LAND AND POLITICS
IN
NEW CALEDONIA

Alan Ward
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Preface

This work arose out of my preoccupation with land in Oceania - land as a key focus of the values and aspirations of the peoples of Oceania. The interests of indigenous and settler peoples concerning land have recently produced some sharp confrontations, but there are also deeper-seated choices between 'tradition' and 'modernity' which complicate, and may override, the essentially colonial issues. The technical aspects of land tenure or land reform both reflect and shape the flux of values and aspirations. During the decolonization of the Anglophone islands of Oceania a considerable amount of comparative experience was developed about how to mediate between competing aspirations and to assist in the evolution of new ones, with concern for social stability. This knowledge is, of course, embedded in the context of much larger social, economic, legal and political concerns, often reflecting deep cultural divisions between Oceanic and European peoples. The purpose of my research in New Caledonia was to observe this interaction in a French territory and to exchange knowledge about experience in the Anglophone states. I gratefully acknowledge the reciprocal interest by the directorate and scholars of ORSTOM, the French Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer, who enabled me to study in association with them in Noumea. Their assistance and advice, and that of the High Commissioner and senior officials in New Caledonia, was generous and kind. Our discussions were frank and cordial. Moreover, I travelled and talked freely with people of all races and social categories. I have tried to represent their various viewpoints accurately and with due emphasis. The overall judgements and interpretations expressed here are, however, strictly my own.

The primary intention of studying the evolution and particularly the judicial framework of the current land reform (réforme foncière) in New Caledonia is, I hope, reflected in the ensuing pages. It was immediately apparent, however, that the land reform was being shaped very greatly by the political context: the opposition between Melanesian nationalism seeking Indépendance Kanak on the one hand, and French commitment to a multi-ethnic society on the other, with the Melanesians being only one group, outnumbered by a majority of settler groups. This study has, in the end, therefore become much more concerned about politics than was originally intended.

I have allowed this to occur because of the intense interest in Australia about New Caledonia. Not, it should be added, by the 'average' Australian, whose interest in New Caledonia is more accurately symbolized by the suntanned bodies on the beach of the Club Med at Noumea. But among Australian academics, officials, and those politicians concerned with the Oceanic region there is very
great concern and anxiety to understand the complexities of the Territory during an era of profound change in the region. It seemed important to write as fully as possible about it. The extraordinary misperceptions on all sides about the forces operating in Vanuatu, misperceptions which led to civil strife and nearly to a tragedy of quite horrible magnitude for the region, have reaffirmed my convictions about that. The interpretation offered here is a personal one. It is bound to provoke dissent. I hope it will provide discussion, across national and ethnic lines, in the interests of understanding and stability in the region.

Often research and writing about New Caledonia has been a sad experience, because everywhere one encounters people of goodwill, possessed of great talent, of great warmth and charm, by no means narrowly self-seeking, yet who are at odds with one another from the depths of their different cultural commitments. Their hostility often seems needless - often to be based on judgements about the worst, not the best or even the average, of the other culture, the other race. It is a beautiful land, where racial divisions have been needlessly strengthened rather than assuaged, where two cultural traditions have been placed in opposition, rather than each valued for the contribution it can make to a new emergent Oceanian society. The search for institutional ways of bridging and sharing has been minimal. In the last few years, however, there have been signs of greater understanding and flexibility, notably in land matters. Taken further, and writ larger, these attitudes could have resulted in the truly Caledonian people of differing ethnic origins developing some common cause, out of common recognition that it is an Oceanian society, not a European one, which needed to be built. But now the confrontations have intensified and it is probably too late to bridge the racial gulf.

In conclusion I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the School of Humanities at La Trobe University in contributing to the costs of research and to the Research Centre for Southwest Pacific Studies, La Trobe University, and the Department of Political & Social Change, Australian National University, for providing opportunity to discuss aspects of the work in seminars. In particular I wish to thank my colleagues Dr Bronwen Douglas and Dr Myriam Dorney, for reading and commenting on the text, Dr Dorney for reading French National Assembly debates in the National Library, and Professor Jamie Mackie and Dr Ron May for encouraging me to publish the work.

A.W.
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ABBREVIATIONS

AICLF: Association des Indigènes Calédoniens et Loyaltiens Français
CFP: Cours du Franc Pacifique
FADIL: Fonds d'Aide au Développement des Iles et de l'Intérieur
FI: Front Indépendantiste
FIDES: Fonds d'Investissement de Développement Economique et Social
FNSEC: Fédération Pour Une Nouvelle Société Calédonienne
FULK: Front Uni pour la Libération des Kanaks
JARM: Jeunesse d'Action et de Réflexion Calédonien
JC: Jeunes Canaques Francais
MLC: Mouvement Libéral Calédonien
MOP: Mouvement Pour l'Ordre et la Paix
ORSTOM: Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer
PALIKA: Parti de Libération Kanak
PR: Parti Républicain
PSC: Parti Socialiste Calédonien
RPC: Rassemblement Pour la Calédonie
RPCR: Rassemblement Pour la Calédonie dans la République
RPR: Rassemblement Pour la République
RURALE: Ruraux, unis pour une réforme agraire libérale et équitable
UC: Union Calédonienne
UICALO: Union des Indigènes Calédoniens Amis de la Liberté dans l'Ordre
UMNC: Union Multiraciale de Nouvelle Calédonie
UNC: Union Nouvelle Calédonienne
Union Progressiste Mélanesienne (1977–)

1 billion = 1 milliard = 1,000,000,000
From the late 1960s radical groups among the Melanesians of New Caledonia began to campaign for Independence. By the mid 1970s three Melanesian political parties championing Independence held seats in the Territorial Assembly and in 1977 the multi-racial Union Calédonienne also opted for Independence. The French government has recently sought to meet the pressures with a wide-ranging programme of economic and social development. Central to the programme is a renewed \textit{réforme foncière} aimed at returning substantial areas of land on the main island - the Grande Terre - to Melanesian ownership and control. There is considerable agreement that this is urgently necessary. But there is great disagreement about the extent and location of the land to be affected, the terms on which it will be acquired and the manner on which it should be reallocated among Melanesians. These matters underlie current New Caledonian politics and strongly affect the Independence issue. This text will examine the reform programme, and the land reform in particular, in relation to New Caledonian society and politics, including the colonial background. It will then attempt to relate the New Caledonian situation to Australia's regional interests and responsibilities.

**COLONIAL ORIGINS**

Several authors have traced with thoroughness and skill the impact of colonization on Melanesian society and Melanesian lands (notably Douglas 1972; Saussol 1971, 1979; Roux 1974, 1977). Bronwen Douglas cites the official attitude in Paris shortly after the annexation in 1853. It embodied the prevailing European distinction between the rights of civilized nations and those of 'peuplades sauvages' not organized under recognizable governments:

\begin{quote}
The uncivilised inhabitants of a country have over that country only a limited right of domination, a sort of right of occupation ... A civilized 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 primitive title (Minister of the Navy and Colonies to Foreign Minister, 22 February 1854, cit. Douglas 1972:369).
\end{quote}

A proclamation of 20 January 1855 by Governor Du Bouzet translated this principle into a recognition of the Melanesians' right only to land actually under cultivation. 'Vacante', or unoccupied, land would constitute the domaine of the state and be available for

\footnote{1 The following section draws substantially on the work of Douglas for the nineteenth century and Saussol for the twentieth to 1977.}
settlement. The vagueness of the term 'vacant' led to the over­
riding of Melanesian claims not only to their zone of hunting and
hunting and gathering land but to their fallowed gardens as well, the French
authorities not understanding the extent of the cycle of fallowing.
In other respects, however, Du Bouzet's policies contained certain
safeguards. Saussol and Roux regard the proclamation as effectively
recognizing the rights of individual families and clans as proprie­
tary rights. Further proclamations annulled all previous transfers
of land to settlers, established the sole right of government to
acquire land from Melanesians, and declared that in addition to their
cultivations one tenth of the rural land available for sale to
colonists would be reserved for Melanesians.

The attempt to distinguish between 'occupied' and 'vacant' lands
was a classic one among European powers colonizing the Pacific, but
like the British in New Zealand and the Germans in New Guinea the
French soon found that truly vacant land - in the sense of land not
subject to any claim by indigenous clans - was practically non­
existent. Virtually all land was claimed or controlled by one or
more clans and, if not subject to actual cultivation, formed their
hunting and gathering zone. The anticipated straightforward survey
of the land and location of settlement therefore did not take place;
instead Melanesians, feeling threatened by settler encroachments,
attacked isolated groups of settlers who thought they had bought
proprietary rights by making presents to chiefs, or who had been
installed by the administration without thorough consultation and
agreement with the clans. The administration responded with
punitive expeditions, widespread confiscation of land and confine­
ment of offending or allegedly offending clans to small areas.

