25-6). From the beginning of 1985 Australian government support again declined, in part because of concern over potential Soviet penetration of the Pacific, increasingly regarded as an 'Australian lake', though this has not led to widespread alarm (Dibb 1985; Mediansky 1985) except in predictable quarters. The Queensland Minister for Welfare Services and Ethnic Affairs, Geoff Muntz, warned in January 1985 that, 'New Caledonia is virtually on our doorstep. If the Libyan-backed communists take over, Australia could be in a similar position to the United States with communist Cuba so close' (The Australian 17 January 1985). Few shared the concern though, as Michael Spencer argues:

Australia's present government is thus likely to continue complaining about Mururoa, while being secretly relieved that France is determined to retain a military presence in New Caledonia and the South Pacific region, helping both to keep the Soviet Union out and making the Untied States look slightly less monopolistic (Spencer 1985:44).

Australian support for Kanak independence has cooled, since New Caledonia was seen as 'one of the last vestiges of colonialism in the South Pacific' to become, at best, equivocal or moderate (Spencer 1985:45), with the growing realization that France was intransigent and that support for Kanak independence within New Caledonia would not attract the majority of the population.

New Zealand's economic and strategic interests in the region are broadly similar to those of Australia, though with a more Polynesian focus, maintaining economic ties with the small states in the region and ensuring the strategic denial of the South Pacific to the Soviet Union. The possibility of Tuvalu concluding a fishing treaty with the Soviet Union, as its neighbour Kiribati had done, prompted an immediate doubling of New Zealand aid and the Labour government has been as opposed to Soviet interests in the region as its conservative National Party predecessor. Though the New Zealand Prime Minister, David Lange, has taken a stand in favour of Kanaks in New Caledonia and in opposition to nuclear testing, these are issues over which New Zealand has proved to have as limited influence as other states in the region.

The United States has been conspicuously silent on events in New Caledonia primarily because of its view that France is a force for peace in the world and in the Pacific. Only Evan Galbraith, the United States Ambassador to France, spoke out in support of the French presence in New Caledonia where he saw New Caledonia as a microcosm of the free world pitted against communism, a potential toehold for the Soviet Union in the only world region where it has no influence and thus a parallel with Grenada where
foreign intervention might be necessary *Sydney Morning Herald* 11 January 1985). Though Galbraith was soon afterwards recalled to Washington these views were welcomed enthusiastically in Noumea, and never contradicted in Washington. A secondary reason for American silence was a function of remoteness, and disinclination to be drawn into a new controversy; there may even have been a fear that the 'anti-colonial momentum generated over New Caledonia would spill over into Micronesia' (Albinski 1985:42) though there seems no real prospect of that. The conclusion of a *Le Monde* correspondent that fear of some form of Soviet intervention 'explains why the United States and Australia are concerned about the danger of the New Caledonia crisis going off the rails' (Jacob 1985) is partly accurate and can equally be extended to New Zealand and, to an even greater extent, to some of the Pacific micro-states. However in all these places there is equal concern over extensive civil unrest, deaths and suffering, and the effects of these on regional destabilization.

Within the insular, conservative and Christian states of the South Pacific itself, opposition to potential Soviet incursions has been substantial, though Pacific leaders have not been adverse to initiating discussions with Soviet diplomats to put Australian and other aid-givers under pressure and, in the cases of Kiribati and Vanuatu, to conclude significant economic agreements. In the smaller Pacific states especially fear of a Soviet presence has produced some support for the French presence; the Cook Islands Prime Minister has stated that he considered 'the French presence necessary for regional security' (PIM May 1982:48) and though other states are sympathetic to this view, ubiquitous concern over nuclear testing and French opposition to decolonization has prevented foreign pressure on Australia. Claude Cheysson, the former Foreign Minister, has also argued that many countries in the South Pacific, like Fiji, welcome the presence of France to prevent unilateral dependence on a single neighbour like Australia (Cheysson 1984) but such unilateral dependence is rare and most Pacific countries have gained no economic or strategic benefits from the French presence except in a wider but still limited sense. Zeldine argues that countries, like Fiji, that desire economic benefits from the Lomé agreement, and from the EC, have no interest in France's departure from the region (Zeldine 1984:59-60) though, when the French Ambassador to Fiji directly suggested in 1981 that Fiji should discourage South Pacific Forum 'interference' in New Caledonia, since Fiji sold sugar to the EC, there was an angry retort from Fiji (Inder 1981:14). Moreover the response that greeted Jean-Michel Baylet, the French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on his tour of the region in mid-July 1985, was unanimously anti-nuclear, a feeling that overwhelmed support for positive elements of the French presence.

Throughout the 1980s New Caledonia was a regular topic on the agenda of the South Pacific Forum and Forum resolutions have consistently supported independence and the recognition of Kanak
rights to self-determination. Both in 1982 and 1983 the Forum welcomed the progress that France had made towards formulating a timetable for independence (cf. Ward 1984a:57-8), so much so, that in 1983 Fiji opposed Vanuatu's proposal that the Forum should sponsor New Caledonia for listing with the United Nations Committee on Decolonization. In 1984 the Forum demanded a firm timetable but in 1985 again largely welcomed French promises and progress towards self-determination. The South Pacific Forum had an uncertain hope that the issues would be resolved without the need for difficult choices to be made either by the Forum, or by individual members.

Support for the Kanak struggle for independence has generally been limited in the Pacific region. Vanuatu has been the strongest opponent of French colonialism, in part a result of its own experience of French colonialism, in part through a genuinely more radical foreign policy and concern over the threats of some hostile refugees to destabilize the situation in Vanuatu (Premdas and Howard 1985). Vanuatu has however been increasingly cautious in its support for Kanak claims and has dissociated itself from more radical objectives. Fiji, one of the most influential states in the Pacific, though itself strongly influenced by the United States, took a conservative line, with the Prime Minister, Ratu Mara, refusing to meet Uregei in mid-1985 (NC 14 July 1985). Other Polynesian states have not been vocal hence the three independent Melanesian states predictably remain the strongest opponents of the French, although every independent state in the region has expressed support for a peaceful transition to independence in New Caledonia. The Melanesian states are the only ones to have opposed details of the Pisani and Fabius proposals, in terms of residential qualifications for voting. Without exception there is widespread opposition to French nuclear testing, but not to the total removal of the French presence in the region.

The FLNKS were denied admission as observers to the 1985 South Pacific Forum, a move which would have amounted to 'an implicit and actual recognition of the Provisional Government of Kanaky' (Uregei 1985:45). However the first ever meeting of the foreign ministers of the three independent Melanesian states (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) in June 1985 expressed their total and unconditional support 'for the legitimate right of the Kanak people to independence' (NC 5 June 1985) and began the process of registering New Caledonia with the United Nations Decolonization Committee. The March 1986 French elections, by establishing a more conservative French government, contributed to a new radicalism within the South Pacific Forum. Tiring of minimal progress towards independence the Forum agreed to collectively raise the issue in New York after its August 1986 meeting in Fiji. Though France launched a diplomatic offensive in the United Nations, aimed at the sponsoring countries (particularly Australia) and arguing for the pluri-ethnic
character of New Caledonia, in the first week of December 1986 the United Nations General Assembly voted 89 to 24 (with 34 abstentions) in favour of referring New Caledonia to the Committee, effectively classifying New Caledonia as a colony. France predictably rejected the decision, went ahead with its proposals to organize a referendum on independence for 1987 and refused the admission of United Nations officials to monitor the referendum, thereby increasing the probability of a Kanak boycott. The outcome of the United Nations decision inevitably remains uncertain yet for the first time the claims of the FLNKS could be launched on the world stage with substantial international support.

The United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization (officially the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration of the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples) was established in 1961 to promote the most suitable and rapid transition from colony to independent state. None of the DOM-TOMs were on the list of territories considered by the Committee although French Somaliland (Djibouti) and the Comores were listed. In February 1980 Papua New Guinea requested the Committee to consider the inclusion of New Caledonia but, following the change of government in Papua New Guinea from Michael Somare to Julius Chan, the request was not followed through. Though Cuba requested that Uregei be allowed to address the Committee, translation of the appropriate documents took over a year, and Cuban support dwindled as the Cubans feared that support might be counterproductive unless it came from a Pacific state. Australia and Fiji, both members of the Committee, failed to act (Stevens 1982) and maintained their unwillingness to raise the issue until 1986. As France appeared to be making movements towards independence in New Caledonia the necessity of including New Caledonia on the Committee's list declined so that it was not until September 1985 when the Papua New Guinea government, once more under Michael Somare, again requested consideration of its inclusion. Australia's perspective was wholly pragmatic; the Labour Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bill Hayden, explained, 'if that initiative were to be set back by French action, and France is in a position to call up quite a lot of IOUs at the United Nations, including from Third World countries, most particularly in black Africa, then I think the FLNKS cause could be severely damaged' (Press Conference, 27 June 1985). Australian caution was also tied to France's powerful role in the EC (Doyle 1981:27-8), a major Australian trading partner. In October 1985, even Vanuatu, much the strongest supporter of Kanak independence, was willing to concede that France required more time to prove its sincerity and consequently would not press for the inclusion of New Caledonia (Times of Papua New Guinea 26 October 1985); the much-vaunted non-alignment of Vanuatu foreign policy proved to be more rhetoric than reality (cf. Premdas and Howard 1985). However the emergence of a conservative French government, in the aftermath of the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior.
and continued nuclear testing, finally overcame the pragmatism and reluctance of the majority of the Pacific states. Hitherto able to keep opposition to both colonialism and nuclear testing at the level of inoffensive rhetoric France finally became subject to concerted international criticism.

Limited pressure on France from other South Pacific states has been paralleled elsewhere where only a few episodic protests from the Caribbean community and the Organisation of African Unity have caused minor problems for France on the international scene. Other conferences, like the Franco-African summit meeting (December 1985) have tended to focus on issues like international debt and South Africa rather than the final phase of French decolonization. As a relatively powerful, and remote, European power France has been quite capable of resisting the minor irritation of negative votes in the United Nations and resolutions from organizations without political power.

Minimal support from within the Pacific region or from the United Nations eventually resulted in indépendantistes seeking support elsewhere, until finally the FLNKS despatched 17 youths for training in Libya, a mission that fuelled all the worst fears of conservatives that terrorism and a Soviet presence were imminent in New Caledonia (Chapter 14). It was a desperate bid, designed to shake France out of any complacency over Kanak claims. The more radical PALIKA however criticized the Libyan mission on the grounds that 'no external support is disinterested' (Kanak 111 1 November 1984:3). Though the Libyan adventure achieved little more than bad publicity, continued frustrations and non-recognition, it was not the end of the Libyan story. At the start of 1986, the FLNKS announced that it would shortly be sending a delegation, led by Uregei, to a Libyan summit of liberation movements. Uregei maintained that 'the West might regard Libya as the devil, but for the people of New Caledonia it is France that is the real devil' (Sydney Morning Herald 3 January 1986). It was an inopportune moment to seek Libyan assistance and, on behalf of the major party in the FLNKS, the UC, Tjibaou quickly rejected the mission; Uregei vowed to reconsider the matter at the next FULK congress and there was no delegation. Though it may have been coincidental that the meeting was in Libya it was a measure of the frustration of FULK that they decided to attend a meeting guaranteed to cause concern in the Pacific countries that were offering some support to the independence movement.

Through all the talk of external support for the indépendantistes there was no evidence of anything other than a trickle of cash from overseas well-wishers and messages of support from left wing unions and other similar organizations. A measure of the paranoia that gripped Noumea in January 1985 were reports in Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes that Melanesians had been heard speaking Pidgin English in Thio and hence that Papua New Guinea troops had landed there to help 'liberate' New Caledonia as they
had previously liberated Santo (NC 9 January 1985). Even Chinese traders have been accused of financing the FLNKS out of a desire for revenge since, unlike in other Pacific island groups, the economy was controlled by Ballande and Barrau and not Chinese businessmen (Huetz de Lemptz and Huetz de Lemptz 1985:36). Fears of Marxism could thus be tied to fears of new forms of neo-colonialism.

The fundamental right-wing view of indépendantistes attributes to them an unusual homogeneity; in the contemporary intellectual climate of New Caledonia, moulded primarily by a single right-wing newspaper, it has proved easy for those on the right to attribute minimal, and revolutionary, goals to their opponents. It has proved even simpler to alarm virtually all the white population and much of the Melanesian population by branding nationalists as Marxists, communists and socialists, the agents of foreign forces and so on. In this they have been assisted by the sometimes ill-informed but 'knee-jerk' reactions of support given by overseas socialist groups when others were more diffident. At the founding conference of FLNKS, for example, the only foreign observers present were from two Trotskyist groups: the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire and the Australian Socialist Workers Party. In the circumstances a conspiracy theory relating Melanesian nationalism to foreign intervention has not been difficult to portray and gain acceptance. 'Nationalism' and 'liberation' are all too easily equated with 'Marxism' and the FLNKS are simply agents of the Soviet Union, Cuba and Libya, all countries intent on destabilizing the Pacific region, stirred up by French metropolitan communists and given unrealistic desires. In this climate, as the right-wing Henri Morini argued, it is 'New Zealand's good luck and Australia's good luck to have us staying here' (Wright 1985:14). Thus the communist menace explains away the activity of the 'minority', who would not cherish goals other than to remain French, and the degree of FLNKS success, since only 'communism' can stealthily subvert so many people. Likewise any external support for Kanak independence and even press coverage of local events that gives the FLNKS publicity of any kind, are bitterly opposed on the simplistic assumption that nationalistic sentiments would disappear if attention was not given to them. Such views found subsequent echoes in South Africa.

Decolonization or neo-colonialism?

Decolonization contributed to a new political geography of the world but in its creation of a series of new and often small states, with limited economic wealth, undeveloped infrastructures and manufacturing sectors, and economies usually closely tied to the colonial power, the consequences were actually extremely limited. Certainly decolonization did not ensure the total independence that nationalist movements had eagerly sought. In the South Pacific, where nationalism was so lacking, the scope for
independent action was exceptionally limited. Post-colonial history has broadly been one of dependent development, with the stated goal self-reliance and the realistic goal a more satisfactorily negotiated dependence. Though decolonization enabled men and women to become citizens of their own countries it did not guarantee that those countries would have independent cultures and economies. The new independent states often exchanged a colonial system for some variant of a neo-colonial system, where elites in the pre-colonial era consolidated their power, trading relations and education systems were unchanged and structural change was minimal.

The colonial powers were often quite remote from the Pacific and their principal interests were elsewhere, usually in Africa, so that 'colonial mapping pens' could be wielded in a cavalier manner in the Pacific. In the circumstances independence produced secession movements. Even before independence the Polynesian inhabitants of the Ellice Islands voted for secession in search of their own identity (Macdonald 1975). The search for a new or re-established identity has also been accompanied by the transformation of old colonial names (such as the Gilbert and Ellice Islands and New Hebrides) to new names (Kiribati, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) in the wake of independence.

Political changes have tended to emphasize the existing problems of the Pacific islands, some of which are inherent in the distinctive characteristics of the Pacific micro-states: their small size (both in population and area) and poor resource base, their isolation from each other and from major markets and suppliers elsewhere, fragmentation within countries (since most are multiple-island countries) and a relatively short experience of monetary exchange economics. The emergence of cash crop and commodity production has increasingly tied the economies of the Pacific states to those of the rich world nations, especially those on the fringes of the Pacific: Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the United States. The absence of industrial production in the Pacific emphasizes the fragility of interdependence, especially in the remaining dependent territories where aid levels, that are some of the highest in the world, offset low levels of production and minimal exports.

For almost all the former French colonies close cooperation with France was the inevitable and logical successor of colonial status; indeed 'France's process of decolonisation was designed in such a way as to perpetuate dependency links after independence' (Martin 1985:189). Formal political autonomy was questionable in practice because of extensive economic and financial commitments to France (although French aid to former colonies was, in some respects, more generous than that of Britain), limited natural resources and limited skilled manpower for developing those resources in the newly independent countries. Not only did the new francophone states exchange a system of colonialism for a
somewhat similar structure of neo-colonialism, in which their economies remained closely tied to the metropolis (and new migration streams to France developed) but they also remained dependent on many of the same French men and women who had been there before independence. Localization has often been less successful in former British colonies while French troops, whose political significance is obvious, have remained in many of the former colonies. Even in the larger states with the greatest prospects of viability, development is often defined in a basically French context; as President Léopold Senghor chastised the ruling party of Senegal: 'the truth is we have not yet decolonised either our mentalities or our habits' (O'Brien 1972:16). The roles and attitudes, inculcated through the French colonial system and spanning, in some cases (as is true of New Caledonia) the whole dramatic era of transformation from broadly small-scale, self-reliant subsistence and exchange-based societies to new nations, with cosmopolitan societies, economies and polities, have been extremely difficult to influence in an era where the economic benefits of independence have been minimal.