From 1858 Paris instituted a policy of making large concessions
of land outside the pacified area to intending settlers and settler
companies. This, and other grandiose plans, were opposed by Du
Bouzet and a later governor, Guillain, who sought to confine the
settlements to areas where the Melanesian population was sparse,
but the reservation of one tenth of the vacant land for the
Melanesians was quietly dropped, they were now assured, at
best, their 'occupied' lands - a concept dependent on administrators' estimates of their requirements.

Guillain for some years diverted settlement from the Melanesian
settlements in the north and east of the island but by 1868 the
transportation of convicts and settler lobbying in Paris caused him
to embark on a new programme of defining and concentrating the
scattered Melanesian holdings. This was the policy of 'cantonnement'.
It involved defining a space deemed sufficient to protect the
Melanesian clans in their subsistence culture, while making available
for settlement the land outside the reserve (Guillain memorandum,
Moreover the land was to be held on an entirely new basis. Traditional Melanesian land rights were complex. The clan of a patrilineal descent group (typically numbering about fifty persons) developed intimate and intricate cultural ties with the territory of which it was, theoretically, the first cultivator. It occupied a hamlet or small village, the focal point of which was the big house (grande case) situated on a mound or hillock (tertre) and surmounted by a sculpture of a deified ancestor and a spire containing totemic emblems. This was the scene of collective group activity and decision making. Because of the flux of population, migration and war, several clans may have moved in upon the same territory, in which case there might be several 'great houses' in a village. Clans, families within clans, and their male heads were ranked, the rank order being denoted by ritual offerings of yams. Ideally the senior male of the senior line of the founding clan would be 'the chief' with diverse ritual responsibilities and prerogatives of leadership (rather than command). But chiefship in multi-clan settlements could be complex and reflect changing physical or political preponderance. Yet in this complexity one important principle seems to have been recognized.. The authority over land of the clan segment deemed 'original' was normally respected, because of its relation with the spirits who dwelt on the land. The head of that segment, the maître de la terre (master of the land), retained important responsibilities as custodian of genealogical and cadastral knowledge with authority to arbitrate difficult questions in the disposition of the land within the collective clan proprietorship. The 'political' chiefs normally deferred to this and they traditionally did not control larger areas or own larger land rights than other members. Individuals personally held rights to their gardens and garden produce (Douglas 1972, 1980).

In contrast to this system Guillain allowed himself to be persuaded by arguments that Melanesian land was, or ought to be, communal property of a larger unit, the tribu, which acted through the chiefs. His decree of 22 January 1868 inaugurated the system of réserves, on that basis. The tribu, as a proprietor of land, was in fact a fictional, administrative concept. The traditional proprietary rights of individual families and clans, more accurately recognized by Du Bouzet, and the traditional authority of the customary maîtres de la terre, although they persisted to a greater or lesser degree in the Melanesian culture, were administratively overridden. Under Guillain's cantonnement the 'political' chiefs were given formal authority to allocate land within the reserves - powers which they had to only a limited extent traditionally. Douglas writes:

... the traditionally scattered pattern of settlement, based on the family unit and centred on the garden lands of particular clans was to be formally replaced by concentration in villages, based on the artificial administrative unit of the tribe (Douglas 1972:380).
The reserves were totally inalienable by the tribu yet they were not true proprietorships but octroi, donations or concessions by the state, and their boundaries could be modified for public purposes.

The policy was first applied in the northeast, after rebellions in that area in 1868-69 and on the west coast after 1876, possibly contributing to the rebellion of 1878 which threatened Noumea. Paradoxically Guillain had considered his policy, while making way for settlement, to be protective of Melanesian culture against pressure from both settlers and Paris to individualize Melanesian land rights in order to acquire them more easily. The more paternalistic officials hoped that ultimately the Melanesians would acquire individual holdings but assumed that if they acquired them at this stage they would soon alienate them. However, as Douglas and other writers have pointed out, the reserves system had opened the way to equal rapacity by the state.

A further decree of 1876 permitted the modification of reserve boundaries by simple administrative act, according to the numerical strength of the clans. The Melanesian population was estimated to be falling rapidly from about 50,000 persons before colonization to 42,000 in 1887, and 27,768 in 1901. This was held, after 1895, as substantial justification by Governor Feillet of his vigorous pursuit of cantonnement to make way for a new programme of free settlement. Feillet furthermore asserted in a decree of 23 November 1897 that the administration had the right of appropriation, pure and simple, of portions of reserved land, and the right to relocate the inhabitants on other land of the administration's choice. As Saussol points out, he justified this by the legal fiction that the chief was sovereign proprietor of the reserve, and had surrendered that authority to France. This itself was an extension of Guillain's fatal fiction of 1868, which has erected the concept of a collective tribal property controlled by chiefs (Saussol 1971:104).

Feillet's governorship thus resulted in a wholesale bundling of clans onto reserves, more often than not on land not their traditional patrimony, dependent on the tolerance and generosity of the host clans and their maîtres de la terre. New Caledonia was not nearly as bountiful in good soils as Feillet and his associates

1 Modern demographers and Pacific historians are now casting doubt on the theory of drastic decline of Pacific populations, arguing that the early explorers' estimates were serious exaggerations and that losses by epidemic disease were quickly made up. In view of the more accurate census-taking by the late nineteenth century, I am not wholly convinced by the new revisionist theories. In any case drastic population decline was assumed to be a fact by contemporary officials and indigenes alike, and their assumptions were potent in what followed.
had depicted and demand for the scarce alluvial soils caused a progressive erosion of the reserves, in particular on the lower river valleys where the Melanesians' traditional settlements and yam gardens had been most heavily concentrated. The process continued until 1902 until the reserves on the Grande Terre totalled less than one tenth of the island.

The cantonnement produced enormous confusion and demoralization among Melanesians, the more so since the grands chefs and petits chefs appointed by the administration often became parties to it, obliged to cooperate in the surrender of territory in return for some monetary compensation. From the outset, and still, there has been (on many of the more land-short reserves especially) severe tension and discord between the officially recognized chiefs and their kin, and between the 'stranger' and 'host' clans. These tensions have been difficult to resolve, given the colonial distortions of the traditional authority structure; but one important traditional technique, sorcery, has continued to be used. Assaults and alcoholism are other unhappy outcomes of cantonnement and the tensions on the reserves. The jealousy and competition for limited resources, and the rigid notion of a collective property, incommutable and inalienable, directed by the chiefs, has also contributed to the frustration of commercial agriculture by individuals or families (although lack of agricultural extension services and reliable collecting, processing and marketing facilities have also been serious inhibitions).

After 1903 cantonnement as a systematic process ceased, but in particular cases, such as the opening of new nickel mines, reserves were diminished. Moreover, unofficially, the settlers and their cattle continued to encroach on Melanesian reserves. Officially, however, and largely at the injunction of the missionaries, a small countercurrent of increase of reserves began. In 1869, local unrest and missionary pressure caused the shelving of plans to use the Loyalty Islands as a new convict settlement and in 1900 the Islands were declared entirely a reserve. In 1913 the Ile des Pins (which had been used as a settlement for deported Paris communards among others), was also so declared. On the Grande Terre there was a net increase of about 10,000 ha in the reserves between 1903 and 1945 (Saussol 1979:109).

In addition to the spoliation of their lands (comparable to that suffered by the Australian Aborigines) the Melanesians of New Caledonia - especially the Grande Terre - came under the regime of the indigénat, a code of 'native regulations' common to French colonies before World War II, which forbade free movement from the reserves and closely regulated life thereon. In addition, Melanesians were required to do compulsory labour on roads and other public works and (through levy of a head tax) obliged to work as exploited labour for settlers. These obligations were enforced by the syndics des affaires autochtones - that is the ubiquitous gendarmes in one of their many roles. The appointed
chefs were paid a percentage of taxes and wages collected. Many were drawn into this exploitative role; more defiant ones were replaced. Sometimes they retained a certain customary authority (Saussol 1979; Thompson and Adloff 1971:260-66).

Yet, while using them as a source of labour for European enterprises the administration did not set out to assimilate the Melanesians. On the contrary the reserves were to uphold a form of traditional society — notably customary marriage and succession to property. This was underpinned by a judicial separation. While the French and other non-Melanesian minorities live under the prescriptions of the *droit commun*, roughly translatable as the French common law,¹ Melanesians (except for a few hundred who have opted for the *droit commun*) live under the *statut particulier* (authorized by the French *code civil*) which exempts them from some of the obligations of the French (such as military service abroad) and upholds the 'civil' aspects of custom (*droit coutumier*). This was to become important in land reform in 1978-80.

On the reserves education and amelioration of the Melanesian social condition was largely the responsibility of the Christian missions. Some missionaries also helped defend the reserves against further encroachment. No history of New Caledonia would be complete without mention of Pastor Maurice Leenhardt, a giant among Christians, whose regard for the Melanesians is reflected in his profound writings on their culture.

French colonization of New Caledonia has thus borne marked similarities to British colonization in Australia, characterized by ruthless land acquisition and the concentration of the indigenous people on reserves, largely out of convenience to settlement but also with the confused and poorly developed motive of preserving customary society against the ravages of a settlement deemed inevitable. The compulsory exactions of Melanesian labour betokens a basic and early purpose of exploitation; the encouragement of coffee growing and some relaxations of the *indigénat* in the 1930s an amelioration of that exploitation. In any event there was a sharp formal separation of indigenous and settler populations uncharacteristic of French colonialism. This was only slightly modified by interracial marriage among some of the early settlers. In general a highly unfavourable stereotype of Melanesians — even a racist attitude — has obtained among the French, quite different from their attitude to Polynesians, for example.

¹ The word 'statut' does not refer to a single 'statute' but to the 'status'established by the totality of laws and regulations which lay down the fundamental conditions of a collectivity. The translation of *droit commun* by 'common law' is a little misleading in that, since the *Code Napoléon*, French law does not admit all the heritage of medieval precedents and interpretations which English common law does; nor in the French system does modern judicial interpretation have quite the proportion of importance *vis-à-vis* statute law and regulation as does the English. Provided these points are recognized it is nevertheless possible to talk of a French common law.
The most significant features (for this analysis) of the evolution of settler society are the mining rush from 1873, culminating in the overwhelming dominance of the economy by nickel mining and processing—notably by the Société Le Nickel founded by John Higginson and subsequently under the substantial control of the Rothschild bank and the French government. A corollary of this was the decline of arable farming—partly from scarcity of cultivable land and partly for complex problems of costs, markets and cultural preferences—in favour of cattle ranching, and the aggregation of land titles into fewer and fewer large estates, often owned by absentee proprietors or pastoral societies founded by nickel-wealthy Noumeans. This was further encouraged by extensive leases of domaine land both before and after World War II (Roux 1977:29-48).

Immediately after World War II the land holding situation was as follows:

. Melanesian reserves on the Grande Terre totalled 126,614 ha on which dwelt about 19,000 Melanesians (1946 census figures). The land was very uneven in quality and very unevenly distributed among the clans. On some reserves there was adequate land for a small surplus for coffee production; on others there was not enough for the subsistence cycle.

. The Loyalty Islands and Ile des Pins comprised a further 209,372 ha, on which dwelt approximately 12,000 Melanesians (1946 census figures).

. On the Grande Terre 318,500 ha were held in proprietorship by Europeans and other settlers. A further 233,500 ha were held in lease from the Territory (1950 figures, cit. Thompson and Adloff 1971:381). The European population in 1946 was 18,100 while settlers of other origin (mostly Vietnamese and Indonesian indentured labour and their descendants) totalled 13,600 (1946 census figures). The balance of the 1.6 million ha of the Grande Terre was held as the domaine of the Territory. Most of it is in the uncultivable mountain chain and some of it is subject to mining concessions.

The maldistribution of land holding between Melanesians and settlers on the Grande Terre is matched by a comparable maldistribution among settlers. Of land held in private estates in 1950

6 landowners held 5,000 ha or more each (29% of total area ceded),
89 " 500 to 5,000 ha " (43% " " " " " ),
1,738 " less than 500 ha " (28% " " " " " ).

The distribution of leaseholds was similar (Thompson and Adloff 1971:381). The maldistribution of European holdings intensified, rather than ameliorated, in the postwar decades, with the continued decline of agriculture and concentration on nickel production. Following the report of Inspector Sorin (1955-56) Roux notes: 'Besides 105 large estates of which 7 cover each 5,000 to 10,000 ha and 2 respectively 15,000 ha (Etablissements Ballande) and 32,600 ha (Société Ouaco); there are nearly 1,300 settlers living on an average area of 10 ha' (Roux 1977:22).
These imbalances, their historical origins, the economic/political structures which sustained them, and social and economic divisions between Melanesians and settlers to which they gave rise, shaped the politics of the postwar period.

POST WORLD WAR II DEVELOPMENTS

Occupation of New Caledonia by allied forces in the Pacific War, their employment of Melanesian labour in wartime construction, and the easy-going anti-colonial attitudes of the Americans in particular, caused the effective collapse of the indigénat. The first postwar French governments attempted a liberalization though certainly not a relinquishment of their imperial order and in 1946 formally abolished the indigénat. In New Caledonia Melanesians acceded to civil liberties and the rights of free labour. From 1951 they were effectively enfranchised (Saussol 1979:361-63; Lenormand 1953; Dorney 1981).

The first organizations effectively to mobilize Melanesian voters were mission-based, reflecting in part the strength of Melanesian regard for the missions and in part the Churches' concern about early postwar socialist and communist proselytization among them. The Catholics in 1946 formed the Union des Indigènes Calédoniens Amis de la Liberté dans l'Ordre (UICALO); the Protestants responded with the Association des Indigènes Calédoniens et Loyalitâns Français (AICLF).

Both organizations regarded the land question as central. This involved, first, the defence of the reserves against further encroachment or subdivision. Paradoxically, now that they were no longer virtual prisons, the reserves gained a new respect, indeed veneration, among Melanesians, as a bastion of their culture against the colonial onslaught.

But there quickly developed also a demand for the return of much more land. For many this was simply a response to demographic growth and economic need. In some cases the population densities on reserves had reached the order of 50 persons per km² of cultivable land - inadequate for the traditional subsistence cycle let alone commercial production. For others the demand related more to the recovery of traditional clan territory, the return of uprooted clans to their ancient terre et cultural roots, and an easing of the tensions and conflicts among the clans thrown together in the reserves. In other words, what officials tended to call the 'economic' claim and the 'psychological' claim were mixed from the beginning of resurgent Melanesian demands.

Both demands came to be reflected in the programme of the Union Calédonienne (UC), the political movement formed in 1951 by liberal Frenchmen and Melanesians of the UICALO and AICLF following
the enfranchisement of the Melanesians. It supported Maurice Lenormand who was successful in the 1951 elections to the National Assembly, largely on the Melanesian vote. The UC programme drew upon that of the two earlier mission-based organizations but also had support from the urban progressives, many of whom favoured redistribution of some of the underused estates of the pastoral companies and absentee owners on the west coast. From its inception the UC was a multi-racial party, using the slogan 'Deux couleurs, un seul peuple'. When the conservatives sought to neutralize the Melanesian vote by demanding separate electoral colleges for the two races - thereby relating the progressive/conservative division to the politics of colour - the UC successfully resisted. It favoured a liberal grant of responsibility for an elected New Caledonian assembly and council, perhaps leading to autonomie interne.

It should nevertheless be noted that the settler supporters of the UC gave their support for many different reasons, for example the advancement of New Caledonian businessmen and public servants against the influence of the metropolitan French. Not all of these were liberal and progressive, and almost all would have assumed that autonomie interne meant continued white dominance.

The UC leaders who were most progressive on Melanesian rights had constantly to compromise with the more conservative of their settler supporters. Not surprisingly the early UC programme for Melanesians was aimed more at greater inclusion of Melanesians within the framework of white institutions than at any accentuation of Melanesian culture. In land policy it was evolutionary in the sense that, while it advocated the defence of the reserves, it also spoke of cadastral survey and registration of individual and family as well as clan holdings, and it acknowledged the freedom of individual Melanesians to renounce their statut particulier and come as individuals under the statut de droit commun (Saussol 1979:370-71). With Melanesian and petit blanc support the UC in 1953 won a majority in the Territory's General Council; nine Melanesians were elected. In 1956 a Socialist government in Paris developed a progressive loi-cadre ('framework-law') for all French overseas territories. As applied to New Caledonia in 1957 (under Lenormand's pressure) it involved the creation of a Territorial Assembly and a Governing Council - an embryo ministerial system with members selected by majority vote of the Assembly. (For a published discussion see Thompson and Adloff 1971:290-306; for an authoritative treatment see Dornoy 1981).