Since in almost all other former French colonies France has retained a strong military, commercial and cultural presence, one question posed in the Pacific is, 'what are France's motives for wanting to retain direct political control, when in the 1970s direct colonial control is unpopular and expensive? Neo-colonialism is now more fashionable and more beneficial to the colonial power' (Crocombe 1975:60). Though France may be more intransigent in opposition to decolonization than other colonial powers the solution to this question lies in the perceived strategic value of the remaining colonies, the demographic structure of the New Caledonian settler colony and the geography of the South Pacific, where it is widely believed that French withdrawal would be immediately followed by Soviet intervention or Australian neo-colonialism.

Fear over Australian intervention in New Caledonia has outweighed the probable extent and impact of any intervention past, present or future, though Australian interest in one of its nearest, and most alien, neighbours is naturally considerable. Australia is the major regional power in the South Pacific, where its interests have been dominated by commercial and strategic issues for more than a century: 'from the entry of contending European imperial powers into the South Pacific at the end of the nineteenth century down to the present time, Australian defence and foreign policy has been dominated by one idea - the search for security in the Pacific' (Meaney 1969:173). The Australian 'frontier', the outer defence perimeter, has moved beyond New Caledonia; though there is concern over destabilization within that frontier, Australia (supported by New Zealand and the United States) would probably seek some joint defence arrangements with an independent Kanaky if France were no longer present. Australian commercial interests would become greater, with more
effective access to a nearby market and possible joint venture development alongside the provision of aid. Direct interest would primarily be limited to commerce, no more nor less benign or exploitative than existing French commercial interests, but, as in the slow growth of Australian participation in the Vanuatu economy (Premdas and Howard 1985), it would certainly become predominant.

Suspicion of Australian interests in the Pacific is longstanding (Simington 1978; Thompson and Adloff 1971:343-4) and, more broadly, 'French policy in the Pacific has been marked by a pervasive suspicion of all alien influences, combined with a parsimoniousness in providing the funds needed to develop the islands' economic resources' (Thompson and Adloff 1971:339). The basis for opposition to Australian interests is primarily directed towards the achievement of a thoroughly 'Australian lake', rather than to the specific nature of future intervention in New Caledonia. In its most extreme form it has been argued that Australia has maintained, for more than a century, a constant policy of attempting to remove France from the Pacific to enable it to become an Anglo-Saxon and Protestant lake; in Vanuatu therefore the Presbyterian churches and Australian and New Zealand unions were allied in opposition to Roman Catholic France (Martinez 1985b:194). This perspective led to the interpretation of the 'task force', established by the Australian government to study the situation in New Caledonia at the end of 1984, as an invasion force. A milder version suggests that 'a massive redistribution of cards is already taking place, to the benefit of Australia in Melanesia and New Zealand in Polynesia - the disastrous decolonisation of the New Hebrides already providing a good example of the "succession from France to Australia" through Papua New Guinean intervention' (Zorgbibe 1985:181). Though there are also concerns over cultural infiltration, and the possible shift from French to English, the principal objection to Australian economic intervention is that it could not be successfully accomplished without decolonization.

Concern over the actual nature of subsequent economic intervention has been weak in New Caledonia and greatest among radical Marxist socialist movements; the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand, alongside the Ligue Trotskyiste de France, have denounced Australian policies. Were it not that the Spartacists demanded the 'immediate and unconditional independence of New Caledonia... [within] the framework of a much larger socialist federation' (1985:1) such extreme views would have been given great prominence in New Caledonia. By contrast concern over the nature of subsequent foreign intervention was weakest in the FLNKS, who valued only independence, alongside the choice to associate with whatever countries they wished, in whatever manner, after independence; as Uregei argued, 'to be imprisoned in a French neo-colonial system protected by French military - what kind of independence is that?' (Kircher 1985:6). Throughout New
Caledonia concern was over the control of the future economy and much less over its content.

The manner in which decolonization and independence has been followed by some degree of disorder and deprivation in many African states has been a strong rallying point for those opposed to independence, even though crises were also apparent in the colonial era. Despite the fact that in the South Pacific such problems have been few, anti-independence elements in New Caledonia, including *Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes*, have missed few opportunities to denigrate the independent governments of the South Pacific and remote African states are grist to the same mill. The AFC launched a particularly unpleasant set of pamphlets in 1983 that suggested that if independence occurred, pensions, family allowances, education grants and free medical services would disappear, replaced by 'misery, hunger and alcoholism', and illustrated the pamphlets with photographs of starving African children (Association Fraternité Calédonienne 1984:146-9). In mid-1984 *Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes* seized on a report from Niue, a Polynesian island hitherto unknown in New Caledonia and with a population of less than 3000, that one prominent Niuean regretted the speed and disadvantages of the movement towards self-government (NC 6 October 1984). In similar vein, contemplating income levels in New Caledonia, where a Melanesian policeman was reported to earn more than the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Sir Thomas Davis, queried, 'Why throw away all these advantages and all that security, for the sake of a passport, or a seat at the UN' (PIM May 1982:49). Beyond that, independent governments may, in the worst perspective, be corrupt and incapable. Thus Jean-Claude Roux speaks glowingly and erroneously of 'three French regions, prosperous, of human diversity and, thanks to their history and language, with a homogeneity that is enviable in the fictitiously independent island Pacific [which is] politically fragile since "Tonton-macoute" regimes can easily develop there' (Roux 1985a:170). More legitimate concerns focus on the extent to which independence would be anything more than formal and whether it would genuinely contribute to individual freedom. Despite the fact that New Caledonia would be the smallest French colony to achieve independence, there has been relatively little argument that it is too small. Nevertheless, for conservatives in New Caledonia, it has always been thoroughly inconceivable that independence can bring progress. Dijoud's fears for the New Hebrides accurately represent New Caledonian beliefs, no optimism is possible and the problems that have confronted the independent states of the Pacific are heralded as the inevitable future of an independent New Caledonia.

France has long experienced particular problems with Corsican nationalism, which has taken a particularly violent form. The island is heavily dependent on French public finance and has some similarities with DOM-TOMs and small island economies
elsewhere: a dependence on tourism, a massive trading imbalance, emigration (Zeldin 1983:30) and a substantial bureaucracy. Under Giscard the approach to Corsica was virtually identical to that of New Caledonia; France was prepared to maintain heavy subsidies, but offer nothing in the way of greater autonomy, and was insensitive towards the Corsican language and cultural issues (Hainsworth and Loughlin 1984:356-7). Under the Socialist Government Corsica was given special status, with its own parliament and greater autonomy. The solution of a new regional assembly and a greater degree of decentralization has proved broadly similar to parallel and subsequent proposals for New Caledonia. Even to recognize the distinctiveness of Corsica, in either economic or cultural terms, is certainly to reduce the validity of claims that New Caledonia is an integral part of France. If Corsica, because of isolation and poverty, is a special case it is not exceptional since post-war France has experienced a rise in regionalism and micronationalism, especially in Brittany and in the Basque and Catalan fringes of Occitania, the southernmost third of France (Keating 1985). Yet, in 'this most centralized of nations' (Ardagh 1982:123) opposition to regionalism has been considerable. The belief in the unified and indissoluble state remains exceptionally powerful and arguments against greater autonomy in France or the DOM-TOMs essentially reinforce each other.

Although the South Pacific has its share of social and economic problems there is little evidence to link the genesis of these problems with independence, and much to suggest that independent states have weathered the vicissitudes of the global economy as successfully as those that retain dependent status. Despite frequent and disruptive votes of no-confidence, aggressive jostling for power through 'pork-barrel' politics, and the constant fission and temporary fusion of political parties in the Melanesian states, the independent Pacific states have made a surprisingly successful transition to Westminster-style parliamentary democracies where governments have smoothly changed hands to the dictates of the ballot box. Though there are problems, associated with rising population and unemployment levels, these have only exceptionally (in Papua New Guinea) resulted in escalating crime and violence and the physical quality of life has usually been enhanced in the post-colonial era. Changes in an independent Kanaky would have to build on what exists, and that includes mining and tourism (Chapter 16). The insidious pressure to modernize and develop is inescapable and with that would come a new form of dependency and neo-colonialism; the restless tide of capitalist expansion will not bypass a future independent Kanaky, nor will it be transformed by Melanesian politics.
The end of empire?

French sensitivities over the loss of territory are unusually strong, emphasized by the reacquisition of Alsace and Lorraine at the end of the First World War and the occupation of France itself during the Second World War. Even 'metropolitan France' is a relatively recent phenomenon. The Comté de Nice (Nice and its surrounding area) has only been part of France since 1860, when it was annexed from the House of Savoy, a more recent acquisition than New Caledonia. Nice often chooses to see itself as somewhat different from the rest of France, prompting its mayor, Jacques Médecin, to comment recently that 'Nice is France's most recent colony. Perhaps we might accept a proposal of independence-association like the one the French government has offered the Kanaks' (Greilsamer 1985). Virtually the same point has been seriously made to defend the retention of New Caledonia as an integral part of France (Martinez 1985a). It was not until around the turn of the century that the French Third Republic was able to turn 'peasants into Frenchmen', to impose the French language on the provinces and create a popular national identity (Weber 1977), hence ethnicity and secessionism are widely viewed with suspicion.

Throughout the DOM-TOMs there are certain structural similarities. Political status has resulted in the growth of a large well-paid bureaucracy that dominates the employment sector; many bureaucrats are metropolitan French, repatriate significant proportions of their incomes and return to France after brief service overseas. The dominance of the public sector, and the commerce that derives from it, has led to the widespread decline of the commercial and subsistence agricultural sector, the absence of fisheries (except in Saint Pierre and Miquelon) and, with complex official procedures and high wage levels that deter French or foreign investment in the economy, productive economies have become 'consumer colonies' heavily dependent on substantial French financial assistance. Welfare provisions have contributed to high standards of living and long life expectations, that are invariably better than in other nearby countries. Such material advantages of DOM-TOM status have discouraged independence movements which have thus tended to focus on cultural aspirations, relative deprivation, self-reliance and self-determination, rather than on economic gains from local control of the economy. This is most apparent in French Polynesia where the independence movement was strongest before the start of the nuclear testing that transformed the economy. Despite financial advantages, the structural problems of the economies of most DOM-TOMs have resulted in high levels of unemployment, emphasized under Socialist austerity, which, rather than stimulating demands for an independent economy, have often emphasized the strengthening of ties with France to ensure the maintenance of unemployment benefits and the large but artificial public sector.
The regression of rural development, and widespread urban migration, have weakened any secessionist tendencies within the DOM-TOMs, especially in French Polynesia, where outlying archipelagos are most loyal to France, hence, unlike New Caledonia, the independence movement is weakest in the more traditional, less French areas, and strongest among urban activists and a discontented proletariat. Here and in the Caribbean demands for independence are those of a small urban protest movement rather than the broadly-based claims of indépendantistes in New Caledonia. The material advantages of colonialism have generally prevailed, often increasingly so, over social and psychological disadvantages. France has stressed the development problems of nearby independent mini-states and argued that independence does not constitute the only form of decolonization, that colonialism may merely be replaced by a more rapacious, less controllable, neo-colonialism or even, in some circumstances, such as French Guiana (Schwarzbeck 1984:47; Gomane 1985:199), that independent states may simply be annexed by larger neighbouring states. This view has been widely accepted in the DOM-TOMs and in Martinique Aimé Césaire has argued that decolonization can exist without independence (Marshall 1985). In the present social and economic climate in the DOM-TOMs support for independence is tiny and much more out of protest over inequality than over support for a coherent political program. The question posed for the French Caribbean, 'is it already too late to choose our future'? (Petitjean-Roget 1983:1871) is relevant throughout the DOM-TOMs. In most places the positive answer suggests that the prospects of greater movement towards independence is very slight, and that, in most DOM-TOMs, it is only likely to follow unilateral French action.

The costs of maintaining the DOM-TOMs have been variously estimated at between 0.2 per cent and 2.3 per cent of the total French budget. Although a substantial sum, this is insignificant relative to the costs of the nuclear warfare and space exploration programs that depend on the existence of two of the colonies. It is also significant that the space and nuclear programs were forced to their present sites after independence in Algeria, a disconcerting domino effect for France that discourages further decolonization. Réunion too may have strategic significance for surveillance of the 'crude oil route' in the Indian Ocean (Schwarzbeck 1984:47) and for access to the substantial French Southern and Antarctic lands, which have their own strategic and military significance, with Kerguelen sometimes being contemplated as a nuclear test-site after Mururoa. Mayotte has a valuable port. The size of French Polynesia gives it wide strategic significance in the 'ocean of the future', hence the limited international pressure on France in this area. Proposals for a new airport and port developments in Noumea, which would make it the largest naval base in the island Pacific after the American bases in the Philippines and Hawaii, emphasize New Caledonia's strategic location in the southwest Pacific and its support role
for French Polynesia. Other DOM-TOMs, like Wallis and Futuna, without an obvious contemporary strategic significance, may nevertheless play a minor contemporary role and a greater future role in France's strong desire to maintain a global presence. France has thus sought to maintain an influence on global affairs, at a time when the United States and the Soviet Union have also attempted to extend their influence, though other hitherto comparable European powers, notably Great Britain, have seen their own influence decline. In the Caribbean, Martinique and Guadeloupe are seen to be between Cuban and American dominance; in the Pacific, New Caledonia is perceived as caught between the Soviet Union and Australia. Though current French economic interests are not served by the retention of these 'consumer colonies', the cost is small compared with the perceived strategic advantages.

French overseas aid is heavily concentrated on the DOM-TOMs which receive 40 per cent of all aid (Table 22), and to a lesser extent on former French colonies. By falling below the global aid levels of some other comparable world powers France can finance the DOM-TOMs and concentrate its overseas assistance on colonies from which the 'leakage' to France in the private sector is very high. A very high proportion of the public money spent in the DOM-TOMs, perhaps as high as 90 per cent in the smallest states like French Guiana (Schwarzbeck 1984:24) and Wallis and Futuna, returns to France in the private sector. The real costs of maintaining the DOM-TOMs are thus very small.

Only in the case of New Caledonia are there obvious economic advantages to the DOM-TOMs, though mineral production is currently only barely economic and little other income is generated there. Even before the nickel boom, 'considering the statistics New Caledonia occupies a privileged place amongst the TOMs' (Anovat Ataba 1984:146). Much has therefore been made of the value of the economic resources of New Caledonia, primarily its mineral resources on land (nickel, chromite and cobalt) and, more recently, the potential mineral wealth (manganese nodules) and fisheries of the 200-mile exclusive economic zone. Though French Polynesia provides a much greater exclusive economic zone its economic potential appears slight, as is that of Wallis and Futuna, and the economic argument for a French colonial presence in the Pacific is exceptionally weak. French Guiana too may generate wealth in the future, but the prospects are limited, and everywhere the benefits of the 200 mile zone are at best elusive and distant. France has certainly not retained the DOM-TOMs for economic reasons; Pierre Messmer claimed with more widespread validity, 'it is not material interests which tie Réunion to the Métropole, it is a political, human, physical and spiritual unit. Réunion is France in the Indian Ocean' (Guillebaud 1976:25). However economic goals give sustained credibility to the necessity for a French presence; as Dijoud explained in 1981:
Table 22  French aid to the DOM-TOMs, 1978-80 (mean) (US$ million)

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<td>5.0</td>
<td>421.6</td>
<td>810.7</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<td>171.0</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>131.3</td>
<td>875.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallis and Futuna</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>610.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total TOM</strong></td>
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<td>-</td>
<td><strong>8.6</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total DOM-TOM</strong></td>
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<td><strong>12.9</strong></td>
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<td>-</td>
<td><strong>40.3</strong></td>
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Why disguise the fact that our national interest is to stay in the Pacific? Thanks to our territories and their zones of sovereignty, France has the third largest maritime economic zone in the world. The core of humanity's hope lies in the sea and under the sea. What's more, the major powers of the 21st century are to be found around the Pacific: the United States, the USSR, Japan, China, Indonesia and so on. So it's natural that France should be there (PIM April 1981:15).

Natural or not, economic interests reinforce strategic interests. Beyond this the French presence is a mixture of intangible influences: myths of empire cherished by the French educational system but especially the vision of at least a thin line of French culture, religion, technology and language encircling and civilizing the globe.

In the future, strategic issues are likely to grow more complex. China currently has no role in the South Pacific and there is no reason to suppose that the superpowers will reduce their interest. In the economic arena Japan plays a growing role and, in political terms, the independent micro-states have voting rights at the United Nations that have enabled them to be discovered by countries like Greece and Israel (and also the Palestinian Liberation Organization) anxious for support in New York. As an established colonial power France will seek to maintain its role and, in concert with the independence movement, New Caledonia's strategic and economic importance to France has grown dramatically since 1984. Virtually unknown in France until then New Caledonia has quickly become a key strategic centre for the Pacific, a major pivot in France's global strategy and a potential source of terrestrial and marine resources. Although French politicians glowingly discuss the strategic and economic significance of the DOM-TOMs, they do this almost solely in the context of avoiding decolonization. Almost all arguments for the retention of New Caledonia 'in the bosom of France', have been couched in metropolitan terms, with the New Caledonian population, black or white, being no more than bystanders. A French lawyer, Martinez, neatly summarizes this perspective: 'Whatever legitimate aspirations some of the 61,870 Melanesians have, the France of the future (la France millénaire) cannot compromise its destiny as a great power to satisfy them' (Martinez 1985b:209). Though not the official perspective its naked vision strongly informs that perspective.