Under the impetus of this political evolution, and of critical reports by metropolitan officials (notably of Inspector Sorin 1955-1956), a variety of efforts at land reform was attempted. These have been brilliantly analysed by Saussol (1979).
There first ensued what Saussol calls the era of the *agrandissement des réserves*, as they were enlarged by transfers of *domaine* land, repurchased private estates and land sequestrated from Japanese nationals during the war. Saussol's figures for the Grande Terre reserves (Saussol 1979:377) are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>126,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>143,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>143,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>161,932</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thereafter the aggrandissement of reserves land slowed. In 1979 they still totalled only 162,536 ha. Although it relieved the pressure on some reserves, at no time did the process keep pace with the Melanesian demographic explosion; indeed Saussol calculates that the overall ratio of hectares per head of population on Grande Terre reserves fell from 7.61 in 1912 to 4.8 in 1969.

There were other weaknesses in the process. First, the areas added were not necessarily added to the reserves of greatest need. For example, they were larger in the less populous reserves of the mountain chain, where it was easier to transfer areas of *domaine* land, than on the crowded coastal pockets where fertile land was held as tenaciously by the settlers as it was demanded by Melanesians.

The question of distribution among the various families and clans on the reserves also became contentious. The administration legally recognized only the *tribu* as a collective proprietor and the extensions of the reserves were vested in the *tribu*. Allocation within the reserves was formally the responsibility of the official *chefs* and a newly-recognized body (on each reserve), the *Conseil des Anciens*, comprising several appointed elders. These officials were sometimes customary clan heads and *maîtres de la terre*, sometimes not. There was frequently contention about the allocation of the land among the leadership and between clans with traditional claims to the land and the stranger clans thrown into the reserves by the *cantonnement*. In general, the administration leaned towards support of the 'economic' claim - the actual land needs for subsistence or farming - rather than the 'psychological' claim to ancestral territory. The traditional claimants therefore often felt their claims to the land further threatened by the entrenchment of the other groups on the extensions to the reserves.

Saussol has analysed the internal subdivision of the *agrandissements* on several reserves and found considerable variation according to local factors. Where the extensions affected reserves containing one or more of the traditional claimant clans, these did tend to gain more in the internal allocation, and the traditional *maîtres de la terre* had a preponderant influence. Where the extensions involved no viable traditional claimant the *Conseil des Anciens* handled the internal allocation and tended to a more equal distribution, on a needs basis, though the more influential families on
the Conseil may have done rather better than others. Sometimes the disputes over redistribution led to the land lying idle for much of the time (Saussol 1979:394).

Problems such as these brought into question the whole concept of reserves (and their agrandissement). So too did the fact that increase of the reserves was not always accompanied by a corresponding increase in Melanesian agriculture. On the contrary, some of the reserves were turned over to beef cattle ranching which expanded rapidly among Melanesians in this period, while coffee growing halted or even declined. This was partly a function of the easier work and greater prestige associated with cattle ranching and partly a function of the entry of Melanesians into salaried employment in the towns and the mines. The income flowing to reserves from the salariés has far outstripped the returns from agriculture, while the population of reserves has in some cases fallen, despite the overall demographic increase. By 1976 over 20 per cent of Melanesians lived in towns. The reacquisition of land was thus taking place within a new set of economic aspirations and opportunities. Roux (1974) and Saussol (1979:394-404) have shown that the attitudes of young Melanesians, in particular, are very ambivalent. Whilst seeing in the reserve a kind of security, they are frequently bored with the life of the reserve and frustrated by the limited economic opportunities there. A further pressure point is created by the customary succession rules which may favour a man's elder brother rather than his own children, or another lineage altogether if he has only usufruct rights. These factors led to discussion, among the administration and among some Melanesians, of the desirability of dissolving the collective proprietorships of the reserves and registering individual and family titles to the land, perhaps under the droit commun, free from the restrictions on alienability, including mortgage.

Meanwhile in the 1950s entrepreneurial Melanesians themselves began to acquire land from settlers on lease or share-cropping arrangements, and occasionally even by purchase. Responding to the demand, and intending now - at long last - to assimilate Melanesians better into the introduced economic system, the administration developed two means of transferring land to Melanesians in individual title outside the reserves and under the droit commun. These were locations domaniales and concessions domaniales. The locations were leases with a promise of sale after a certain term of years and improvement of the land. They were favoured by the Melanesians both as a mode of acquiring individual titles and as effectively adding to reserves, on the margins of which they were often granted. Saussol calculated that 196 locations totalling 18,861 ha were granted in the period 1958-1963, greatly exceeding formal agrandisements of reserves during that time.

The second method, concessions domaniales, involved grants of domaine land, available first to returned soldiers (of any race) then to enfants du pays (persons born in New Caledonia). Free grants
(concessions gratuïtes) were normally 25 ha each but could be added to a location or to a concession involving progressive payments (titre onéreux). The concessions gratuïtes were given in provisional title for five years. These were made definite when improvement conditions were met. Widely granted to European applicants they were made available to Melanesians increasingly in the 1960s and eventually overtook locations in importance as a means by which Melanesians acquired land. They were often, but by no means always, on the margins of reserves. The system of concessions was suspended in 1974, partly because Europeans were acquiring them for hunting and recreation purposes around the margins of Melanesian reserves in the mountain chain, and partly to allow the Service du Domaine (Lands Department) to catch up with the survey and paperwork generated by a backlog of applications (Roux, verbal communications 1979–80).

During the industrial boom also, Melanesians began to acquire lots de village - urban concessions in new Noumea suburbs and other townships.

Other modes of land transfer analysed by Saussol reflect an interest by French administrators in trying to adapt customary Melanesian social organization to modern land development. These included an early (1958) experiment with a cooperative at Nassirah which failed, as cooperatives have failed elsewhere in the Pacific, because of rather naive European assumptions about the collective nature of Melanesian society and economics. Later 'sociétés civiles agricoles' (agricultural cooperatives) were organized around existing Melanesian entrepreneurs and regulated within a framework governing such societies generally. These have been much more successful and have received loan finance from new state credit organizations designed to foster rural development.

Internal subdivisions of reserves by which the appointed and customary authorities formally recognize 'a permanent right of possession and enjoyment' (though not of alienation) in a particular parcel of land by an individual or family, may also be registered by the Service du Domaine and form the basis of personal loans. This practice has been used on some reserves to foster individual enterprises (Saussol 1979:423–31). It is essentially a formalization of traditional individual rights within group land.

Another significant experiment in the Tchamba valley involved the subdivision of a former Japanese proprietorship into thirty-two lots and their allocation under droit commun, after public discussion involving the clans of the adjacent reserve (whose land it formally was) in the ratio of seventeen lots to the traditional claimants and others linked to them, to fifteen to Europeans and Melanesians having no relationship with or consent from the locals. The evidence of improvement of the land by the traditional claimants and the failure to improve (or even reside on) the land among the stranger
Melanesians, is considered by some French analysts (notably Guiart 1961, 1974) to show that without the consent of the customary authorities Melanesian landholders are not well motivated to improve their holdings, whatever rights the droit commun gives them. Saussol surmises, however, that where they hold under both the droit commun and the approval of traditional authorities the former rights will in time supplant the latter in importance (Saussol 1971:120-21).

Whether this is so is a moot point, because there is a tendency for individual holdings on the margins of reserves to be drawn into the property-rights system of the clans. This is partly a function of the customary law of succession, which favours the nearest clan claimant, not necessarily the children or widow of the deceased. Since only a few hundred Melanesians have opted for the statut commun most Melanesians' inheritance rights are governed legally by the statut particulier. Pressure for a customary devolution of land therefore has been supported in effect by the law, even though the incidents of title may have been those of the droit commun.

It is clear then that the French authorities had made some effort to return land to Melanesians, and had evolved several forms of title, of transfer, of rural credit and of adapting customary organization to modern exigencies. In some ways they had been more adventurous than their counterparts in adjacent Anglophone Oceanic dependencies – if only because they had at their disposal the category of domaine land, ruthlessly acquired by their predecessors.

But precisely because it raised fundamental questions of the form of society to evolve in New Caledonia, and of who should control that society, the land reform question evoked more and more controversy.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND POLITICAL CHANGE

In the 1950s more progressive sections of the Union Calédonienne began to feel that the piecemeal aggrandisement of reserves was altogether too limited and contemplated a much more thorough-going transfer of land to be based on much higher land rents or taxes, and on powers of pre-emptive purchase or even expropriation of unused or underused settler land. The grands colons – led by Henri Lafleur, Roger Laroque and Georges Châtenay – were already anxious about the threat to their primacy apparent in the growing success of the Melanesian-backed UC and by the adoption in New Caledonia of the loi-cadre. Lenormand considered the revised statute granted to New Caledonia in 1957 inadequate (especially in its failure to devolve fiscal powers) but under it ministers had authority to direct various departments of government, and the UC, having won the elections to the Territorial Assembly, occupied these posts. Among the conservatives apprehension developed not only of liberal-socialist reforms but also about the implications of autonomist
thinking. *Autonomist* ideas, in the sense of a desire for greater independence from France in economic matters, were not absent from the settlers' thinking either, even among business circles. But their views were ambiguous, and with the Melanesians still comprising 50 per cent of the population, many began to fear the ultimate abrogation of white supremacy.

If such notions were then actually remote from the UC, more thorough-going land reform was not and it was this which precipitated drastic action by the settlers. In 1958, with De Gaulle recently acceding to power in Paris, armed *broussards* (bush settlers), with the complicity of the army, caused disturbances in Noumea and threatened Lenormand. When Lenormand was thought to be organizing Melanesians to make counter-demonstrations his deputy, the Melanesian chief Roch Pidjot, was harrassed and other UC leaders temporarily imprisoned. The governor, Grimald, regained control and there followed De Gaulle's famous referendum by which the French overseas territories voted whether to stay in the French Union. Lenormand and the UC, anxious to rebut charges of secessionism, campaigned for a 'yes' vote (unlike Pouvanaa Oopa of Tahiti who was subsequently charged with incendiariism and exiled); but they have subsequently claimed that they were assured by Paris - and still have the telegram to prove it - that political evolution to self-determination, along the lines subsequently followed by France's tropical African colonies, had been promised for New Caledonia. Instead, the new governor, Pechoux, began whittling away the powers accorded under the *loi-cadre* and obliged Lenormand to resign from the Governing Council. Although he was overwhelmingly reelected to the National Assembly, and the UC continued to win majorities in Territory elections, further disturbances occurred and in 1963 Lenormand, implicated in an alleged bomb plot, was deprived of civil liberties for five years. The UC remained a considerable force under Roch Pidjot's leadership but the 1963 revision of the Territory statute under Governor Jacquinot sharply reduced the powers and size of the Governing Council. Only five non-official members remained; they were no longer 'ministers' and they were elected by proportional, not majority, representation of the Territorial Assembly (Thompson and Adloff 1971:317-18; Dornoy 1981). Effective power lay largely with the governor (later called high commissioner), his secretary-general, and the army and gendarmerie they controlled; and with Paris, which subvented the annual Territory budget, appointed the principal officials, and oversaw in great detail all new developments.

The events of 1958-1962 established the conjunction of the right and centre in France with the settler right in New Caledonia. France needed the settlers to retain the French presence; the settlers, despite the evident subordination of the Territory to metropolitan interests, needed France to preserve their privileges against the resurgent Melanesians.
The demographic balance in the island also moved against the Melanesians. New immigration of French settlers included perhaps 2,000 *pieds-noirs* from Algeria, and a considerable number of ex-servicemen on retirement pay. The biggest influx, including many small business people, came with the nickel boom of 1969-1974. Immigration of Polynesians from Wallis Island and French Polynesia (Tahiti, Austral Islands, Marquesas, etc.) flowed steadily from the 1950s and these groups also formed substantial minorities. Both groups of Polynesians tended to manifest an ethnocentric superiority towards the Melanesians, and the Wallis Islanders in particular saw themselves as dependent upon the French for jobs and land, and voted with them.

Table 1 compares the size of the Melanesian population with that of European and other settler groups.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Europeans</th>
<th>% of Total Popul.</th>
<th>Number of Melanesians</th>
<th>% of Total Popul.</th>
<th>Number of Others</th>
<th>% of Total Popul.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887e</td>
<td>18,800</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>42,500</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>62,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>22,750</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>29,100</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>2,550</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>54,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>20,900</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>28,500</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>53,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>17,300</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>28,800</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>50,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>14,200</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>27,100</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>47,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>15,200</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>28,600</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>13,400</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>57,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>15,400</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>28,800</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>53,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>18,100</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>13,600</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>62,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>20,400</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>11,100</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>65,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>25,160</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>34,969</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>8,351</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>68,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>33,355</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>41,190</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>11,974</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>86,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>41,268</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>46,200</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>13,111</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>100,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974e</td>
<td>51,582</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>53,725</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>26,358</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>131,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>50,757</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>55,598</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>26,878</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>133,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979e</td>
<td>49,900</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>59,400</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>28,800</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>138,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980e</td>
<td>49,700</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>60,500</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>29,400</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>139,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*e* - estimated


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1. The number of ex Algerian *colon* tends to be exaggerated by Australian commentators. They were not officially assisted and no statistics are kept to precisely identify the group. Retired army personnel are probably equally numerous.

2. In recent work Dr Dorothy Shineberg of the Australian National University has shown that the estimate and censuses for the years 1887 to 1911 probably involved errors of up to 12 per cent. They must therefore be treated with considerable reservation.
These figures show that the Melanesians first became outnumbered by the combined settler groups as recently as the late 1950s, and then only marginally until the nickel boom of 1969-1974 when they comprised only 41.7 per cent of the population. In the last three years the Melanesian proportion has increased again in comparison with the European population. The collapse of nickel prices and the ensuing economic malaise has led to a net decline in migration of Europeans, which the net birth rate does not make up.

The other obvious feature is the growing importance of the 'other' ethnic groups, notably the Wallis Islanders. Table 2 shows the proportions for the 1969 and 1976 censuses.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition of 'other' ethnic groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964 (estimate) 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number % of total population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number % of total population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallis Islanders 6,220 6.2 9,571 7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Polynesians 3,370 3.3 6,391 4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesians 4,400 4.4 5,111 3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese 1,500 1.6 1,943 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hebrideans (ni-Vanuatu) 200 0.2 1,050 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (from Réunion, Martinique, Guyana, Guadeloupe etc.) 600 0.6 2,812 2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Service de la Statistique 1980:8

By 1969 the Wallis Islanders were already the third largest ethnic group and they have rapidly increased both in numbers and proportion since. In 1979 they were estimated at 10,800, 7.8 per cent of the population, with French Polynesians 6,500 and 4.7 per cent (a slightly declining proportion). The rapid growth of the Wallisian population is the result of very high birth rates - sustained largely by the generous French allocations familiales as well as by immigration. But there has been a net decline in Wallis Island migration in 1979-1980 (with more departing than arriving).
The 1976 census showed the proportions of each ethnic group born in New Caledonia (Table 3).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proportions of ethnic groups born in New Caledonia</th>
<th>per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melanesians</td>
<td>99.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesians</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallisians</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polynesians</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hebrideans (ni-Vanuatu)</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INSEE 1976:26

Precisely at the time of their reassertion, therefore, the Melanesians found themselves outnumbered as the result of new migration. In this basic fact alone originates much of the ensuing political confrontation.

The economics of the nickel boom did not favour the Melanesians, either. The rise in nickel prices from 1969 brought a heavy investment in mining and in secondary and service industries of Nouméa, which enjoyed a spectacular but temporary boom. During this period young Melanesians began to move to Nouméa and its environs in considerable numbers, reducing the commitment to coffee and the rural economy generally and contributing to unemployment in the towns when the boom passed in the early 1970s. Salaried officials of the various services, especially metropolitan French officials and the employees of the Société Le Nickel and other favoured firms, were the principal beneficiaries of the prosperity. In 1976 average wages were 6.4 times the level of 1969 but the number of wage earners increased only 2.5 times (Dornoy 1981: Chapter 4). Inflation, stimulated by the heavy demand from the wealthy for consumer goods, spiralled ahead of wages. It was aggravated by the regressive tax structure: there was no income tax but heavy duties on imported goods. The oligopoly of three or four big import/export firms limited competition. In short the boom benefitted those on high salaries and certain well situated entrepreneurs. Most others suffered under the inflation.