For Great Britain and most other European imperial powers the era of decolonization has essentially drawn to an end; Hong Kong reluctantly draws closer to China, Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands implacably oppose change and other tiny territories seek the maintenance of the status quo. For the United States distant islands have become legally incorporated and also converted into 'consumer colonies' where strategic interests would certainly
squash the improbable emergence of independence movements. France too has used the same formula, incorporating its distant islands by changing their status from colony to department or territory, so that only Britain and the Netherlands formally retain colonies. In a world now largely without colonies New Caledonia stands alone as a discrete territory where a majority of the historic indigenous population demand independence and seek the end of their colonial status.
Chapter 16

The choice of a future

A few places have been separated from France. By political mistake... often after defeats.... There have even been losses from Realpolitik. Saddest of all, Algeria. The grief. But in a thousand years there has never been a loss through ideology. It has taken until 1984, and the days after 18 November, for that to occur in New Caledonia. As if France, assembled behind the sacred banner of St. Denis, would stop at Thio in front of the tee-shirt of Eloi Machoro. Evidently unacceptable. The heritage of the Bourbons cannot be ended in buffoonery, or France's heroic exploits in a closed ideology (Martinez 1985a:xii).

From the moment that claims to sovereignty are expressed by an authentic people they can only be achieved through independence (Edgard Pisani, 7 January 1985)... I know of no territory where 80 per cent of the indigenous population support independence that has not achieved it (Edgard Pisani, 3 October 1985).

The events of the nineteenth century are of extraordinary significance in contemporary New Caledonia. French annexation, the early nickel rush, agricultural colonization by free settlers and convicts, the violent dispossession of Melanesians and their confinement in reservations, where their native numbers declined, combined by the end of that century to produce an economy and society that had already taken on a structure not very different from that of today. Though the slogan 'Atai, Machoro: the same struggle' is partly rhetoric, the reality is the centrality of land in the struggle against colonialism and for independence. The 1878 revolt, through which Atai progressed from man to martyr to myth, was dramatic and durable evidence of the strength of opposition to colonial dispossession. Nowhere else in the smaller Pacific islands was there so much land alienated or so much violence on the colonial frontier. Where land was forcibly acquired in the same manner, in the larger settler colonies of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa or the United States, there were stark parallels both in the brave and skilled resistance against sometimes superior numbers, resources, arms and organization and, ultimately and more poignantly, in cowed
submission to colonial rule. For a small colony violent resistance was unusually sustained; the desperate attempts of a population without any other legitimate means of asserting their rights and their identity. Ultimately widespread revolt was a failure; the colonists were too powerful and traditional conflicts and rivalries prevented widespread alliances, in part because many Melanesians had something to gain from the colonizing power. As elsewhere, and in particular the Marquesas, 'in resistance they never forgot their own divisions... in their resistance they never found the institutional means to unite' (Dening 1980:286). Vanquished by 1971, Melanesians achieved a measure of acquiescence and accommodation and for more than half a century unity and the nationalist dream lay dormant.

After suppression, French colonial policy was directed towards assimilation, to making New Caledonia a part of France in the South Pacific rather than a colony ruled by itinerant administrators. In practice the 'waltz of the governors' and racial attitudes ensured that New Caledonia was a colony and remained so in name until the Second World War and beyond that in practice. Moreover the confinement of Melanesians to reservations ensured not only that assimilation was totally impossible as, like Maoris and Aboriginals, 'they were isolated from the white working class by geography, occupations, culture and political status' (Denoon 1983:190) until the post-war repeal of the Indigénat, but also that a vast legacy of resentment was constructed. Even in isolation the Melanesian social order inexorably changed. In this transformation submission was inevitable as Melanesian resources dwindled, through legislation and renewed settlement, and wage employment became a new resource. The nature of response to colonialism moved from almost wholesale opposition to the colonial presence to a later demand for participation and power within the colonial structure. Until far into the present century only accommodation to colonial power was possible, though some Melanesians achieved political power and a degree of material wealth. Finally, the response was directed towards control of the whole political economy.

Minimal colonial expenditure, among other factors, limited the entry of rural Melanesians into the education system, and the broad view of assimilation, which in the post-war era denied the existence of differences between racial groups, meant that there were no policies of 'localization' because all French citizens were equal under the law. Entry of Melanesians into the public service was as restricted as that of indigenous people in other French colonies. Such fine legal principles also extended to the land, where special rights for the first occupants were denied; land reforms, responding only to economic issues, were invariably too little and too late. Unidirectional assimilation could not accommodate Melanesian attitudes to land; Melanesian cultures and languages were never accorded virtues and had nothing to contribute to the colonial system: a legacy of both racism and
the early assumption that the Melanesian population would eventually disappear. The pursuit of assimilation was meaningless when the goal of assimilation was the dream of one race. In this perspective the firmest proof of assimilation is the growth of a métis society, hence liberals, conscious of the need to develop a harmonious, multi-racial and broadly egalitarian society, have strenuously but unsuccessfully pointed to its existence.

In the European world of Noumea, where the virtues of assimilation and a multi-racial society are loudly proclaimed by the very people who reject such ideas in practice, the 'real Melanesians' are those who have entered the modern employment sector and apparently escaped the confines of tradition. Supporters of the FLNKS are automatically discounted for their misguided views, a result of imperfect assimilation, as are those who apparently remain bound by coutume and tied to an archaic agricultural economy. Despite conscious attempts to increase the visibility of Melanesians in New Caledonia the media present a picture of an urban society where Europeans predominate; most news in Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes comes from Noumea but, through a focus on trivia, whether tennis matches or SLN medal presentations, multi-racial society is emphasized. Melanesian rural life is without interest, other than as curiosity or through rural folk being the passive and homogeneous recipients of the technical expertise of a liberal, benevolent French society. Focusing solely on FLNKS disruption, the historical, political and philosophical content of Kanak nationalism is depoliticized by its omission leaving the FLNKS as 'a small, unrepresentative extremist minority which manipulates the cowed, passive pro-French Melanesian majority through force and intimidation and is itself subject to sinister outside influences' (Douglas 1985:24) hence with no valid claims of its own. FLNKS representatives are merely 'terrorists' and, in Kanak demonstrations, stress is placed on the criminality of the participants, the insanity of the events and the solely disruptive goals that pose a threat to 'normal' people; right wing violence occurs only in response to Kanak provocation and is thus accorded little publicity. The dominance of one conservative newspaper, and its smaller predecessors over several decades (Thompson and Adloff 1971:504-5; Dornoy 1984:232-6), and minimal contact between Europeans and Melanesians, has reinforced the patronizing view of Melanesians as backward but, through education and urban employment, moving into a modern French environment of a richness and splendour wholly absent from rural life.

Incomplete assimilation left a legacy of great uncertainty, an anxious search for status in the Melanesian (or European) environment, and an inheritance of conflict. Already historically divided by geography and language, European contact brought new divisions of religion, language and culture. The failure of assimilation meant that, even a decade ago, 'white and black gaze at each other across a vast chasm' (McTaggart 1976:195). Although
that chasm has subsequently yawned even deeper, many Melanesians have crossed it or found themselves uncomfortably straddled between sides. Yet even now, 'there are no individual Kanaks. Each person is but a strand in a spider's web of family relationships, bound together by traditional obligations - the sharing of goods, hospitality, gifts and services' (Métais 1985). Nonetheless a small Melanesian bourgeoisie has emerged, acculturated through western education, employed at high wages by French companies or the bureaucracy and sometimes irritated by the traditional obligations that continue to bind them loosely into a seemingly immutable order. Other Melanesians have found themselves marginalized by two conflicting societies with no real concept of their own identity.

Despite the belatedly liberal education system and long history of contact between Europeans and Melanesians the separateness of the two racial groups is striking. The two major races interact at work, but primarily in a structured superior-subordinate relationship rather than as colleagues; it is exceptional for Europeans to be in an inferior position to Melanesians. In the social world, despite the constant evidence of intermarriage, inter-racial contacts are limited and it is becoming rarer to observe Melanesians and Europeans in conversation together. Indeed the influence of self-fulfilling prophecy on behaviour is apparent: 'Ask yourself what would happen to your own personality if you heard it said over and over again that you were lazy, a simple child of nature and had inferior blood' (Allport 1958:7-8). Eventual Melanesian recognition of themselves as effectively permanent outsiders, peripheral to the colonial society, economy and bureaucratic system but immersed in and subordinate to that world, enabled an assertion of their own view of themselves as human beings with rights, dignity and the potential to take power in their own land, and hence able to assert the nature of a distinctive Melanesian identity (cf. Tjibaou 1981). Incomplete assimilation ensured the genesis of nationalism. The nationalist movement in New Caledonia has been largely led by intellectuals, men (and women) who broadly accept a western world view of western forms of political organization, rather than traditional or religious leaders who played a greater role in the past. In practice these divisions, as in the case of Tjibaou, are not always easy to distinguish. Nonetheless the present nationalist leaders are to a significant extent defending the virtues of an old order to which they were bound, and this old order and especially the relationship between land and people legitimates the struggle; similarly, but in distinct contrast, striving for a better accommodation with the global political system also legitimates the struggle. The emergence of nationalist intellectuals in other French colonies has been vividly described by Frantz Fanon (1968) and Albert Memmi (1965); initial fascination with western life and a yearning for assimilation, frustrated by the recognition that such hopes cannot
be fulfilled, leads to rediscovery of traditional cultures and a conversion to a culture of resistance.

Melanesian societies and much of what is valued in traditional Melanesian life remain: a sense of community in association with a particular tract of land, shared beliefs and values, a rough equality of material conditions, direct and multifaceted relations between members of a community, reciprocity and a significant degree of community control over the means of production. Such values, and virtues, that have enabled localized autonomy and self-reliance, are simply not transferable into the modern world. As much as anything this is a question of scale, though the disappointments of Opération Café demonstrate that technical rationality cannot wholly displace traditional world views, methods of decision-making and rhythms of life. Nationalist sentiment has grown through the inevitable failure of assimilation and the attendant growth to maturity of a society with its own identity, in terms of common ancestry, related languages and distinctive cultural and economic structures. In time this culminated in the demand that, as elsewhere in Melanesia, nation and state should coincide, the only means of giving true and full expression to national sentiments. The pressures of the French colonial system have created a nation where one had never existed before. The barest fragments of this were apparent at the time of Atai’s rebellion, and the memory and glorification of this century-old rebellion, allied to recent disappointments and frustrations, have forged a widespread awareness of a common political destiny. Despite contemporary differences within the FLNKS, the separation of the LKS and Melanesian support for France, the desire to mobilize resources against French colonialism has created a unity and consciousness of New Caledonia or Kanaky quite different from other parts of Melanesia where centrifugal forces are often more vivid. Nationalism engendered the nation (cf. Gellner 1983), returned tradition to Melanesians and provided an identity in an alien world.

A settler colony

The failure of the Melanesian population to either die out without honour or remembrance, or to become assimilated into the dominant European society, emphasized that New Caledonia was a settler colony with European settlers and Melanesian natives in roughly equal numbers. New Caledonia and Fiji are the only parts of the island South Pacific where the historic indigenous population has become a minority. Fiji, with a majority Indian population, achieved independence early but the demographic history of New Caledonia, where Europeans were dominant, especially in Noumea, resulted in it becoming more like New Zealand or Australia rather than like the independent states of Melanesia. This even population balance has stimulated an
obsession with the arithmetic of racial demography, policies to
stimulate selective immigration, greater social cohesion within
the European and Melanesian communities (with those Europeans and
Melanesians who supported 'the wrong side' being the targets of
vulgar opposition) and a search for precedents and parallels
with this exceptional situation. The obsession is well founded.
The most vocal and effective opponents to every phase and case of
global decolonization have invariably been the European residents
of the colonial empires; the racial composition of colonies, a
function of the experience of settlement, has thus exerted a
critical influence on decolonization. Where there is no real
distinction between 'colonizer' and 'colonized' (as in Réunion or
Bermuda), or colonizers overwhelmingly dominate the colonized (as
in North America or Australia), pressure for decolonization is
necessarily muted or even absent. In every DOM-TOM, except the
two most loyally French, St Pierre and Miquelon and Wallis and
Futuna, racial issues cloud politics though only in New Caledonia
have they become acute.

In earlier times the first Melanesian politicians, such as
Pidjot, and Europeans within the UC, such as Lenormand and Aifa,
were opposed to independence primarily because Melanesians were a
minority. It was left to later politicians, radicalized by events
elsewhere, to stress that nationalism was more important than mere
numbers; older Melanesians in the RPCR, such as Parawi-Reybas and
Boewa, still concern themselves with numbers (Colombani 1985:151),
but for Kanaks the struggle had moved beyond this.

It is the central fact of the minority claiming independence
that lifts the New Caledonia decolonising process out of the
ordinary and makes it a process with potentially enormous
implications. The Kanaks are making a moral and political
challenge to the definition of democracy as simple majority
rule. They are saying that sovereign independence can be as
much the right of a minority as of a majority. It is what
some Maori and Aboriginal groups have been saying for years.
The Kanaks are a much larger minority in New Caledonia than
the Maoris or Aborigines are in their countries but the
principle is identical (Wright 1985:13).

For those who oppose independence numbers are critical, with
elections constantly seen as referendums, alongside a Pyrrhic
pride attached to the fact that European settlement of New
Caledonia did not wipe out the Melanesian population. When
'settlers' are of several generations residence and New Caledonia
is their only home, the question of numbers acquires primary
importance.

Although Melanesians are only marginally a minority in New
Caledonia this has not prevented their claims being ridiculed as
comparable with those of other minorities in quite different
historical circumstances, such as Blacks in the United States
(Daniel 1984), or even, 'under different skies America has not been handed back to the Redskins or Israel to the Philistines' (Agostini 1985:93). Despite the goal of assimilation there is wide recognition that it has not been achieved but that Melanesians remain a distinct minority group. Pointed references are made to the repression of Aboriginals and Maoris to highlight French achievements in New Caledonia, though one outsider has suggested that New Zealand 'has constructed a genuine multi-racial society' (Gomane 1985:433) that might yet be a model for New Caledonia. Assimilation in New Zealand, where ethnic ratios are more like those of New Caledonia, is almost as conspicuous by its absence as in New Caledonia. Maori attachment to the land remains strong and European politicians interpret Maori beliefs, ideals and objectives in their own monocultural terms of reference and hence dismiss them as quaint, unrealistic and problematic or, worst of all, with indifference (Douglas 1984). A minority of Maori activists continue to demand that Europeans 'must hand leadership of the country back to the 12 per cent Maori minority or go back where they came from' (Sydney Morning Herald 3 October 1985). It is this situation that provokes greatest recognition in New Caledonia where the visit of the New Zealand Prime Minister, David Lange, in October 1984, enabled Les Nouvelles-Calédoniennes to ridicule the thought of recognizing the exclusive rights of Maoris, even if they grew to 20 per cent of the population by the end of the century (NC 6 October 1984). The goal of assimilation has been equally elusive in Australia though that conclusion is rarely drawn; the cultural claims that continue to be made in New Zealand, Australia and elsewhere, and the furore over the restoration of land rights to Australian Aboriginals, demonstrate that tiny minorities may often be ignored and excluded but rarely assimilated.

As in other settler colonies perceptions of the threat from an ethnically different group have welded together groups that might elsewhere have been divided. In Algeria Italians, Maltese and others rioted together for Algérie Française (Kahler 1984:25). In New Caledonia Italians, Asians, the pieds-noirs and even a handful of Australians share similar political ideas and aspirations. Moreover Polynesians, whether from French Polynesia, or from Wallis and Futuna, share these aspirations and have rarely been tempted to cast their lot in with Melanesian indépendantistes; this is indeed a colonisation noire where the most recent migrants share the politics and policies of European colonists. Ethnic divisions between recent settlers have been blurred by contemporary politics just as divisions between Melanesian societies have been glossed over.

Not only have ethnic divisions between a wide variety of settlers become blurred but open class divisions have effectively disappeared within colonial society. The early years of the UC were partly an attempt to create a broadly socialist society among small farmers and the white working-class; after early success
this petered out with Melanesians coming to dominate the UC and Europeans moving into the FNSC which was effectively extinguished in November 1984 through further polarization and overwhelming European support for the RPCR. Elsewhere, in Northern Ireland the most fervent die-hards in the Unionist party have been from the working-class; in Algeria those who might, from their social and economic status, have been expected to be socialists or communists were utter reactionaries (Kahler 1984:26). So too are the Caldoches of New Caledonia, especially the petits blancs, who have everything to gain by demanding that superior status be accorded primarily on the basis of colour, a status that could best be achieved in a colony.