The Melanesians' share of the boom was disproportionately low. True, more Melanesians were brought into government employ in the service industries and into the teaching profession, and the average salaries of Melanesians in employment doubled. But in 1976 few Melanesians were employed in the private sector (relative to Wallis...
Islanders or other immigrant groups); among the salariés the Melanesians remained the least numerous group, and they formed less than 1 per cent of the employer class. Whilst the 'services' proportion of employees grew by 47 per cent from 1969-1976 and 'commerce' by 43 per cent, the Melanesians remained proportionately much the least involved ethnic group in those sectors. On 1976 figures 70 per cent of Melanesians were still engaged in subsistence agriculture, with but a small cash surplus (INSEE 1976:55). Moreover, in respect of family allowances and other benefits payable to employees, the Melanesians were frequently earning below the minimum of CFP 25,000 per month required to qualify, or were only 'actifs temporaires'. For cultural and historical reasons - shyness and maladroitness with regard to the bureaucratic process and a reluctance to confront officials after a century of contempt and condescension - they do not apply for all they could in the way of extra allowances or unemployment benefits. Thus, while a spectacular but insubstantial prosperity came to Noumea and a few small centres between 1969 and 1974, it widened the gap between the returns to most Melanesians and those to most settlers.

The unhealthy dependence on nickel also intensified, as the boom drew people further away from the rural economy. In 1976 nickel exports accounted for 97 per cent of value of all exports (Dornoy 1981: Chapter 4).

In this period, also, although some concessions continued to be granted, the rate of land redistribution to Melanesians slowed. By contrast there was a flurry of activity in the real estate market in Noumea and its environs to the advantage of developers and new migrants. Settlers also continued to receive concessions of bush land, largely for hunting and recreation purposes.

It is not surprising, in the face of all these trends and the continued inability of the Union Calédonienne to secure advances in political responsibility for the Territory, that Melanesian politics became more radical. It is also important to note, however, as has been pointed out in recent theses (Sim-Barr 1977; Dornoy 1981), that in any case the Melanesians were rejecting the cultural assimilationist policies of the UC - which had largely aimed at Melanesian advancement within Eurocentric concepts of progress - in favour of a reassertion of Kanak culture and values. This reassertion was to make at least as great an impact on New Caledonian politics as the earlier political mobilization of Melanesians by the UC.

From the late 1960s there emerged organized groups of educated young Melanesians. Among the leaders was M Nidoish Naisseline, a young high chief from Mare Island who was studying in Paris in 1968 at the height of the student fervour for decolonization and anti-capitalist revolt. The movement he founded in 1969, the Foulards Rouges, aimed at rediscovering and reasserting Kanak identity and
culture. Memories of the humiliation and exploitation of the *indigénat*, and continued day to day reminders of European paternalism and racism, produced a note of bitterness in the attitudes of many of the young radicals, whose basic nationalist, anti-colonial stance found expression in a certain amount of marxist analysis and rhetoric. But the movement generally operated at many more practical levels, embracing questions such as land rights, the place of Melanesian language and culture in the education system, and the right to publish Melanesian-language newspapers (forbidden as 'subversive' by the Administration). A later offshoot, the Groupe 1878, aimed particularly at mobilizing Melanesian opinion in respect of the land problems of the Grande Terre. Their demands included the wholesale return of ancestral land, a demand which, as Saussol wrote in 1971, had 'more and more the appearance of a "battleshoe" crystallising all the resentments of Melanesians and, by consequence, the reaction of the settlers. Under this heading one can affirm that now the question of land is the major, if not the only problem in the rural bushlands of New Caledonia'. He urged that it must be defused before a confrontation over land became unavoidable (Saussol 1971:112).

Demonstrations by Foulards Rouges and other groups in Noumea in September 1969, and from time to time in the early 1970s, produced confrontation, sometimes violent, with the forces of law and order. These tended to occur about 24 September, the day celebrated for the *prise de possession* of New Caledonia by France but treated by the Melanesians as a day of mourning for the loss of their liberty and the subjugation of their culture.

But the Melanesians were fast moving from protest to organized party politics. In 1970 a new Melanesian-led political party, the Union Multiraciale de Nouvelle Calédonie (UMNC) was formed by M Yann Céline Uregel, hitherto a member of the Union Calédonienne. The UMNC captured many Melanesian supporters of the UC as well as the temporary adherence of many Foulards Rouges. In the early 1970s both the UC and the UMNC pressed for *autonomie interne* (responsible self-government in all domestic matters) but already the 1970s were witnessing the advance towards Independence in Fiji (attained in 1970), Papua New Guinea (1975), the Solomon Islands (1978) and other adjacent British possessions. Consequently, and as a result of the failure of France to make any moves towards *autonomie* for New Caledonia, from 1975 the UMNC (renamed the Front Uni pour la Libération des Kanaks - FULK - in 1977) demanded full independence for New Caledonia. So too did a new radical party, the Parti de Libération Kanak (PALIKA), formed in 1977 by Naisseline, Elie Poigoune and Mlle Dewe Gorodey from elements of Foulards Rouges, Groupe 1878, Union des Jeunesses Calédoniennes and others, who preferred their own party to working under the aegis of FULK. Another moderate group, the Union Progressiste Multiraciale (renamed Union Progressiste Mélanésienne in 1977) (UPM), also broke away from the UMNC under André Gopea; it included many active Christian members, and favoured Independence by non-revolutionary means. These parties adumbrated a policy not merely of Independence but of 'Indépendance Kanak' - an
Independence recognizing the paramountcy of the Melanesians as the legitimate people of New Caledonia. Some such movement would certainly have arisen even if the conservative quasi-coup of 1958-1963 had not occurred. It is certain, however, that it would have had much less easy and swift success among the Melanesians if the UC, the party of their previous general allegiance, had been permitted to implement its policies of autonomie, land reform and advancement of Melanesians to a share of political and administrative responsibility and to the fruits of a diversified economy. The reaction of 1958-1963 had the ultimate effect of polarizing the politics of New Caledonia in terms of autonomy versus dependency and in terms of race — with whites standing for the continued French presence, white privilege, and limited autonomy; the blacks for Indépendance Kanak. Having embarked on an anti-autonomist course the French state was then obliged to intensify control of the Territory's democratic institutions, against mounting Melanesian radicalism ('répression' in the language of the Indépendantistes).

In March 1977 the Melanesian parties and some Melanesian candidates of the UC gained startling victories in the Territory's municipal elections, winning or threatening control of several East Coast communes. France responded with more changes to the Territorial laws. Aspects of the Loi Billotte of 1969 and the Loi Stinn of 1973, while formally upgrading the status and powers of the communes, transferred the responsibility for the local government budget directly to Paris. The Melanesian chefferie, increasingly criticized or ignored by some sections of the young radicals, also had their authority weakened in favour of the chefs de subdivision (the equivalent of the metropolitan sub-prefects). However, these measures (contrary to the effect of similar measures in French Polynesia) stimulated rather than discouraged Melanesian nationalism.

A revision of the basic Territorial statute in 1976 indicated the limits of local responsibility: France ('the State') still appoints the high commissioner and the senior officials of the administrative services. It retains formal responsibility for foreign affairs, defence, external communications, finance and credit, justice, local government, secondary and tertiary education, and radio and television. Other matters — primary education, health, transport, agriculture, and land are formally Territory matters, but the Territory lacks the finance, the staff, and the detailed legal authority to do much more than routine administration of these matters. Any major new departure — the recent land reform proposals, for example — requires elaborate coordination with Paris, visits each way by officials and politicians, months of planning, and dependence upon metropolitan finance.

Meanwhile the right wing and centre parties were also grouping and regrouping as factionalism and leadership rivalries, and divided and changing views on how to deal with the autonomist movement,
competed with the realization that some consolidation was necessary to meet the threat. The most important conservative party in the 1960s was the Union Démocratique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie headed by Lenormand's longstanding opponents Henri Lafleur, Roger Laroque and Georges Châtenay (leading nickel miners and businessmen). By 1977, after several divisions, its political successor - aligned to the Giscard d'Estaing group in France - was called the Rassemblement Pour la Calédonie (RPC). Perhaps its most important leader was Jacques Lafleur, Henri's son. In the 1977 elections it joined forces with the RPR (Rassemblement Pour La République), a pro Chirac (Gaullist) group led by the conservative Melanesian elder Dick Ukeiwe. The RPC/RPR combination presented a Liste d'Union of candidates for the 1977 elections.

The UC, meanwhile, had also lost some of its more conservative European supporters like Jean Lèques, now opposed to autonomie interne because of the increasing possibility of Melanesian dominance. Defections both by these on one hand and radical Melanesians on the other left it in 1972 in a minority in the Assembly for the first time since Melanesian enfranchisement (Sim-Barr 1977: Chapter 7). The UC responded by moving closer to the Melanesians, supporting 'Indépendance Kanak' rallies and, while formally clinging to the autonomie interne programme, noted that this was normally a prelude to Independence. In consequence a further group of (more liberal) European members also split away to form new groups such as the Union Nouvelle Calédonienne (UNC). These included able leaders like Jean-Pierre Aifa, a farmer of Arab descent and mayor of Bourail.