Kanaks have drawn the most acute parallels with relatively familiar Algeria, stressing the rights of a colonized people, the maintenance of an oppressive French colonial system and, more optimistically, pointing to the victors in the Algerian war. Hnalaine Uregei, though more fond of the Algerian parallel, has also emphasized that Kanaks do not want to be the Palestinians of the Pacific. Opponents of independence have reluctantly drawn the same conclusions but noted that Europeans were a minority in Algeria, that Algeria is a large country capable of a more self-reliant independence and that in New Caledonia almost all the population have Christianity in common. Pisani concluded that comparisons between Algeria and New Caledonia constituted 'the most pernicious distortions' since Kanaks 'know that they need France to ensure future development' (Pisani 1985).

At one time or another the search for parallels and precedents for New Caledonia has drawn virtually every divided state and cultural minority into the debate. Though South Africa, Sri Lanka, Lebanon and Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) have all been considered the greatest similarities may well be with Israel, Cyprus and Northern Ireland. In each of these three, population surveys of broadly equal numbers are divided by some combination of ethnicity, language, culture (especially religion) and political affiliation to a distant power. Violence and intransigence have heightened the similarities between New Caledonia and these plural or 'fragment' societies (Kahler 1984:25); all are, or were, settler colonies. Fiji is the only regional parallel that has been suggested (e.g. Guiart, 1983a) because of the roughly similar balance between two major ethnic groups, one of which is composed of descendants of recent settlers, though in Fiji the historic residents have achieved independence and retained control of land and power. Edgard Pisani saw Fiji (and also Malaysia) as a possible model for a future New Caledonia, where Europeans would obtain long-term leases of land from Melanesian owners (Le Monde, 18 March 1985). Conservatives have opposed the possibility of New Caledonia becoming like Fiji, because of the constitutional system, which has given a numerical majority, the Indians, a restricted role in the principal national institutions (Zeldine 1980:19-20).
However, the closest parallels are almost certainly with Northern Ireland. Both places are 'fragment' societies, divided by culture, politics, economics and demography, where a settler majority has partly displaced long-term residents. Pluralism has produced mutual insecurity, a search for external political support, elections fought over one abiding issue and the extinction of the middle ground in political life. The majority expresses its effusive commitment to a distant state but is unwilling to accept most decisions of that government that affect it without its own specific consent. If structures are similar so the problems in achieving solutions are also similar. Consensus has long been impossible and divisions have intensified, the legitimacy of the controlling state is disputed, compromise is perceived as a gain to one group by the other, there is no agreement on fundamental aspects of democratic government (such as the value of a vote) and the weight of historical precedent and constitutional structures stifle discussion of new alternatives (cf. Mitchell 1979; Boyle and Hadden 1985). Strong similarities with Northern Ireland and other 'fragment' societies, where settlers are neither a small minority or a large majority, offer violent, depressing but incontrovertible precedents for New Caledonia. The intractable nature of complex and wide-ranging issues, in every case focused around land and demography, and with inequalities at the heart of the economic structure, pose massive problems for constitutional solutions. Where governments are distant, the temptation to ignore problems, avoid intervention and postpone decision-making has proved irresistible. Available parallels offer gloomy precedents.

Through effective partition, with a European urban society and a rural Melanesian society, New Caledonia has avoided some of the infringements of liberties associated with conditions of threat either from below, or from outside. New Caledonia broadly lies between the situation where, in plural states, either 'the majority suppresses the minority and the minority, in order to survive, takes undemocratic action, as in Northern Ireland [and] Cyprus', or 'the majority of the population and the minority are almost equal from a demographic point of view. Every attempt to create harmony between them usually fails and a solution lies in the direction of federal structure' (Soffer 1983:83). The establishment of Regional Councils, the most recent manifestation of the old colonial policy of divide and rule (cf. Kahler 1984:38) but in conflict with French historical predispositions to a unitary, centralized and indivisible state, was one attempt to manipulate the plural society and defer a political solution to an intractable problem. The French presence outside the Noumea region is now, in some respects, little more than symbolic but Melanesian control of almost all the land area of New Caledonia, despite occasional vague Kanak threats to water or power supplies, scarcely affects any French economic and political interests of a local or international nature. Kanak gains from the federal structure have been tiny. The demands of a minority group cannot
be met by federation but only by destroying the existing political system.

Caldoche anxiety to retain the colonial status quo stems partly from economic insecurity though, more often, from the higher incomes and status that can be obtained in New Caledonia compared with their places of origin. These issues are as relevant to Asians and Polynesians as to Europeans. Where a high proportion of those incomes comes from the public sector and where most 'settlers' were born in New Caledonia, the perceived threat of independence to life-style and livelihood is greater. Reactions in opposition to an independent state, or the demands of Melanesians for a more equal participation in the economy, have partly retained the old perspective that unequal rewards were the result of whites being abler and more hard-working and that a radical shift of power would destroy the economic structure, as inexperienced, less motivated politicians ran the affairs of state. This was no mere manufacturing of slogans but the expression of decades of contact with the myth of white supremacy, enhanced by the constant parading of examples of cupidity and mismanagement in neighbouring independent states. Nor was it concerned only with mismanagement but a genuine and realistic concern that French aid would dwindle away, taxes would rise, and the profitability and pleasure of colonial life would disappear. Like the Jews in Israel, the Caldoches have 'hammered out an illusory ideology in which they have sacrificed themselves as well as a great deal of effort and many human lives' (Rodinson 1973:94). Many are descendants of migrants from a time when nationalism was a wholly European phenomenon and colonial endeavours were beyond reproach. In New Caledonia France is almost always 'metropolitan France' even among Melanesians; France is emphatically not viewed as a colonial power but is the legitimate state.

Conservative stress on an indivisible France, its national integrity and constitutional unity, ensures that struggles for independence in New Caledonia are described as those of secessionists and separatists and not those of nationalists or indépendantistes. In response to the FLNKS, it is the 'socialist' element that is emphasized and exaggerated rather than the 'national liberation' element which is ignored. In the French parliament an RPR(F) deputy, Didier Julia, stressed 'If you take a position against democracy, against the constitution so that power is given to a small minority supported by armed gangs, you will discover "national socialism" and we will not accept that' (NC 21 December 1984). In this spirit Tjibaou was prosecuted for threatening the integrity of France. Beyond this the FLNKS are not recognized as representatives of the Melanesian people, which they patently are, on the assumption that if the FLNKS could be ignored, and so marginalized, their influence would disappear.
The costs of maintaining colonies are born solely by the imperial power. Business and manufacturing interests, free to come and go, can only gain from the existence of a larger market (or source of labour or raw materials) that the 'consumer colonies' provide. Though their interests are served by the maintenance of colonies, there is little evidence of French commercial pressures on political decisions (which is not to say that they have not existed). Over the past three decades, as European economies have restructured, the pattern of global trade has increasingly been between the major world powers of the north and not between imperial powers and their past or present empires. The powerful economic interests in New Caledonia, with the substantial exceptions of the SLN and the banks, have limited ties to France. The extent of French expenditure in New Caledonia gives the commercial sector in New Caledonia seemingly strong dependence on the maintenance of that expenditure. However, if those interests can be maintained in an independent Kanaky, in a neo-colonial environment, then business interests, unlike agricultural settlers, may be the most conciliatory towards independence, as they were in Zimbabwe (cf. Kahler 1984:312-15). Scattered evidence suggests that even in the difficult circumstances of 1985, where group loyalty was most extreme, some sectors of the business community and also some settlers, would have welcomed an early independence, on the assumption that their businesses would have been maintained in the post-colonial era and profitability would increase in conditions of peace and security (Chapter 14). That those sectors of the business community were predominantly rural suggests that they were less concerned with the rhetoric of either indépendantistes or their more reactionary opponents but with the reality of their own experiences and contacts. In some of those areas with the greatest contact with Melanesians there was greater optimism over the economic prospects of an independent Kanaky. More widespread fear and uncertainty demand some assessment of what the social and economic future of an independent Kanaky would actually be.

An independent Kanaky: revolution or evolution?

The demand for independence has been associated with such themes as cultural and ethnic identity, uniqueness, minority status, the desire for national freedom and the right to independence: the hope of achieving the restoration of a 'degraded' community to its rightful status, dignity and authority. In these demands material goals have played no real part hence policies for the development of an independent Kanaky have been given little consideration. There is no revolutionary ideology; expressions of commitment to 'socialism' are essentially the stimulation of a revolutionary spirit and fervour rather than a socialist practice that is unknown in the Pacific. To rebel is not to be revolutionary. Few Melanesians have ever visited a 'socialist' country, or been inspired or corrupted in radical
university courses; 'socialism' is little more than a rejection of colonial capitalism. The ambivalence and uncertainty of the FLNKS towards socialism was well expressed by Hnalaine Uregei in a speech to the Annual Conference of the Socialist Workers Party in Sydney in December 1984:

Socialism, the alternative to colonial exploitation, is currently seen by many in FLNKS as doubtful and still a question to be determined. However we are not struggling for independence to be another banana republic; we must have political and economic independence. Land is crucial to this. Somewhere between the social democracy of France and the socialism of Cuba there must be a small spot for us. There will be much suffering before imperialism is removed, a gradual process of eradicating export-import imbalances. We are not naive. France could wipe out our monetary system and we can't move out of the franc monetary zone, but remaining in it ensures staying under the dominance of French capitalism. New Caledonia is doomed to pass through the structure of neo-colonialism. Socialism must emerge from our history and traditions, the collective memory of workers exploited by capitalism.

Uregei, a prominent unionist, was addressing a primarily socialist gathering, hence this limited and conditional support for a socialist future. For Tjibaou: 'our socialism is not written down. We are in the process of writing it. It does not refer back to anyone, to any existing political doctrine. To define it negatively it is the rejection of the exploitation of our patrimony by a handful of settlers' (Tjibaou 1985b:144). Kanak socialism is in fact a broadly-based mixture of populism and nationalism partly based on the rejection of the contemporary structure of development and partly on an idealized vision of an imaginary past and an anticipated future.

Ignoring and ridiculing Kanak aspirations within New Caledonia had the dual purpose of ensuring that they remain an unknown quantity and therefore suspect. Socialism, anathema in conservative Noumea, was constantly embroidered with unreality; even François Doumenge, once France's most distinguished Pacific geographer, could write that 'the real New Caledonian scenario is to purify Kanak land from white pollution and return to one's origins through a socialist myth which implies the destruction of Noumea and the departure of its citizens (as in Khmer Rouge Kampuchea)' (Doumenge 1985:22). A related concern was over the extent of 'the return to rural life' to 'Melanesian Vichyism: tribe, tradition and taro' (Martinez 1985b:185) following both conscious choice and the deliberate destruction of the modern economy. Similar views are commonplace in Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes. While much distortion is deliberate, uncertainty over socialism, anathema to most Caldoches, and the loss of
economic ties with France reinforced conservative opposition to Melanesian nationalism.

Central to nationalist aspirations are Kanak rights; indeed nationalism is essentially a theory of political legitimacy which requires that ethnic boundaries do not cut across political ones (Gellner 1983:3). Nationalism can only develop under conditions of greater homogeneity, where regional and tribal differences are welded together; in New Caledonia this fusion was relatively easy, partly because of a form of colonialism that engendered opposition and contributed to a common history, and partly because of more limited regional distinctiveness than elsewhere in Melanesia. Nonetheless the number of language groups, and their separate identities and traditions, have hindered the emergence of ethnic identity; this is most apparent in the Loyalty Islands, excluded by geography and the retention of all Melanesian land from a common history, and in the existence of some largely regional parties, like FULK and the UPM, without distinctive ideologies. Race thus becomes one important thread in the construction of unity, with the FLNKS using the racial dimension to heighten its appeal to all Melanesians, rather than in its being a racist movement in opposition to other ethnic groups; colour emphasizes similarity in opposition to the colonial state, helps dissolve local fragmentation and encourage status reversal and strength in numbers (cf. Smith 1982:99-105). The stress on 'Kanak' within the FLNKS is essential to the struggle for legitimacy and the restitution of tradition, rather than the racism that its conservative critics elaborate upon.

It was not until 1982 that, even in the loosest way, Melanesians were actually contemplating the nature of an independent New Caledonia and, even then, most of the debate revolved around who would be citizens in the new state. In February 1982 Tjibaou spoke of economic issues:

We are also actively considering the question of economic decolonisation, the decolonisation of the economy... When we speak of Socialist Kanak Independence we want institutions which reflect the Melanesian approach to their heritage, their property and their resources. Equally there is a Melanesian approach to the management of their patrimony, to small or medium-sized enterprises, and there is a Melanesian way of viewing the distribution of work, welfare, social services and environment so that the country may have a soul which comes from itself and not elsewhere. There is a lot to be done to decolonise the minds of the people (PIM April 1982:36-7).

But then the real issue was achieving independence. Focus on political objectives, and divisions within the FLNKS, have prevented the formulation of a social and economic development program for Kanaky. The differences that have seen PALIKA operate
outside the FI and the LKS dissociate themselves from the FLNKS, reflect different attitudes to social and economic issues, as well as to political strategy. Differences between Melanesians, and between indépendantistes, are as important as between themselves and Europeans. Those differences and the lack of a cohesive strategy ensure that approaches to economic change are broadly conservative.

As in other nationalist movements, and perhaps even in Atai's struggle a century earlier, there is a simultaneous appeal to both progress and tradition, modernity and a 'Melanesian way' combined, and there are rapid switches in discourse from pragmatism to idealism. Through tradition, Melanesian identity can be reclaimed and, through modernity, reinvested with vitality and relevance. In this there is necessarily some biblical or even millennial element: 'the image of nationalism is that of restoration and renovation, of return from spiritual exile to the promised land. The past has not been in vain. Out of its sorrow and tragedy the nation has rediscovered itself and seeks its rebirth' (Smith 1982:42). Nationalism thus promised a new social order based on customary legal precepts, in which a better life could be achieved free from European or other alien administration. Tradition is the ideological arm of those who defend a threatened status quo or those who seek to revert to a real or imagined past where 'tradition' prevailed alone.

What is thought to be traditional is of more recent origin than people generally imagine it to be, and represents primarily the conservative instincts of some group threatened with declining social status. Indeed there seems to be nothing which emerges and evolves as quickly as 'tradition' when the need presents itself (Wallerstein 1974:356).

Yet Wallerstein's suggestion is incomplete; tradition can also be a vital and valuable resource for those who support collective action and resist the encroachments of an external authority. Tjibaou quotes a Kanak: 'amidst coutume I am someone; in town I am nothing' (Tjibaou 1985a:1591). In its purest form the revaluation of tradition becomes a delusion; John Peu, former FLNKS spokesman in Australia, has claimed that 'there were no prisons in traditional Melanesia, because there was no theft and no violence. The same will be true of Kanaky' (ABC Radio, 2 December 1985; cf. LKS 1984). But such utopianism and reconstruction of tradition are rare. Nationalist aspirations are not generally sustained by myths of the past and there has been no suggestion that great wealth would follow the deliverance from dependency status or that independence is a panacea. Nonetheless nationalism is

the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society, with mutually substitutable, atomised individuals, held together above all by a shared culture... in place of a previous
complex culture of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves... But this is the very opposite of what nationalism affirms and what nationalists firmly believe. Nationalism usually conquers in the name of a putative folk culture. Its symbolism is drawn from the healthy, pristine, vigorous life of the peasants (Gellner 1983:57).

There is then a blending of the old tribalism, based on social structure, with a new more anonymous nationalism based on shared culture, which partly supercedes tribalism. Resistance to alien authority has resulted in a degree of populism: an anti-urbanism with coutume and agricultural work being invested with positive qualities, as resistance has led to a reaffirmation of Melanesian values. Yet, at the same time, there is no hesitation about developing a new social and political regime with many organizations, innovations and institutions consciously derived from European society. It is an illusion to pretend that Melanesian cultures could ever regain the integrity and self-reliance that they once had; 'the return to tradition is a myth' (Tjibaou 1985a:1601). Many Melanesians, especially those in PALIKA, say nothing of coutume, are distrustful of a past history of social inequalities, and anxious to progress forwards not backwards. There can be no wholesale reversion to tradition, more a transformation through tradition; 'our identity is in front of us' (Tjibaou 1985a:1601).