In the 1977 elections, then, the Territory was presented with a range of policies, from that of the RPR favouring a permanent connection with France and limited local autonomy, through various centre parties which wanted a reduction of the privileges of big business and the transfer of more responsibilities to the Territory, to the Union Calédonienne, the Parti Socialiste Calédonien (PSC) (formed in 1976 from the Trade Union movement and with autonomist leanings) and the Melanesian parties favouring Indépendance Kanak.

In the Territorial Assembly elections of September 1977 the results were as set out below in Table 4.
Table 4

Results of Assembly Elections 1977

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Percentage of vote</th>
<th>Assembly seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RPR/RPC</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various centrist parties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Nouvelle Calédonienne,</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Démocratique,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union pour le Renouveau de la</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calédonie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FULK</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALIKA</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPM</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parti Socialiste Calédonien</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 22 September 1977

The right wing RPR/RPC (soon to become the Rassemblement Pour la Calédonie dans la République - RPCR) and the centrist parties with 50.7 per cent of the vote and 19 seats (to the combined total of 46 per cent and 18 seats for the other parties) were thus able to form a coalition which usually dominated the Territorial Assembly and its various Commissions, and contributed most, but not all, of the members of the Governing Council (elected by proportional vote of the Assembly). In 1978 Lafleur formed the RPCR from the former RPC and other factions of the right. Some members shifted to centre parties.

As a result of the clear shift of Melanesian support from the UC to the Melanesian Indépendantiste parties (and more fundamentally because of the developing Independence movement both in the Pacific region and in the rural areas of New Caledonia) the Union Calédonienne now formally shifted its policy, following the elections, from

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1 In 1979 the RPCR stated that it was comprised of elements of the RPR, the RPC, the Mouvement Libéral Calédonien (MLC) led by Jean Lèques, the Jeunesse d'Action et de Réflexion Calédonienne (JARM), Jeunes Canaques Français (JC), Parti Républicain (PR) and the AICLF (*Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 7 March 1979).
autonomie interne to full Independence. This was a move of very great significance. Although it had already lost some European as well as Melanesian support the UC still encompassed both communities. And it was still one of the biggest parties. Its support for Independence meant that such a goal was no longer the preserve only of radical Melanesian parties, but a serious option confronting New Caledonia and France.

The situation brought increased polarization and new bitterness to the community. The September elections had produced some unpleasant nocturnal clashes as the adherents of the various parties sought to plaster Noumea with their posters and destroy those of their opponents. On a very much smaller and less lethal scale, developments in New Caledonia continued to provide echoes of the terrible divisions which had beset other French colonies. Given that the indigenous community could not forever be isolated from the worldwide currents of nationalism it was inevitable that they would reject their underprivileged colonial status and reassert their racial identity and their claim to self-determination. But already half the French community, unlike the settlers of British colonies, had been looking to closer integration with the Metropole - i.e. departmentalization - rather than responsible self-government; and now many of the remainder, who had been willing to contemplate autonomie interne, were frightened by the prospect of Indépendance Kanak - an Independence presumably dominated by the Melanesians. This is despite the fact that their numbers (35 per cent of the population) and their near-monopoly of managerial skills would give them effective control of the emergent state for many years.

At bottom, settler apprehension is born of highly ethnocentric - even racist - attitudes towards Melanesians. The French reputation for racial tolerance and mixing is rather let down in New Caledonia. In the southwest Pacific this is not peculiar to the French, however; European peoples almost invariably, in their racial stereotyping, prefer Polynesians to Melanesians. These attitudes stem from such basic matters as European conceptions of physical beauty, sensuality and/or availability of women, the presence or absence of ranking structures to which Europeans can relate, and the 'open' or 'closed' nature of the society. Moreover there are historical reasons: Melanesians in New Caledonia put up a spirited resistance to European encroachment and then were bundled onto reserves and not encouraged to engage with and assimilate to the full range of European culture. There they naturally held to their social structures and traditional belief system (despite the admixture of Christianity). Some became demoralized and alcoholic. The closest parallel in the Pacific is to the Australian Aborigines, and the extremely negative attitudes white Australians have formed about them.

Whatever the reasons there has been little real mixing in New Caledonia. Interracial marriages occur but are relatively few (in
comparison with, say, French Polynesia or New Zealand). The mixed-race community is too small to bridge the two cultures.

The Administration, having long denied Melanesians entry to the state schools, has in the last fifteen years greatly increased its efforts to bring education to the Melanesians. There are beautiful state schools in every local centre and a range of secondary and tertiary educational institutions. But although Melanesians are responding strongly and the lycées now have considerable numbers of Melanesian students, the response is proportionately low compared to that of other ethnic groups. The reasons are largely historic and cultural (it is hardly surprising that the Melanesians are reluctant to come forward now to eagerly embrace a completely Gallic education system) but explanations by New Caledonian French tend often to be in racist terms. Despite the liberal, indeed generous, attitude of some recent settlers and officials, old settler attitudes inevitably die hard. The Melanesians have long been despised, ignored or at best patronized by many settlers, and still are. About 85 per cent of the Europeans live in Noumea and neighbouring townships, and (like the settlers of Algiers and Oran) scarcely know the indigenous inhabitants. Their lifestyle and their associations are almost totally separate from the Melanesians, whom they meet only as hired labour (including domestic help), or (more recently) formally in class in the schools. Inevitably their contempt is increased by the excessive drinking of some Melanesians, and their apprehension by the increasing thefts of cattle and other property, and the stone throwing and drunken interceptions of European motorists at night near Melanesian settlements, which have accompanied the renewed Melanesian self-assertion. So although Melanesians are not generally aggressive, and thus far seem incapable of the organized ruthlessness of the Algerians or the Vietnamese, the settlers' reaction tends in part towards the purchase of arms and support for potentially militant organizations such as the Comités d'Action Civique, and Comités d'Action Contre l'Indépendance, which seek to organize settlers in a variety of tactics, including shows of strength, to defend the settler positions and stiffen the Administration against Indépendantiste demands.

While French officials make light of the divisions or the dangers, the possibility of some sort of physical clash is widely talked about informally. Given the history of the use of armed force in New Caledonian politics (notably in the Pétainist versus Gaullist confrontation of 1940 and in 1958 and 1963), and given the militancy both of PALIKA rhetoric and some of the settler statements, it is not surprising that there are fears of civil conflict of some kind, probably small-scale and localized but nevertheless vicious and deeply damaging. Indeed the authorities would be foolish to ignore the dangers; and they have not. In 1977 the existing gendarmes and civil police were reinforced by a company of gardes mobiles, and to the infantry and marines have been added a company of paratroops. A succession of visiting warships collaborate in the rehearsal of
amphibious and helicopter-borne operations on the coast and in the bush.\(^1\)

The question then arises, as in previous colonies subject to nationalist movements, as to how the forces of the state are brought to bear in civil politics. Statements by senior French ministers in the early 1970s suggested that New Caledonia, with its nickel and its relationship to the Tahiti nuclear testing programme, was essential to France and that the problems of public order that could be created by a population of 120,000 were trivial (see, for example, statement by the former prime minister, Pierre Messmer, cited in Sim-Barr 1977:29). Certainly demonstrations by the Foulards Rouges and the pro-Independence parties (which sometimes use language deemed seditious and conducive to violence, sometimes resort to stone throwing, and at other times are peaceful and non-violent) have been vigorously broken up by the police, and some of the leadership gaol ed. The tensions arising from this situation contributed in 1975 to the shooting by a nervous policemen of Richard Kamouda in Noumea during the dispersal of a rowdy (but not politically organized) group of young Melanesians. Not only because of the shooting but because of the virtual exoneration of the policeman, Kamouda became, for the Indépendantistes, the first martyr of the modern nationalist movement.

The land question also produced physical confrontation of a kind. In 1977 young PALIKA and UPM activists, tired of the encroachments by settlers and their cattle and tired of the incessant talk of recovering traditional land but the absence of swift results, launched a campaign out in the rural valleys to reoccupy land. There were no killings or woundings but young Melanesians and brousardes were both armed with hunting rifles and shotguns and each side alleged that the other fired shots - to discourage settlers on the one hand or to deter Melanesians on the other. The PALIKA campaign was checked by the gendarmerie and gardes mobiles in the vicinity of Balade, Touho, Poindimié, Ponerihouen and Thio.