What such a transformation would entail is necessarily unclear; Melanesian societies are now modernized and wholly different from pre-contact times. Traditional authority is still respected by the young as is the authority of the old. Other customs, such as parental choice of marriage partners, are widely seen as outdated, though male superiority is maintained. Traditional values are more vibrant in the larger, more homogeneous Loyalty Islands and less apparent among the urban employed and school youth (Kohler, Pillon and Wacquant 1984:24-47). Yet, at the same time, Loyalty Islanders have long had better access to urban jobs, high incomes and some degree of modern status. Indeed it is very much out of the uneven development that nationalism has grown; uneven development is regional and socio-economic and, though classes are no more than incipient in Melanesian society, social differentiation is sometimes substantial. At the same time, the fact that the vast majority of Melanesians were subordinate to Europeans, ensured that under colonialism Melanesians themselves were virtually in the process of becoming a class. The conjunction of class and emergent nationalism is basic to the struggle for independence. Such modern divisions cannot be legitimized within old cultural contexts; they therefore create an illusion that consequent tensions and uncertainties can be remedied by granting 'national' independence.
The FLNKS is composed of several parties and includes Europeans and others, whose views and attitudes are sometimes influential. Christianity has also influenced the lives of all Melanesians and the course and structure of the independence movement; Tjibaou, for example, stresses both his Melanesian identity and Christian heritage even though 'the Catholic church in Caledonia is opposed to our struggle' (Tjibaou 1985a:1599). Certainly Christianity has not been transformed into 'liberation theology' (Aldrich 1986). Linguistically Kanaky can only remain francophone (Rivierre 1985) hence two major colonial institutions, language and religion, will be unchanged. Though coutume is a powerful ideological tool its practice is viewed very differently, from those who see any loss of modernity (wages, imported foods, clothes, television, cars and so on) as an unacceptable withdrawal and reversion (cf. Connell 1981a:252), to those who genuinely seek to build a more self-reliant and thus agricultural society, organized according to custom on a more communal and egalitarian basis, and those few who anticipate a genuine 'socialism in one country' solution, with withdrawal from the world capitalist system. Differences are considerable, cutting across a range of conservative and radical parties, united now in the struggle against colonialism, but likely to lead, as in the Melanesian states to the north, to a system that has scarcely broken with the colonial heritage in society, economy or politics.

Opponents of independence, Melanesian and European, reject the claims of tradition, though in different ways. Some claim that Melanesian values have completely disintegrated, an inaccurate perspective that insists that any revival of tradition is impossible. Ukeiwe claimed a contradiction between coutume and its development by an office like the Melanesian Cultural Institute but, more important, noted that from the time of first contact customs had changed under the influence of missions and the administration. Though voting against the establishment of the Institute, Ukeiwe, in the end, expressed his own support and respect for the remaining values of coutume, noting how all Melanesians still lived with its heritage: coutume represents a collection of values of a spiritual and sacred character; when one speaks of coutume it must be done with respect (NC 23 September 1982). Indeed gaining the vote and establishing the UC occurred only 35 years ago. Others, like Joel Mindia, the grand chef of Houailou, reluctant to recognize any virtues in coutume, claimed that 'Melanesians know well that if independence occurs it will not be the beliefs of the ancestors that will prevail, but those of Marx or Lenin... We prefer de Gaulle to Lenin' (NC 4 January 1985). Despite the conservative arguments in support of a multi-racial society, seeking to demonstrate the fusion of cultures, even Ukeiwe, much the most articulate of conservative Melanesians, expressed clearly his own identification with coutume. No Melanesians ultimately denied their distinctiveness.
The principal indication of the different organizational structure that might exist in Kanaky is in the schools and cooperatives that now exist in parts of the countryside. Kanak schools are a definite rejection of a colonial educational system, though, other than a greater respect for Melanesian custom, languages and life, they may not have a real influence on the direction of change. The establishment of a Melanesian education system throughout New Caledonia, divided between many Melanesian language groups and with a majority of the population knowing no Melanesian language, poses massive problems, far beyond those of the Melanesian countries to the north, where education systems broadly remain those inherited from pre-independence days. The objective of Kanak schools to maintain and develop Kanak identity through an emphasis on Kanak language and culture presents real paradoxes (Kohler and Pillon 1982b:79-84; Kohler and Wacquant 1985:1668). To break away from the more technical French educational system would be a massive step; few African countries have successfully developed a more appropriate educational system, even where there is one dominant language, and the school-leaving exam, the baccalauréat, remains 'one of the most powerful fetishes' (Hayter 1966:193) in the education system, though few Melanesians complete it. By contrast appropriate education, through Melanesian languages, is likely to remain an unattainable chimera, though French is now taught as a second language in primary schools in predominantly Melanesian areas.

Cooperatives, on the other hand, have been supported by Melanesians for more than a quarter of a century and have grown in recent years throughout New Caledonia. The independence movement has itself stimulated commercial activities, such as cooperatives and stores, which in turn has led to reflections on the most appropriate form of rural development for the Melanesian environment. Such development strategies would maintain traditional social ties, especially communal ownership of land, oppose renewed tendencies towards individualism, and attempt to prevent the emergence of such situations 'as the formation of peasants, the deterioration of food crop cultivation, and thus food dependency, and uncontrolled rural migration' (Pillon 1985a:1648). Yet in attempting to resolve these problems, some of which have frustrated French administration services, the Melanesian independence parties have run into the same kinds of problems as they faced earlier.

In Caledonia, just like Vanuatu, there have been cooperative stores in the rural areas; in some places there have also been fishing, rice and market garden cooperatives but these cooperatives have often closed or failed to work properly; participation in them declines, suspicions emerge and activity slows to a halt (Pillon 1985a:1649).

Throughout Melanesia cooperatives have gone through these phases and many have been replaced by a more individual form of
production and entrepreneurial activity, just as land tenure, under pressure from long-term cash cropping and population increase, has increasingly moved from a more corporate to a more individual form. In short, throughout the Pacific there has been a movement towards the establishment of both a peasantry and a proletariat, accompanied by the withering of cooperative organization. Continued population growth in Melanesian reserves is likely to encourage further similar changes in Kanaky; the movement towards a more capitalistic organization is seemingly inevitable, even though cooperatives emphasize one area where 'priority must be given to the small and medium-sized enterprises' (Tjibaou 1985b:144) and where a viable communal development is possible. Both Kanak schools and cooperatives combine idealistic and real responses to the problems of colonialism and capitalism; in opposing the present structure they have an important role to play but in an independent Kanaky their role may quite quickly disappear. The practice of development will turn idealism into irrelevance.

Underlying every aspect of independence is land; the restoration of authority to land and the ties between Melanesians and the land. Despite attendant myths and the fervour and directness of land claims the concern is essentially about title rather than about occupation and use of the land. Though some rural land would revert to Melanesian use, and minor migration movements would restore a few Melanesians to their traditional lands, establishment of title would probably be followed by most land being hired out to its present users: those Caldoches who chose to remain as tenants of Melanesian landlords, a wholly capitalist outcome. Though FLNKS policy is currently directed towards granting land rights to other 'victims of history', there are widespread fears among Caldoches that in an independent Kanaky such policies would be changed. Land occupations, continued destruction of the property of rural settlers, resentment over relatively recent Wallisian landownership, and the lack of land rights for non-Melanesian citizens in Vanuatu (cf. Ward 1984a:64) suggest that such fears are not without foundation, and that land issues will be a source of contention for some time. Moreover the necessity to achieve power by constraining notions of universal suffrage ensures both that Caldoches refuse to contemplate any other future than retained territory status and that, as Kanak solidarity increases, such refusal becomes stronger.

If land is crucial to the struggle for independence, it is less crucial to its outcome. Almost a quarter of all Melanesians live in Noumea hence Jean-Pierre Doumenge has argued strongly that 'the economic and social future of Melanesians lies outside the reserves' (Doumenge 1982:449). In a territory dominated by capitalist enterprises, in a region dominated by capitalism, albeit at the periphery of the global economy, where French institutions (missions and schools) dominate a part of social life, it would be surprising if some Melanesians had not found a
substantial and apparently permanent stake in the capitalist system, either in commerce or the bureaucracy. Such men (there are few women among them) have been the epitome of social and economic mobility and have achieved a power, status, privilege and wealth that might have been denied them in the Melanesian world. A few, secure in their positions in a lavishly inflated bureaucracy, are hostile to the independence movement that offers a more uncertain future, and are unwilling to reject the colonial system through which their advancement has been secured. Their presence, even as a Melanesian minority in a European bureaucracy, inevitably serves as one objective for independence: the transfer of positions of authority and power to Melanesians, a genuine localization of the work-force, and no more than bourgeois nationalism. Thus, despite hostility from the independence movement, bourgeois Kanaks are a source of envy and inspiration for many; they, after all, have achieved power and status against the odds.

We live in an artificial manner. Local public servants have salaries like their French counterparts, rather than what is appropriate to our economic infrastructure. Currently, and it is a real problem, the bureaucracy constitutes a model; almost all school-leavers wish to be public servants since this is the most secure (Tjibaou 1983:15).

The most individualistic of Melanesians, indoctrinated and educated to the highest levels of the French education system, provide one future for the evolution of society in New Caledonia or Kanaky.

Independence would be shaped on the backs of these Melanesians, as much as on those of more rural or radical Kanaks, and would be constructed from the existing economy rather than through its radical transformation. That there would be some transformation is inevitable; on the other hand, as one Melanesian explained:

Melanesians have few illusions about independence. Every year the state invests 26 milliard (thousand million) CFP francs for 140,000 people. Tomorrow if we get Independence we'll have to find 50 milliards. The economically active population is only 35% and there are 54,000 school children. How are we going to face it? In our region, agriculture is slowly declining, because it is a mining region. Pensions, insurance benefits, wages and other benefits (such as family allowances) kill agriculture... It is necessary for Melanesians to be integrated into the economy. That is the immediate problem since the consumer society is well established. All our houses are electrified, and we must pay for the electricity. At the time of colonization and traditional authority, society was communal, now it is individual (Kohler and Pillon 1982a:161-3).
Withdrawal from the pattern of consumption that this entails, and from the process of individualization, despite populist ideology, is impossible without some degree of dissatisfaction. Though mining and tourism offer options beyond rural development, a probable reduction in external financial support would demand efforts to revitalize agriculture. Serious problems are currently experienced in independent South Pacific economies that have not given a high priority to rural development. There will be no rural cornucopia, with Melanesians re-establishing a prosperous communal agricultural economy on ancient land, yet the inability of mining to provide substantial employment, and the probability (in an independent state) of the decline of bureaucratic employment, point to a more balanced development, in which agriculture and fisheries have an increased role. Though this would be inevitable for Kanaky, it would constitute a withdrawal from participation in the modernized economy that would be threatening to many.

Agriculture would gain new significance, in large part because of the decline in aid and a withdrawal to self-reliance, rather than idealistic attitudes to agricultural work; that much is apparent to some Kanaks:

The Kanak will always be an agriculturalist. This is why there are often disputes on the reserve for small patches of land. In the capitalist system, the administration, to overcome Kanaks and resolve unemployment problems, first puts Kanaks in a school like the Maisons Familiales Rurales, pretending that modern techniques will double production on the small scraps of land in the reserve... It's true but what's the point of doubling production on tiny patches... Why are Kanaks agriculturalists? Because the word agriculturalist simply puts down Kanaks; they are without money or trade, which is why Kanaks are so often unemployed. Seen from this perspective coffee and forestry development seek to keep them in an inferior position, merely sniffing a few crumbs from the great cake that comes from the good earth (Kohler and Pillon 1982a:169).

While such radical sentiments are relatively rare, the ideas are well known and have not only influenced widespread suspicion of the administration and all its activities (cf. Kohler 1984:138) but engendered pessimism about the real prospects of any other form of development. After all the UC has stressed that 'the development that we seek is above all rural development. Whether Europeans like it or not, the present situation in New Caledonia exists to reconstitute a Kanak countryside' (Avenir Calédonien 855; quoted by Dardelin 1984:135), but that reconstitution would also impose strains on many Melanesians. Indeed widespread coffee cultivation, animal husbandry, cooperatives and wage incomes (some in or close to the reserve) have inevitably and irrevocably introduced key elements of the capitalist economy throughout New
Caledonia that can never be removed or avoided. In the independent Melanesian states to the north capitalist relations of production, perhaps proto-capitalist in an earlier pre-colonial era, have become entrenched under colonialism and ebullient and sometimes overwhelming in the years of independence. There is nothing to suggest that an independent Kanaky could secure another form of economic development.

The future of the SLN and the mining industry, the principal productive sector in the economy, is consequently crucial to the future of Kanaky. Kanak parties long ago called for the nationalization of the mines (Dornoy 1984:150) and every political party in New Caledonia has called for greater territorial control over mining operations. The wish of the SLN to continue mining operations, as long as they remained profitable, has resulted in its being criticized for giving financial support to independence parties, an allegation unlikely to be true and hence proven, although the SLN have naturally attempted to remain on good terms with all local parties: 'opportunism basically motivated the actions of SLN' (Dornoy 1984:152). Although the SLN is regarded by some indépendantistes as 'a pure product of neo-colonialism' (Baumier 1985:23) there is no question that mining would continue (cf. Tjibaou 1985b), almost certainly following renegotiation of mining legislation along the lines of that in Papua New Guinea which gave the independent state a greater share of profits. Kanaky would not have the resources for nationalization. Mine income and employment are too important to be lost, hence the independent state would again be dominated by, and characterized by, this unusual and most extreme form of transnational capitalism.

Unless Kanaky negotiated new mining arrangements with an alternative company, such as INCO, a prospect that is unlikely, the state would remain firmly in France's sphere of interest. Indicative of this is the expressed FLNKS and LKS preference for it to remain a part of the franc zone. As a participant in that zone Kanaky would be assured greater monetary stability, through the benefits of a convertible currency, and perhaps, as is the case with former French colonies in Africa, free circulation of goods throughout the zone, exempt from customs duties, and even a guaranteed quota and price for export products. This would be crucial for nickel, mainly sold to France, and for coffee, which would otherwise almost certainly require subsidies to be competitive at world market prices. The French presence is deeply entrenched at every level in the New Caledonian economy; after a century of almost exclusively French investment, and the development of extensive economic ties between New Caledonia and France, there is little in the history of decolonization elsewhere, and especially in other French colonies, to suggest that these ties and this orientation could be easily broken or redirected.
Though questions remain over the extent to which an avowedly 'socialist' state would favour private investment, as with other former French and Pacific colonies, Kanaky would be likely to welcome all forms of private investment initially through necessity and subsequently through choice. Participation in the franc zone would favour French investment rather than investment from nearer metropolitan countries such as Australia. Although the small size of New Caledonia and its remoteness from France would discourage some forms of investment in an independent state the experience of Vanuatu suggests that French firms are as willing as others to invest capital in potentially profitable enterprises. High wage rates in New Caledonia would however discourage the establishment of any industry oriented to South Pacific regional markets.

The future economy of Kanaky, as perceived by the FLNKS, would thus be virtually unchanged. Tjibaou viewed tourism and agriculture, alongside nickel, as the future key elements in the economy, elements that would be supported by foreign capital. Moreover one of his dreams was to establish an international free port at Nepoui, which might become a major area of investment for Chinese displaced from Hong Kong (Tjibaou 1983:18; cf. Gabriel and Kermel 1985:154), a wholly capitalist enterprise. By contrast the LKS has called for the nationalization of the key sectors of the economy: mines, energy, transport and health, and also tourism, through concern at the neo-colonialism and deculturation involved in tourism, that would lead to 'the destruction of Kanak culture and its folklorization' (LKS 1984). Although the FLNKS have sought power without an economic program there have been similar debates over the extent to which tourism would reduce Melanesian culture to folklore and debase it to become a spectacle, but, in the end, tourism has been supported both as one part of a future economy, where there is current Melanesian participation which could expand considerably, and also in 'enclave conditions like the Club Méditerranée' where 'tourists cannot invade the tribes' (NC 10 November 1983; cf. Tjibaou 1985b). Within the FLNKS however PALIKA has argued that 'tourism profits multinationals and local territory businesses and leaves only crumbs for Kanaks and workers' (Kanak 88, 29 October 1983:7) and even that small Melanesian hotels 'only benefit a minority, whether Kanaks or others, and tend to individualize still more the Kanaks in the tribes' (Kanak 90, 10 December 1983:5). Effectively the FLNKS have called only for greater Melanesian participation in the economy without any structural transformation. There is little radical socialism here. 'We Melanesians are only socialists in terms of the traditional principles of ownership and reciprocity. If you have something it must be shared. We are not opposed to institutions that make profits and benefit the whole society... Currently we lack economic models in every sphere' (Tjibaou 1983:15). These views are based on Tjibaou's concept of traditional life where 'prestige is in giving, giving much and giving widely: the opposite of the capitalist world' (Tjibaou
As Pisaní well recognized, 'the socialism of Monsieur Tjibbaou is a communal socialism, a socialism close to the earth, a socialism based on tribes and clans. It is a kind of cooperative, an economic expression of social realities' (Pisaní 1985), a socialism then that no one need fear. Tjibbaou is not the FLNKS, though he is leader of the UC, much the largest coalition party, and within the FLNKS there are more radical sentiments from individuals (cf. Kohler and Pillon 1982a; Kohler 1984), from the relatively small party PALIKA, and also from the LKS. The expressed principles of the FLNKS are cautious and based on opposition rather than a positive program of reconstruction. Socialism is about reactions and not revolution. Broad-based political coalitions, formed to gain independence, are certain to fragment perhaps before independence is achieved. Both the FI and FLNKS came together, in different alliances, in opposition and in pursuit of a single goal. Achievement of that goal will produce new divisions, as the constituent parties seek different social and economic futures and express diverse philosophical and particularly pragmatic objectives.

The expressed importance that France attaches to the South Pacific region, and French aid to Vanuatu, though not without its problems, suggest that France would provide aid to an independent Kanaky (or at least to a Kanaky that had achieved a negotiated independence). However, bilateral aid is not altruistic and is invariably tied to metropolitan strategic and commercial interests. Continued French interests in French Polynesia would not ensure high aid inputs to (an independent) Kanaky and, as long as France sought to retain French Polynesia as a territory, declining aid to Kanaky might serve as a useful threat to Polynesians. Much of this is in the realm of conjecture; what is probably true is that French financial assistance to Kanaky would be much below present levels and the leeway would not be taken up by other aid donors in the region. This would ensure continued support for the nickel industry and encouragement of private investment.

Beyond the expressed policies and intent of indépendantistes there are two further perspectives on a future Kanaky: the experiences of other former French colonies and the post-independence era elsewhere in the Pacific. Though a number of French colonies came to independence with more radical economic policies than those set forth for Kanaky, their subsequent history has emphasized the extreme difficulties of constructing socialism in single states, beset by internal problems and divisions, external pressures and powerful international economic interests maintained from the colonial era. Similar problems are apparent

1 PALIKA and the LKS share some of the more radical political philosophies in New Caledonia and throughout Melanesia. PALIKA, for example, strongly opposes traditional land tenure systems on the grounds that they produce some clans with little land and others with large areas (Kohler and Pillon 1982a; cf. Gabriel and Kermel 1985).
in Melanesia, despite different colonial heritages, and perhaps the closest parallels are in neighbouring Vanuatu where the nationalist aspirations of Melanesians were almost identical to those in New Caledonia (Bonnemaison 1985a:244). Vanuatu's post-independence economic development can best be characterized as the maintenance and intensification of capitalist forms of development, which remain firmly integrated into external trade relationships with a small number of capitalist countries (primarily Australia). To the extent that there has been a significant change since independence, this change has been the emergence of a national bourgeoisie playing a larger political and economic role; Melanesian socialism is merely a myth (Howard 1983). Despite claims of creating Melanesian socialism in Vanuatu the reality has been continued capitalist development, based on tourism and the commercialization of agriculture, the development of Vanuatu as a tax haven and the introduction of industrialization. Both the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea are pursuing broadly similar development paths, though in both these larger countries the penetration of foreign capital is more substantial than in Vanuatu and there is no pretence of socialist development. Based on these parallels the prospects for an alternative development in an independent Kanaky are extremely limited. In a territory that is already more capitalist than its northern neighbours (crudely measured by the relative dominance of monetary relationships and the slight significance of subsistence agriculture in the economy) the possibilities for restructuring the crucial elements of the economy, mining and tourism, are weak even if a strong commitment existed.

Independence would quickly become capitalist. Indeed the LKS have constantly accused the FLNKS of being 'in the process of preparing capitalist independence' and, for example, not opposed to either Ballande 'a colonialist, trading-post economy' or the ore-loading operations run by Lafleur, to the extent that they have even claimed a de facto alliance between the FLNKS, who would obtain political power, leaving economic power in the hands of Lafleur and others (Le Monde 5 January 1985), though such an alliance appears implausible.

The core of independence sentiments lies simply in the objective of a more Melanesian society and economy, with less dependence on the uncontrollable fluctuations of the global economy. The problems involved in changing the whole trajectory of development are enormous. It is improbable that Kanaky could achieve a significant degree of even financial self-reliance, unless mineral resources prove to be more substantial or valuable than they are now, yet it is capable of moving away from the present massive dependence on aid. The elements of such a policy direction are: agricultural development policies that stress food crop production, increasing concentration on marine resources, energy policies that move further away from non-renewable resources and job decentralization. Self-reliance entails
reducing dependence on imported 'necessities' including foods, oil products, capital equipment and also expertise; this involves changing consumption patterns as well as increasing local productive capacity. Policies would be needed to change life-styles at given income levels, using taxes, price controls, advertising and perhaps rationing and import controls. In short self-reliance entails a more selective approach to external influences of all kinds; in keeping with this approach factors that were previously regarded as 'obstacles' to development, such as traditional customs and Melanesian languages, appear as shields against the expense and inappropriateness of modern consumption styles and technologies (Seers 1977). All this is very fine in theory but theory has a habit of falling short of practice, especially where national income would almost certainly fall dramatically. A strong, probably violent and disruptive legacy of resentment against independence would exist and the ability, unity and determination to carry out radical change are lacking. Even more important, if the population of New Caledonia demand more academic education, wage and salary employment, welfare benefits and other material benefits of modern industrial-type development, political policies that advocate greater self-reliance are doomed to failure.

The combination of rural-urban migration, a rapid rate of urbanization, the emergence of cash cropping (and hence greater value being attached to land) and dependence on imports have firmly moved most Melanesian societies from beyond the limited realm of subsistence organization into fragile dependence on the international monetary economy. The economies of the independent Pacific nations are now extremely open and economic risk has been added to subsistence risk. Competition for scarce resources (alongside rapid population increase, as high in many parts of the Pacific as in any developing country), coupled with a decline in traditional authority, in the face of the adoption of alien legal institutions, have fostered inequality and tension within villages. Integration into a national economy has also emphasized the disparity in living standards between regions, producing secessionist tendencies in richer areas to offset demands from poorer areas for increased shares of national development. Invariably economic decentralization has not paralleled political decentralization and available evidence indicates a general widening of economic disparities within nations (Connell and Curtain 1982). The process of nation-building, dependent in part on the establishment of capitalist relations at an international level, is thus frustrated by fragmentation. The problems that are faced by most developing nations, such as excessive rates of urbanization without industrialization, rapid population growth (here averaging 2.4 per cent per annum in recent years), the erosion of food cultivation at the expense of cash crop cultivation, sometimes inadequate nutrition and health and, in general, increasing dependence on worsening terms of trade, are enhanced in small nations by their inability to diversify their
economies, and especially to provide cash incomes outside the agricultural and administrative sectors, neither of which have much capacity for growth. In the Pacific these problems are further emphasized by the massive distances between extremely small nations and the tenuous links between them (born of their separate colonial histories). Strategies of development that appear viable elsewhere have reduced chances of success in the Pacific. The small nations of the Pacific appear destined to remain dependent on the whims and mercies of large nations beyond. Indeed, as de Bres and Campbell concluded for Tonga, 'possibly nowhere in the world has economic dependence been taken further than in this microcosm of underdevelopment' (1975:451). For a number of often superficially idyllic islands the future appears to be one of continued dependence where colonialism has essentially been exchanged for neo-colonialism. Kanaky would be no different.

There are then few prospects for radical transformation in an independent Kanaky; in Karl Marx's celebrated phrase, 'Men make history but they do not make it as they please... but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past'. The transformation of New Caledonia to Kanaky is constrained by place, time and existing institutions, and by historic Melanesian values and social structures. At the very least to build anew a Melanesian state, after the partial obliteration of the traditions, history and cultural identity of the people, would be extraordinarily difficult. New Caledonia fits almost perfectly one version of the liabilities that plague governments with limited room to manoeuvre: 'a small population, serious ethnic divisions, location close to a super-power, few natural resources, a culturally subverted bureaucracy, high consumer expectations and a narrow technological base' (Seers 1983:91). There may be greater stress on communalistic and cooperative activities, rather than individual or company enterprise, but even that transition would be subtle and counterposed against the necessity of maintaining already inflated income levels. There will be no more socialism than in other Pacific micro-states, already characterized by increasingly conservative economic policies, and no radical orientation towards rural development. Problems will follow in maintaining current levels of infrastructure and welfare provision since no independent South Pacific state could sustain the kind of society that depended on an economy where 40 per cent of the GNP is contributed by France and the French state also largely owns and subsidizes the SLN, the dominant economic activity. In no conceivable situation would aid be so substantial. Declining incomes would be most apparent within the bureaucracy, the group with least to gain from independence (and the greatest ability to thwart or delay some legislation), and among the politicians themselves. Such problems may be severe but would not lead to revolutionary change. These conjectures are inevitably
hypothe
tical; New Caledonia is not about to become independent Kanaky.

The eternal pause

France has invariably had problems with its overseas territories. Whether, in the past, with Quebec or Louisiana, more recently with Indo-China and Algeria, and now in New Caledonia, there has been a history of incomprenhesion, broken promises, violent struggle and bitterness. The French record on decolonization has been marked by hesitation, conciliation towards conservative demands and compromise of anti-colonial principles, well exemplified in the decolonization of Vanuatu. Confronted with a 'settler colony' like New Caledonia this record can only become further tarnished as the temptation to postpone and compromise is so much greater. France has always been divided between the principle of undertaking a global mission civilisatrice (civilizing mission) and that of respecting the right of colonized peoples to eventually regulate their own lives. The present socialist government has not escaped these divisions. Intervention has inevitably been directed towards maintaining and stabilizing the status quo. Following the devastating domestic consequences of the Algerian War French interest in resolving the problems of the DOM-TOMs was never more than minimal; there was no constituency for Melanesian interests in Paris. One element of radicalization was the movement towards the by-passing of French politics. Quite unlike Algeria, where nationalism had no voice in the French political system (cf. Kahler 1984:335-6), autonomist and indépendantiste sentiments had always been represented in Paris, from Lenormand to Pidjot. However the sole deputy (out of two from New Caledonia) never had either adequate leverage, allies or influence in French politics. Even to the most left wing deputies of the French parliament, including the Communist Party, there was always something reactionary about the Kanak struggle for independence and cultural autonomy. In terms of the real nationalist movement, the sole representative in Paris was an insignificant and often irrelevant spokesman.

Two decades ago autonomist movements in both New Caledonia and French Polynesia were undermined by French political power, their leaders were removed on obviously improbable charges and the powers of the territorial assemblies reduced to controllable proportions (Thompson and Adloff 1971:325). French concessions were intended to serve not as steps towards independence but as means to prevent this occurring. For a long period reforms, wholly in response to sustained local pressure, were constantly too little and too late, technocratic rather than political, culminating in the conflagration of 1984 which brought the crisis of ignorance and mismanagement to a head.
The election of Mitterrand initially gave some hope to indépendantistes that a new era was underway although, within months of his election, those slim hopes had been largely dashed, though for some indépendantistes the vision had been tantalizingly close. If the French government had ever intended to grant independence it would have been in its interests to do so relatively quickly, which would have enabled France to more easily retain substantial economic interests in a neo-colonial future and better overcome certain conservative reaction long before the next elections. Early loose hints that independence might be considered were quickly replaced by messages of reform and autonomy and, though the Nainville-les-Roches meeting in 1983 recognized the 'innate and active right to independence', the timetable for the transition to independence was always lacking.

After twenty-three years in the wilderness the Socialists arrived in power with a program of reform and modernization, oriented to making a 'sharp break with capitalism' to create an irreversible shift in the balance of society and the economy (Ardagh 1982:14) but wholly within France. When these policies produced inflation, a steep decline in the franc and an export boom in Germany, policy quickly changed course in the pragmatic manner that has always characterized French domestic and foreign policy. The new policies were more conservative, including a wage freeze, cuts in public spending and an emphasis on fighting inflation. This then was socialism with a more conservative face, although Mitterrand retained an emphasis on reducing unemployment, by a variety of sometimes rather desperate and unsuccessful measures. Although this emphasis ensured that the French government retained more idealistic elements, so that the resort to austerity, or 'rigour' did not take on the rigidity of the previous more conservative economic regime, it also did not result in growth. There was more than a hint of the vacillation in economic policies that characterized Giscard's earlier oscillation between mild reformism and hard, free-market policies, the same lack of direction that initially gave the Socialist Party their chance. The withdrawal from a more expansionary socialism and from opposition to privilege (for example in the education system) brought about the departure of the Communists from government, a revival in the fortunes of right wing parties and an unpopularity that endured. Both vision and consensus had disappeared within three years as economic problems continued to worsen and private enterprise was restored to its leading role in promoting economic growth (cf. Hoffman 1984); reformist aspirations were abandoned as the economy slumped into disarray. The Socialist government shifted from socialism, ideological or idealistic in different perceptions, towards more pragmatic economic policies that emphasized technological modernization and management; socialist practice became indistinguishable from that of its predecessors.

Domestic preoccupations diverted attention from foreign policy, or policy towards the DOM-TOMs, and its subsidiary role
ensured that it was less ideological and more pragmatic than domestic policy. Expressed commitment to a 'new economic order', through increased aid to developing countries and to ending French military intervention in Africa, proved elusive in practice, a victim of French commercial interests, divisions within the Socialist Party, and the strategic and economic importance to France of several African states. President Mitterrand 'adopted the path of caution and fell back on the policy which, if not innovative, at least had the virtue of reduced political risk' (Chafer 1985:9; cf. Martin 1985). Despite a withdrawal of investment from South Africa France maintained some commitment to developing country interests primarily at the rhetorical level (Berthelot with Besnaïou 1983) but even this initiative also declined after the euphoria of the post-election months, as aid became increasingly a political weapon (Payne 1984:103). Aid was increased to countries that might have been drawn towards the Soviet Union on the assumption that 'it is poverty, oppression and injustice which clear a path for the Soviet Union' (Smouts 1983:166); in Chad, and in a different manner in New Caledonia, similar assumptions produced very different responses.

Mitterrand, like his immediate predecessors, regarded foreign policy as the exclusive domain of the head of state. In 1945 he had argued that 'we need our colonies. To abandon them is to abandon ourselves' and, a decade later, proclaimed that 'Algeria is France' (McShane 1982:53,61). More than three decades later although Mitterrand's views had become more liberal and reformist, 'his political approach was still essentially colonialist' (McShane 1982:63) and that colonialism certainly extended to the DOM-TOMs, which he too had never perceived as anything other than integral parts of France. He had little knowledge and no experience of New Caledonia. For another commentator the three characteristics of Mitterrand's international policies have been 'conservation of France's security and foreign policy position, consensus on major Gaullist-inspired instruments of policy and compromise with the international economic order' (Kolodziej 1983:159). Though rhetoric often remained radical and Régis Debray's presence as adviser once suggested it might be more than that, the practice of foreign policy, and policy towards the DOM-TOMs, quickly regained the conservatism of previous governments.

In France, perhaps more so than for any other colonial power, decolonization has been seen as a loss of power and status in the international order, and French élites have tenaciously resisted change. Perhaps the most significant difference in the politics of decolonization in Britain and France has been the manner in which events in the French colonial empires shaped domestic politics (Kahler 1984:4-5). For France, where colonies were often regarded as territories or departments in an inviolate empire, insulation was impossible, the shock of dismemberment much greater and the consensus against further decolonization unusually
strong, manifest in either strong opposition from conservatives or withdrawal from involvement by socialists. Anti-colonialism has never been strong in France; conservatism, loyalty and the maintenance of grandeur are more important themes.

Ignorance of New Caledonia in France is considerable and, except for a brief period at the start of 1985, there was little interest in the situation. Nor was there a great deal of knowledge about the issues involved, the general situation of New Caledonia or even where it was. Melanesians visiting France have become accustomed to being recognized only as Africans and a quick perusal of the themes of general and specific literature on 'France', either from outside (e.g. Ardagh 1982; Zeldin 1983) or within (e.g. Beaujeu-Garnier 1976; Lequin 1983) quickly reveal that New Caledonia, and the other DOM-TOMs, play no role in French life or consciousness. The combination of widespread ignorance and disinterest with weak convictions over the economic and strategic gains from New Caledonia, have ensured that successive French governments have lacked the will and the courage to confront a complex situation, and steer a difficult course. Challenged by intransigence in New Caledonia, and beset by economic and social problems in France, the Socialist government, as its predecessors, has withdrawn from confrontation. Only during Pisani's months in Noumea, in what may retrospectively be seen as a brief and exceptional period, were that courage and will in evidence. It eventually achieved a new regionalization of New Caledonia, but also the withdrawal of Pisani and the retreat towards conservatism as the prospects of electoral defeat loomed larger and the perceived threat from Kanak insurgents diminished. The time had not been seized. Virtually all French proposals for New Caledonia seem to demonstrate de Gaulle's historic and perhaps plaintive query: 'is it not the usual tendency of Frenchmen to clamour for progress while hoping that everything will remain the same?' (Ardagh 1982).

The extraordinary feature of the political history of New Caledonia is that the post-war years have not been an era of decolonization but merely an era when the political system remained essentially unchanged and the colonial status was consolidated. Melanesians, once politically in advance of all their neighbours, now remain in a colony while their neighbours celebrate various anniversaries of independence. Since 1983 the French government has acknowledged the right of the territory to independence, but this is not a great step forward from Giscard's 1979 promise that 'Kanaks can have independence if they can win it at the ballot box'. Though ordinarily, as Pisani has suggested, history is considered to be on the side of independence movements, there are good reasons to be extremely cautious about predictions of imminent, or even eventual, independence in New Caledonia. The reasons for this have been outlined above: an unusual population structure, where the indigenous Melanesian population is in a minority, and an extremely concentrated and conservative settler
and migrant population which opposes (sometimes violently) any apparent progress towards independence, a partly profitable colonial economy (with continued possibilities of a new nickel boom, and seabed mineral resources), a significant (but declining) number of Melanesians who are content within the present system, a newly embellished strategic significance for New Caledonia and a history of French intransigence towards decolonization in the New Hebrides and larger colonies elsewhere. Otherwise the issue of political status might be almost an anachronism in an ocean characterized either by neo-colonialism or 'colonialism by consent' and where there is merely verbal pressure on France. It is primarily French support for the political power of settlers, in their diverse forms, in opposition to alien cultures, that has ensured the rejection of Melanesian nationalism.

The claims of indépendantistes, based on a sense of nationalism, an abhorrent colonial history demanding social justice and retribution, and the search for pride and power, are more diffuse and nebulous than competing claims. Attitudes are formulated less with respect to relatively objective indicators, such as income levels and participation in the work-force, than through a range of more subjective and emotional influences, amply illustrated with reference to Atai's struggle, where condensed into one historic event are 'patriotic pride, anxieties, remembrances of past glories or humiliations, promises of future greatness' (Edelman 1972:6). Much of Melanesian politics is the quest for community, identity, dignity, self-esteem and inalienable rights, denied by incorporation in a colony, but existing in the wielding of power in neighbouring independent Melanesian states. Despite the legitimacy of these claims, a legitimacy of national self-determination and freedom from alien domination, even occasionally recognized by opponents of independence, possession and numbers are powerful in international law and politics. Five years ago it was concluded that 'for the moment the tide of independence has run dry in the Pacific; France may eventually be forced to relinquish its major colonies but that time does not yet appear imminent' (Connell 1981b:584). For all the sound and fury of subsequent years there is still no reason to conclude otherwise; there are many alternative precedents in the South Pacific.

The evidence for history being on the side of the Kanaks is slight. In settler colonies, fragment or plural societies, such universal goals as national self-determination are distorted, often deliberately so, by unusual economic and demographic histories. Demographic change may accelerate, but even with more rapid Melanesian population increase and white emigration, achievement of success through a demographic influence on the ballot-box is a distant dream. There are no grand theories to explain why some peoples become independent nations and others remain ethnic minorities within states; their fate, and perhaps destiny, 'has only to do with the fact that at any given time they
lack the power or other fortuitous conditions in which, weak as they may be, they could set up "states" of their own' (Isaacs 1975:436). In this settler colony, now imbued with strategic and economic significance, the conditions have never been propitious to Melanesian nationalism and the prospects of power have constantly been denied. When almost two-thirds of the settlers were born there, many without family ties elsewhere, there are obviously powerful vested interests in opposition to decolonization, where the future is necessarily uncertain, either in terms of political status, social status or economic well-being. Opposition to the 'established order', even where that order has inherent injustice and inequality, are perceived as serious threats to local and regional stability. Introspective conservatism, in insular isolation, has become locked into inflexibility through French support. As New Caledonia moves inexorably and deliberately towards becoming another French 'consumer colony' it may well be that the most propitious period for Melanesian independence has now passed; indeed it may have passed long ago.

Future prospects are particularly unpleasant. By 1984 violence had arrived with a vengeance in New Caledonia; a year later more mindless confrontation was apparent. Armed militias were patrolling the streets of Noumea and adding to their already well-stocked arsenals; probably the first news item of 1986 in the Pacific region was the confiscation in Auckland Harbour of smuggled arms destined for Noumea. For a world attuned to warfare, terrorism and international crisis, the struggle for Kanaky has hitherto been limited but the potential for more intensified violence is still great; in this Melanesians would be certain losers. Control of Noumea, and the fragmentation of nationalist opposition (in space and politics) is an important key to the future of New Caledonia, as the politics of decolonization appears set to become even more pragmatic than idealistic. For the moment the balance of power has shifted to France, despite FLNKS control of much of New Caledonia, and history has shown that France uses that power in New Caledonia only under duress.

Melanesian nationalism might be broken down into small impotent protest movements, concerned about local issues (land tenure, unemployment and so on), as in Caribbean DOM-TOMs, rather than a genuine independence movement. Without achievement of expectations, the legitimacy and fragile unity of the FLNKS, even with its broad membership base, will be called into question; fratricidal internecine disputes in Lifou and dissent over the 'Libyan connection' are indications of pragmatic and ideological differences. The LKS are resented for their 'defection' to the 'easy road' of decolonization within the French institutions. A violent struggle against colonialism, a heroic culture of resistance, may be forced into permanent acquiescence with the colonial power.
It may be that the key element is force; some as yet unknown constellation of events, possibly violent, will rapidly transform the existing system in a dramatic manner. France may tire of recurrent violence, as it did in Algeria, and engineer a withdrawal, though in this last stronghold of the pieds-noirs that prospect is unlikely. France may be willing to be 'forced out' by the scale of local military activity but withdrawal would surely leave a New Caledonia more like Rhodesia or South Africa, than like neighbouring independent Melanesian states. Conservatives in France would feel great moral qualms about ditching a white settler society for any reason; though Algeria looms large it is implausible that a French government would send troops to manhandle whites into transferring power to Kanaks and thus offend the centre ground of French politics, a centre streaked with its own nationalist and, not least, racist emotions. Though for Britain 'the moral rhetoric of decolonisation has given way to an implacable economic reductionism' (Holland 1985:292) it is unlikely that economics would really influence French decolonization. Other factors too may weaken France's resolve; nuclear and strategic policies may change and the cost of maintaining the colony may mount far beyond the benefits. A decade ago Woodcock suggested that the nickel will eventually run out leaving Noumea 'a ghost town commemorating the last era of French imperialism' (Woodcock 1976:210). This is unlikely though it is ironic that nickel has become of minor economic importance at the very time that the struggle for independence has been greatest. Given the futility of past predictions little can be discounted.

The convincing removal of the French Socialist government in March 1986, despite Mitterrand remaining President, led to a rapid reversal of the liberal reformism that had recently existed. Even that was far short of Kanak aspirations and demands. The conservative conviction that New Caledonia is part of France, with aspirations somehow indistinguishable from those of France itself, and that Socialists pressurred a partisan policy in New Caledonia that opposed the honour, interests and integrity of France, led to a more conservative position on New Caledonia. It was, after all, the long-awaited and anticipated fulfilment of conservative dreams in New Caledonia. The exercise of regional responsibility by the FLNKS will count for nothing.

Whatever legal and constitutional proposals are eventually chosen by the people of New Caledonia or, more probably, imposed upon at least a minority of them (and perhaps a majority of them), it seems improbable that any proposals will both end violence and

\[2\] Moreover the last four years have been typified by the growth of the extreme right wing Front National with its slogan 'France for the French'. strong opposition to immigration and support for 'law and order'. The Front National gained strong support in the south of France, bastion of the pieds-noirs, and in New Caledonia, where opposition to immigration took on a wholly different meaning, the converse of policy in France. The growth of the Front National has marked a recent resurgence of conservatism in France.
satisfy Kanak nationalism. In any event the future is unlikely to
be one of steady progress and development, after decades of
inertia, underdevelopment and broken promises, but more likely one
of uncertainty, hatred and division. The voices of moderation
have long been drowned out by vibrant Melanesian nationalism and
strident conservative reaction; the conciliators have left
politics, or been forced to choose between one or other hostile
camps, while those who were never 'political', but merely wanted
to go about their work, have found politics thrust upon them. The
weak but much sought after centre is symptomatic of fragment
societies.

It is appropriate that this account of the political history
of a French colony should end with France since it is there that
effective decisions are taken and it is with France that Kanak
destiny appears to rest. Melanesian nationalism has grown,
despite limited political power and greater material wealth, as
the structure of domination and psychological repression remain;
unlike elsewhere in Melanesia nationalism has preceded the nation.
Though bread and circuses may be adequate rewards for some,
disenchantment with an unequal world of sustained European
technical control, ensures that nationalism is not merely the
struggle of an intellectual élite. Melanesians may not be
starving, cowed or subject to abject humiliation but, without
power and identity, as Tjibaou has pointed out, 'so long as one
Kanak survives a problem for France remains'. Kanak demands will
remain between the twin poles of materialism and idealism, itself
a function of Melanesian culture and history, and the awkward
balance may never be satisfied. Though, as Jean-Marie Tjibaou had
said, 'there is a new vitality of the Kanak people associated with
the demand for independence (Le Nouvel Observateur, 22 March
1985:21) this vitality may, in the end, not be powerful enough to
achieve its goal; the restitution of history. The strongest
independence movement that has ever existed in the South Pacific
is located where independence is quite unlikely.
Appendix 1

Charter of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front

The present Charter aims to specify the objectives of the Kanak people and to explain why and how they are conducting a fight for national liberation so that their rights may prevail.

The Charter is written to reaffirm recognition of the continuity of the resistance of the Kanak people for over 130 years. It is drafted for a limited period: the period of the national liberation struggle, a transition preparing for Kanak socialist independence.

A. WHY A FIGHT FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION?

1. Declaring that
   (a) the French government is complicit in the colonial process that it perpetuates,
   (b) François Mitterrand, President of the French Republic according to the mandate of May 10, 1981, has not kept his promises,
   (c) the declarations of Nainville-les-Roches regarding our innate and active right to independence have not been put into practice,
   (d) the French government refuses to accept all the proposals of the Independence Front to prepare for Kanak socialist independence and instead imposes upon us the Lemoine statute with all its problems (election to the Territorial Assembly, State-Territorial Commission, referendum in 1989, etc...), which directly threaten the Kanak people with extinction by decisively making them a minority in their own country,
   (e) capitalist and imperialist exploitation by foreign economic interests continues in our country for the profit of colonial France and its allies,
   (f) the French government pursues an immigration policy which aims to:
      - prevent the Kanak people from taking control of their economy,
      - prohibit the Kanak people the full exercise of their right to work,
      - prevent the Kanak people from attaining social, cultural and political unity,
(g) the French government passes judiciary and military provisions to repress the forces working towards Kanak socialist independence,

the Independence Front has judged that the Kanak people are entering a phase of struggle for Kanak independence: their fight for liberation.

As a result, the Independence Front has decided to break the dialogue with the French government, to dissolve itself, and to participate with all the active forces of the independence movement in the establishment of a Kanak National Socialist Liberation Front.

2. We affirm the existence of the Kanak people, fiercely attached to their cultural identity and the values of their own traditions.

3. We demand the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Kanak people, since France has ignored and confiscated these rights by unilaterally asserting its colonial legitimacy, a source of institutional violence towards the Kanaks, since 24 September 1852.

4. The sacred and inalienable rights of the Kanak people, which have been oppressed and wronged by the colonial reality, are as follows (see UN declarations 1514 and 2621):

(a) recognition as a separate people,
(b) dignity and liberty,
(c) recognition as the only legitimate people in the Kanak country which is their home,
(d) free self-determination of their future,
(e) the return of all their lands to establish the Kanak nation in its essential unity,
(f) the immediate exercise, without any conditions or reservations, of their sovereignty to freely choose their political status: Kanak and socialist independence,
(g) the means necessary to pursue their economic, social and cultural development in order to build socialism,
(h) the custom of welcoming non-Kanaks.

B. THE KANAK NATIONAL SOCIALIST LIBERATION FRONT

1. PURPOSE: The Kanak people take sole responsibility for their national liberation struggle. To successfully carry out this struggle, they are equipped with an effective force for the struggle: the FLNKS.
2. COMPOSITION: All the signatories of this Charter: indépendantiste Kanaks and anti-colonialist non-Kanaks, organizations, trade unions, movements, associations, churches... make up the FLNKS, of which they are active members.

3. ROLE: The national liberation struggle is a total one: it takes place on all levels at the same time. Thus the FLNKS is the union of all active forces who are striving for Kanak socialist independence. It is a liberation front to liberate the Kanak nation from colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism in order to establish a socialism based on the local reality which will be defined in the course of the struggle for liberty.

4. ORGANIZATION: The Central Committee, the guiding force of the FLNKS, is responsible for the coordination of members. It is this political core which will propose the guidelines for action to be discussed at the plenary meetings of the FLNKS.

5. STRATEGY, as defined in the course of the struggle:
(a) is unified and multifaceted,
(b) is primarily directed against the colonial oppressor, France,
(c) denounces the false colonial 'democracy' and will boycott all elections held in this framework,
(d) is also directed against capitalism and imperialism in order to establish a more just socialist society,
(e) aims to progressively establish Kanak sovereignty on the land through concrete actions, which illustrate its own rights in opposition to the colonial authority.

C. APPEAL FOR PARTICIPATION AND COMMITMENT

1. The FLNKS makes an appeal to non-Kanaks. They must recognize the sovereignty of the Kanak people and support their liberation struggle and contribute to its success. Only their commitment and solidarity with the liberation struggle will guarantee their future citizenship in an independent socialist Kanak nation.

2. The FLNKS makes an appeal to its brothers and sister states in the Pacific, as well as to all nations who have voted in support of declarations 1514 and 2621 at the United Nations, to support the struggle of the Kanak people.
3. It is urgent that Kanaks come together and organize the quest for liberty. The first act of this commitment for everyone should be to sign this Charter for the liberation struggle.

September 1984
Appendix 2

The Pisani Proposals

France or independence... independence or France. It is possible to link two concepts until now opposed. I suggest that you choose, within the framework of Article 88 of the Constitution, the 'independent-association' with France statute, which guarantees to both France and New Caledonia stable relations, and to everyone - every person and organization - respect for their legitimate rights, as well as their security. France and independence: why both - and not one or the other? How can there be a guaranteed independence with a guaranteed French presence? I will endeavour to answer those questions.

There cannot be a durable, peaceful and useful French presence in the South Pacific without everyone's agreement. There cannot be an agreement on this without a political procedure acknowledging the birth of a new sovereign State. Claims to independence have their roots in history. It exists at various levels and dwells, with varying degrees of impatience, in the hearts of men and women born in their land. Furthermore, the last forty years have taught us that, from the moment that claims to sovereignty are expressed by an authentic people, they can only be achieved through independence. There is proof that the present statute of the Territory does not unite all the opponents - the number of which can only increase, even after order has been reinstated. No similar statute would correct, swiftly and fundamentally, the deep imbalances within the New Caledonian society. This change is necessary for New Caledonia, because it is essential for its future. There is no other way to bring internal peace and security. This answers the question 'Why Independence?'

Now, why France? Because she has legitimate interests to defend. Because many Caledonians demand that she remain; because all Caledonians wish it to be so; because France has accomplished something in this territory - something perhaps imperfect, but useful - and she should continue to do so. No one in a position of responsibility in the French Republic has ever viewed things differently.

The indépendantistes themselves wish France to remain. They know that a French presence is necessary to maintain and guarantee the new situation: to accompany the new interested institutions in their first steps towards the development of human and economic resources; to guarantee the status and the interests of those non-Kanaks, who would fear for their safety and belongings. French presence in this land is necessary to France. This presence is equally essential to those in favour of independence as to those
who would prefer New Caledonia to remain within the French Republic. I ask the latter to understand that the propositions I am about to make will enable them to remain in this land they have loved and enriched. These proposals will offer a guarantee that they will be able to work and live there freely as long as they recognize that the change is unavoidable. Political reality must change so that life can continue. To ensure the security of people, belongings, rights and investments, a new definition must be given.

The best solution, no doubt the only one, is independence, but in association with France. What exactly does this mean? In order to find the best answer to this question, once I have presented the directions of my plan, I will ask all Caledonians to take part in new consultations and discussions. Once the consultations are finished, I will undertake the responsibility of submitting a comprehensive proposal to the government. The government will then present to Parliament the plan which it has approved. I will now explain these global proposals to all you Caledonians, for it is you who will decide.

Five aspects can be analyzed separately, but to retain their full meaning, they must be looked into as a whole: the timetable, independence, the guarantee, the French presence and its legal base and the future of New Caledonia. First, the timetable. In order to draw New Caledonia out of the uncertainties which paralyse her at present, the following timetable has been proposed.

Before 1 February 1985: a report will be made to the President of the Republic and to the Prime Minister.

February 1985: Special parliamentary session. The government will state its position and intentions on all aspects of the problem. On this basis, citizens will then be able to vote on self-determination. The Parliament will enact appropriate legislation to authorize a referendum.

March 1985: The electoral rolls will be open for two months for revision.

June 1985: Campaign before the referendum on self-determination.

July 1985: The referendum will take place. It could include the following questions:

*Do you wish the (Lemoine) statute of 6 September 1984 to be maintained?

OR
Do you approve the constitution of New Caledonia as an independent state associated with France, under the conditions laid down by Article 88 of the Constitution and in accordance with the government declaration? (It being understood that this association is based on a treaty linking the two states, on a joint pact defining relations between the various Caledonian communities and on cooperation agreements, guaranteeing France's contribution to the development of New Caledonia.) All citizens who have lived in New Caledonia for three years or more would be entitled to vote. Should the electorate decide to maintain the statute adopted on 6 September 1984, all procedures defined in that statute would be swiftly implemented.

Should the present statute be rejected, the French Parliament would adopt legislation recognizing the independence of New Caledonia as from 1 January 1986. Until 1 January 1986, New Caledonia would be under the authority of a transitional government appointed and headed by the High Commissioner, acting as delegate of the French Republic. In that case:

October 1985: The New Caledonian Assembly would be elected and would draft and vote for:

- a Treaty of Association with France
- a joint pact which would lay down the foundations and principles of a multiracial society in New Caledonia
- the cooperation agreements

January 1986: Independence would be proclaimed: the first government of New Caledonia would take office. The official transfer of sovereignty to the new State would take place. But what forms can this independence take?

If the citizens vote for independence in July 1985, this will be granted according to international law such as it applies to all countries in the world. New Caledonia would become a sovereign state. It would become a state in its own right; a democracy; a multiracial state where the principles of liberty and equality for all would prevail. It would be entitled to become a member of the United Nations, through which it would adhere to the principle of human rights; a member of South Pacific regional organizations, where it could play an important role, and as a member of the Caribbean, African and Pacific States, it would be linked with the European Communities by the Lomé Convention. Furthermore, through its own decision, this State would be linked with France. A Treaty of Association would, by mutual agreement, establish new links to replace those now unilaterally defined by the statute. The new State would have its own legislative power, as well as executive and judiciary powers. It would be a
sovereign state, even if its emergence into sovereignty included qualifications and agreements passed with France. This is the general procedure when states conclude agreements in their mutual interest. But the most important element of the sovereignty rests with the reappropriation of the land. This act, to which the Kanak community has always given priority and absolute importance, has a symbolic, political meaning. It means for them the recognition of those links which, between the community and the land, found the nation.

What guarantees will the new State give to individuals, communities and firms who have settled in this territory and who have acquired, whatever the vicissitudes of history, legitimate rights to be honoured? What would the joint pact contain? A change as far-reaching as one that could be introduced by the majority vote of the people concerned could modify people's behaviour, disrupt acquired habits and alter their destiny. Everyone should be informed of their rights and have them guaranteed, not only by the new State, but by the French Republic, which would specify from the outset how she intends to intervene in these matters.

The first problem - and the most sensitive - concerns citizenship. No one would be forced to take up the citizenship of the new State and no one would be forced to leave the country just because he has not adopted the new citizenship. French citizens living in New Caledonia who choose not to take new citizenship should be able to benefit, regardless of the ethnic group to which they belong (European, Pacific Islander, even Kanak), from a status of privileged resident, with all that this means in a constitutional, economic and social context.

With sovereignty, the new State would have full rights to its land, soil and underground resources, air and sea space. As regards land rights, new regulations governing contracts on leases and concessions for exploitation would be elaborated. This would ensure a long-term use of the land, and also recognize Melanesian freehold. However, the rights of the present users would be guaranteed; their right to work, as well as their right to transfer their property, would be maintained. As far as mining and underground resources are concerned, the new State would contract agreements with mining companies or participate with them in the establishment of development companies. Should some land or mining rights be affected by the application of the new rules, a compensation scheme guaranteed by the French State would apply. Those entitled to land rights would receive compensation calculated according to the value of these rights as at 1 October 1984. Concerning the economy in general, free-enterprise would apply for everyone (nationals or privileged residents) - within the boundaries of the new law - and with the aim of achieving the main targets set for the economic development program in New Caledonia. To this end, the new State would need to draw up
civil, social and commercial legislation. In the meantime, the present legislation would remain valid.

Noumea presents some particular problems in the economic, legal and institutional sense. Hence it appears necessary to work out a special statute for the capital, enabling the participation of the privileged residents, or their representatives, in the administrative and economic management of the city and the port. The whole of the land of Noumea, whether developed or not, would be subjected to a long lease granted by the new state to an authority responsible for all operations, compensation and arbitration.

Among the problems of guarantee remains the case of public servants and employees of the territory and local administration. Special measures would be adopted to protect their rights and ensure their integration into the national administration, according to their free choice, and with respect to the legislative and contractual rules applying. These rules would not prevent them from continuing to work in New Caledonia, whether for the new State or for the French Government under its technical assistance scheme. Thus, without being exhaustive, the list of guarantees given by the new State and by France, jointly or separately, responds to the most difficult but also the most legitimate question that everyone asks.

So let us now talk about France. The French Republic and the new State would agree to conclude a Treaty of Association. France can maintain, and should maintain, her presence. France is not in the position, and does not wish, to lose interest in New Caledonia. She will be present through her language and her culture. She commits herself to otherwise define her links with New Caledonia and will give her presence the beneficial influence that the statute does not otherwise allow her to develop.

Before discussing the means of change, the spirit of the Treaty of Association must be explained and understood. Article 88 of the Constitution states that the Republic can conclude 'agreements with states that wish to associate with her in order to develop their civilization'. Thus France, a state that has for centuries participated in the history of the world, having occupied by force a territory situated in the Antipodes, having populated and developed it, having helped the native people to develop according to her law, has decided, as the time has now come, to accompany this nation along the path to the dignity of statehood. Having achieved this, France will offer to this new State a Treaty of Association that will allow the latter to settle, develop and evolve according to the interests of its people. The Treaty of Association will also allow France, present in another way, to play a role more suited to her abilities and more in line with her interests as an international power dedicated to the pursuit of development and peace. This is the
profound political sense of the Association and, on that basis, the treaty would organize joint institutions - such as a President of the Association of States, who will ensure respect for the pact between the states and guarantee the peaceful and harmonious development of the communities, a Council of the Association of States, an Assembly representing the two peoples and an Arbitration Court. A delegate of the French Republic, who will reside in the new State, will fulfil the role of Ambassador and will assume the responsibilities that the Treaty entrusts to the French Republic. The Ambassador of the new State, residing in Paris, will represent the interests of the new State within the Association.

The Treaty of Association will stipulate that the French Republic will be entrusted with the full responsibility for the defence of the new State and for the internal security of its territory. A protocol of agreement will specify the obligations to which both parties will commit themselves, particularly with regard to the structure, establishment, organization and use of the forces, as well as the training and promotion of personnel from the new State. The Treaty will define the division of responsibilities and powers within areas such as money, credit, justice, international transport, telecommunications, radio and television. The continued implementation of the Treaty will be the responsibility of joint institutions. In specific sectors conventions will be added to the Treaty to warrant France's contribution to the Caledonian state. This will apply in particular to the spheres of development and training.

Towards what future? In adopting a new definition of its relations with New Caledonia, if Caledonians so decide, France does not intend to give up her responsibilities. France suggests to the new State that she fulfil them differently: by contract and not by statute, by a convention, freely signed by both parties, instead of through a unilateral decision from the Republic. The commitment of France goes hand in hand with defining the conditions of the French presence. Her presence and commitment are necessary to all: to France, to all the Caledonian communities and to the new State itself. This commitment would be expressed by cooperation agreements. These would aim at developing national resources in New Caledonia and at maximizing her economic potential through a coherent development program. The French administration can draw up a national development program, but only the new State will have the power to finalize it and to adopt it. France can and wants to utilize her financial, commercial, technical and human resources, in order to contribute to the development of the new State - but these resources can only be put to good use if the new State has determined its own objectives and priorities and the areas in which French assistance would be requested.
Several successful plans for New Caledonia have been drawn up. They have not had a lasting effect, owing to the general lack of the people's will to support them, and perhaps primarily, because these plans were not elaborated by the New Caledonians themselves. One can, however, refer to the main lines of these plans. First of all, training, because human capital is an essential factor to real autonomous development. Primary education, while retaining all it has gained, must be in line with the cultural realities of New Caledonia. Secondary and technical education must be adapted to the specific needs of New Caledonia's future. Tertiary and further education should be developed and oriented, through the French system of diplomas, towards international realities from which this country cannot stay isolated. To ensure the country's management and development, adult training must also be developed because New Caledonia cannot afford to wait for the younger generation to take over the administration and development of the country. It must be reiterated how crucial these problems are: cultural and economic development; the struggle against social problems; employment and political responsibilities are of major importance.

Then agricultural development. It is sad to see that agricultural production represents only 3% of New Caledonia's gross national product. Since they are unfavourable to the development of agriculture, forestry and cattle raising, the soil and climate have only been exploited up to 10 or 20% of their potential. There has been a discouraging land rights system; an obvious lack of technical training; too little cooperative organization and too few food processing industries, as well as a tendency to import what could be produced locally. As a result of all these factors, the nature of forest and cattle industries have to be reconsidered and, in many areas, have to be established. A good amount of courage and determination will be necessary to carry out this task. The government of the new State will require the contribution of everyone: including non-Kanaks, who know and love this land, and France, which could be obtained through cooperation agreements still to be defined. But first of all everybody must agree to work together for agricultural development and land reorganization.

To develop the economy of the Grande Terre and the islands does not necessarily have to affect Noumea's economy. On the contrary, it would provide the capital city with a solid basis for development: a hinterland, acting as supplier and buyer, could help the city and the port to develop the international and maritime role, which they have played and should continue to play. But to think about Noumea is to think about New Caledonia. There is no point in opposing the city and the 'desert' of the Grande Terre, or the Grande Terre and the islands. It is as a united entity that New Caledonia will build its future.
Three other priorities are: the exploitation of underground resources; the exploitation of sea resources and the exploitation of natural areas for tourism. In those three areas there are important resources that would require a large labour force, which could be quickly trained. There is room for Government initiatives and, to a great extent, for initiatives in the private sector. An adequate legislation to promote the participation of firms would in that sense be required. In all these areas, France will play its part. To complete the Treaty of Association, France is ready to sign with the new State specific agreements for cooperation. However, France must deal with a new country fully responsible for the application of the Treaty and for its own future.

Those are the suggestions I am making to Caledonians. They constitute the basis of the report I intend to submit, in less than a month, to the President of the Republic and to the Government. These propositions do not exclude the possibility that the population of New Caledonia might, by majority vote, decide to stay with the previous statute adopted on 6 September 1984. They open up new prospects that I believe to be preferable. For some, there would be too much independence, and for others, too much of France. The former will have in mind the risks they could face for refusing the changes; life would not recommence, as security would not be re-established. The latter should ask themselves what an independent New Caledonia would become without France. Choose together the best way to establish an independent, democratic Caledonia, freely but firmly associated with France; this being the best way to ensure that France retains a presence in the South Pacific that is not disputed, but requested, and also the best way to guarantee personal status and rights to everyone.

These main lines that I am submitting to you can only be discussed under certain conditions: if public order, already improved, is fully re-established and applied extensively to day-to-day lives; if all return to work, everyone being able to carry out their duties freely; if schools resume normally, and if the communities become aware of the fact, despite their distrustful and at times hostile relations, that their future depends upon their ability and willingness to find common goals and to achieve them together, tomorrow as yesterday, in a different way. You are responsible for your own future.

As the French Government's delegate, I have drawn up for you this ambitious project, worthy both of you and of France. It is your concern. It is not an international problem, but a problem between France and a part of France. The solution to this problem does not depend upon the French internal policy debate. It goes further than that. It relates to the meaning of the accord that France and Caledonia would like to give themselves. It is your own affair. In this region of the world an independent New Caledonia has a real opportunity, if it is associated with France.
This opportunity, however, must be rightfully earned, not only through imagination and youthful dynamism, but also through wisdom and mutual respect. You must decide today because tomorrow everything will be more difficult. Men, women and particularly young people, all of you who live in this land of New Caledonia, work on it, love it, your future lies in your hands. Today you can decide together to overcome your differences and together build for your future. I urge you to do so.

Edgard Pisani, 7 January 1985
Appendix 3

The Fabius Plan

1. The populations concerned of New Caledonia and its dependencies will be called upon, as soon as the conditions are appropriate and no later than 31 December 1987, to decide on the territory's accession to independence in association with France. To this end, until the legislation on this referendum takes effect, New Caledonia will be administered according to the transitional system determined by the present Act, which will enable the expression of the diversity of the territory through the establishment of regions and the establishment of a program of reform and development that will remedy economic and social inequalities. A subsequent law will establish the conditions in which the determination of the territory's future will take place.

2. The institutions and public authorities in the territory are the communes and the municipal councils, the regions and Regional Councils alongside the regional custom councils and the regional economic and social committees, the territory and the Congress with its executive council and territorial custom council, the High Commissioner as representative of the State [France] and executive of the territory.

3. Four territorial divisions are created as follows:
   i. The Northern region from Belep to Pouembout and Ponerihouen,
   ii. The Southern region from Poya and Houailou, south to Bouloupari, Yate and the Isle of Pines,
   iii. The Noumea region including Dumbea, Paita, Noumea and Mont Dore,
   iv. The Loyalty Islands.

4. Within New Caledonia the regions constitute territorial collectivities which will be administered freely, under the conditions stipulated in the act, by 'Regional Councils' whose members will be elected by direct universal suffrage. The number of members of each regional council will be 21 from the Southern region, nine each from the Northern and Central regions and seven from the Loyalty Islands.

5. The Territorial Assembly will take the name Territorial Congress. The assembly of the four Regional Councils will constitute the Territorial Congress. The members of the Congress will replace the Territorial Councillors.
6. The mandate of the members of the Regional Councils and the Congress will end when a new law, referred to in the first paragraph, takes effect, or, at the latest, 31 January 1988.

7. In each constituency the elections will take place through proportional representation... Seats will be allocated to successful candidates according to their order on the list. Lists that did not obtain at least five per cent of the votes will be excluded from the distribution of seats... The candidate on a list named immediately below a successful candidate may replace an elected candidate from that list if the seat becomes vacant for some reason...

8. The conditions of eligibility are those defined for the Territorial Assembly elections in 1952 and subsequently modified...

9. The High Commissioner will determine the location of polling stations...

10. Electors not listed on the electoral register of 28 February 1985 can still be included... including those who left their normal place of residence following disturbances to public order who may make arrangements to record a vote in that place...

11. A copy of each of the voting lists will be available to all electors at the polling station...

12, 13, 14, 16 and 17. [Further electoral regulations.]

15. A 'High Authority for Audio-Visual Communication' will regulate television and radio programs... in order to respect pluralism and equal opportunity to provide information.

18. At its first meeting the Regional Council will elect by secret ballot a president and two vice-presidents from among its members...

19. In each region there will be established a Customary Advisory Council. These councils will advise on all legislation submitted to the Regional Council. All their members also constitute the Territorial Custom Council which will advise on all matters submitted to it by the High Commissioner.

20. Regional Councils may set up economic and social councils.

21. The Regional Council will govern the affairs of the region, formulate the budget and manage the accounts.
22. Without reference to powers transmitted from the state [France] the regional authorities will exercise their authority in the areas of social, cultural and economic development, especially in the following areas:

(a) development and regional planning
(b) primary education, local languages and cultures
(c) cultural and sports facilities
(d) health and social policy
(e) rural development and land reform
(f) transport infrastructure (including ports and airports)
(g) housing.

The regions will be able to establish development contracts with France and agreements with New Caledonia's other territorial authorities...

23. At its first meeting the Territorial Congress will elect by secret ballot a president from among its members...

24. With reservations specified in Articles 4, 22, 23, 25, 27 and 31 the provisions of the Act of 6 September 1984 that related to the Territory are applicable to the Congress.

25. The High Commissioner as the executive of the territory will be responsible for preparing and implementing the resolutions of the Congress. The functions of the territory are under his authority.

26. An Executive Council, made up of the Presidents of the Regional Councils and chaired by the President of the Territorial Congress, will be set up alongside the High Commissioner. The latter will consult it on resolutions tabled in the Congress and will keep it informed of the measures taken in implementation of the Congress's resolutions.

27. The Government will be authorized to regulate, in accordance with article 38 of the Constitution and before 15 November 1985, measures called for by the situation in New Caledonia with regard in particular to the creation of the regions (and defining their powers), the required amendments to the Territorial Statute, the implementation of reforms designed to correct economic and social inequalities, law and order enforcement and reparation of the consequences of events that have occurred in the Territory since 29 October 1984. The bill ratifying these ordinances will have to be tabled in Parliament not later than 1 December 1985.
28. Elections to the Territorial Congress and the Regional Councils will be held within sixty days following promulgation of the Act. The electoral campaign can begin fifteen days before polling day.

29. The powers of the Territorial Assembly will expire simultaneously with the first meeting of the Territorial Congress, and during the electoral campaign and before the Congress has its first meeting, the High Commissioner will take charge of territorial government.

30. A decree in the Council of State will determine the manner in which this Act will be applied.

31. All previous legislation conflicting with this statute is cancelled.

Paris, August 1985
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