In the countryside the forces of law and order have, with some skill, maintained a formal peace and generally avoided excessive use of force. But the delicacy of the situation, and the factors which give rise to that, were revealed in an incident at N'Goye on the east coast in December 1978. Two years previously a new nickel mine had

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\(^1\) It is difficult to say exactly how many military and paramilitary personnel are in New Caledonia. The 1976 census figures give 2,500 persons in the armed forces and police together. Unofficial non-partisan estimates in 1979 place the number much higher than that - normally in the order of 3,500 possibly rising to 5,000 during manoeuvres or change-over of army units.
been opened and its operations had begun to pollute the gardens and the lagoon used by an adjacent tribe (as well as providing them work). After a series of protests, in December 1978 the Melanesians struck and picketed the wharf to stop the loading of ore. Several days of negotiation failed to move them and on 18 December gendarmes were sent to the scene. According to the report of the trial a leader of the pickets then menaced an officer with a bush knife and the officer levelled his pistol at the man while the gendarmes removed the weapon. At that point Melanesians positioned in two groups to the side and rear of the gendarmes opened fire. Four gendarmes were wounded by ball and bird-shot, others were hit by stones. The gendarmes apparently replied with tear gas and perhaps with shots in the air and regained control (Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 19 December 1978, 29 December 1978).

In sum, several rural areas of the Grande Terre manifest a certain tension and are at least equally susceptible to sporadic violence as is Noumea where demonstration and counter-demonstration could, if not intelligently controlled, also get out of hand.

PROPOSALS FOR SYSTEMATIC LAND REFORM

From time to time metropolitan officials (such as Inspector Sorin in 1955) and scholars as well as reformist politicians in New Caledonia had condemned the maldistribution of land and urged systematic and radical reform. But little had been done during decades of conservative politics other than to grant locations and concessions of domaine land to Melanesians, virtually for the first time, in an effort to create a Melanesian smallholding class. When the issue was approached again in the mid 1970s, in the context of a drive to stimulate agriculture, the Kanak resurgence and its associated political arms were well established. A 'Commission for Rural Economy' in 1976, reflecting the strong settler dislike of the reserves, again contemplated their subdivision into individual and family holdings. Even though the Commission suggested that these might still be inalienable the Melanesian political leaders, and authorities on the reserves, were overwhelmingly opposed - to the surprise and disappointment of the officials and settlers. To make their own subdivisions on reserves (which they frequently did, often with recognition of the primary rights of the traditional proprietor clans) was one thing; a subdivision directed by paternalistic officials or the political parties of their adversaries was quite another. Their opposition was acknowledged by a visiting metropolitan official, Inspector-General Jacquier (Dornoy 1981: Chapter 4).

Among the prominent Melanesian opponents of the Commission was André Gopea of the Union Progressiste Mélanesienne (UPM). In May 1977
Gopea proposed land reform, not by tackling the reserves but by a systematic redistribution of both private and domaine lands that were uncultivated, abandoned or 'insufficiently exploited'. These were to be allocated either as aggrandisement of the reserves or to individuals (especially but not exclusively Melanesians) for exploitation under new and more productive systems of agriculture. A new Commission Territoriale de Réorganisation Foncière, which included the customary authorities from reserves adjacent to the land from time to time under consideration, was to supervise the process. Proprietors were to be given reasonable notice but if land was not then improved it was to be expropriated by the state under a 'right of pre-emption'. Compensation was to be paid by the Territory, which would have the power to determine the price of the land. All existing leases were to be reviewed by the new Commission (AT, Procès-verbal 25 May 1977:29ff).

The UPM motion embraced both the so-called 'economic' and 'psychological' (or 'customary') claims and was flexible as regards reallocation of the land. However, immediately, and with Gopea's foreknowledge, M Lenormand, now back in politics, proposed a UC motion which focused on the 'customary' claim:

Considering the people despoiled of their ancestral lands and welcomed by other tribes following the cantonnement, the Assembly demands that in the repurchase of lands priority be given to the urgent problems of returning Melanesian families to their ancestral land with respect for the status of reserves and the right to free choice of individuals and invites the Governing Council to table a draft law instituting the necessary organizations and structures (AT, Procès-verbal 25 May 1977:32).

Lenormand said that for twenty years the UC had been asking for the Territory the powers of pre-emption already possessed by the Departments of France. Both motions were referred to the Commission for Agriculture to study.

Soon afterwards a number of cases arose which indicated the serious obstacles to the effective transfer of land under the existing legal framework. A classic case concerned the property of the settler Mazurier in the Houailou valley. There the tribe Nessakouya contested the boundary; their existing settlement, moreover, was flooded annually. Twenty years before, in 1958, a local leader had asked for the return of ancestral land for the group but nothing had been done and in 1977 the group was again asking for the restoration of about 50 ha of their traditional land. Mazurier at first would not sell more than 11 ha for a price of CFP 7 million, but eventually the Administration got an offer of 38 ha for CFP 5 million. Even this was a price much above the
average for rural land - perhaps five times as much - but the area was a tense one, Melanesians having encroached on Mazurier's land and Mazurier allegedly having fired shots at them. With some reluctance, and fear of increasing the already high asking prices, the Assembly approved the expenditure at the price demanded, but a sharp difference of opinion broke out as to whether the land should be allocated as aggrandisement of the reserve (the view of Lenormand and the UC) or as individual lots (the view of Roger Laroque and the RPCR). The Melanesian elder M Parawi-Reybas (RPCR) was very critical of the control of reserved lands by certain powerful individuals in the tribal community, and the consequent frustration of young Melanesians. In the end the Assembly agreed that the attribution would be left for discussion and decision by the Services and the tribu (AT, Procès-verbal 7 December 1977: 14-24).

Meanwhile other 'hot points' had remained unresolved because of the high demands by settlers. At Boulapari M Creugnet had asked CFP 15 million for 700 ha and declined the Administration offer of CFP 10 million. At Pouébo M Mainquet had proposed a price of 2 million for 40 ha and declined the Administration's offer of CFP 600,000. At Thio M Bouye asked 6 million for 13 ha for which the Administration offered 1 million. At Tiwaka near Poindimié M Soury-Lavergne asked 18 million for 514 ha (Administration offer 12 million). At Tieti (near Poindimié) the Société Civile Pastorale Soury-Lavergne asked 2.5 million for 13 ha (Administration offer 1.3 million). At Paita the Société des Etablissements Ballande asked 7.9 million for 418 ha (Administration offer 5.5 million) (AT, Procès-verbal 1 August 1978:15-20).

In all of these cases the purchases were frustrated and in some areas, especially on the east coast, young Melanesians continued their campaigns of encroachment on the land and harassment of settlers in frustration at the years of inaction as regards the key areas of valley land. Old arrangements between colons and Melanesian elders began to break down in a climate of covert violence and virulent hatred (see, for example, 'La Vallée D'Amoa',

The land question, and alternative modes of resolving it, was a major and bitterly debated issue in the elections of 1977, sharply dividing the conservative settler parties and the pro-Independence parties.

In this context, in June 1978, the report of the Commission examining the UPM and UC motions (Report No. 81) was tabled in the Territorial Assembly. Given the nature of the Melanesian demand and the tension on the land itself, the report was not only conservative but provocative. The preface adumbrated two principles: first, the need to proceed with 'great prudence' because of the
sensitivity of the question to Caledonians of all races (meaning especially in this case the Europeans); secondly, to give financial aid to the scheme with a view to the improvement of the land for commercial agriculture. Three types of operation were proposed:

1. urgent redistribution and improvement of land to the benefit of tribes where land was contested among them and with settlers (the relief of so-called 'hot points' near reserves);

2. the setting up of a small peasantry (familial);

3. the establishment of modern forms of commercial agriculture.

With reference to all of these, including the first, the report spoke of the aspirations of young people, notably young Melanesians, to move outside the reserves and set up modern small farms. The report leaned strongly in favour of that aspiration and looked to the improvement of unexploited land within the reserves as well as outside them, and by the 'stranger' clans located there during the cantonnement as well as by ancestral claimants. The report proposed the allocation of Territory funds in the order of CFP 43 million for the repurchase of land which would be redistributed with improvement conditions and some payments (titres onéreux, not titres gratuits) (AT, Procès-verbal 21 June 1978:1ff).

In essence the policy was a revitalization of the existing programme of granting locations and concessions not for the restoration of customary 'clanique' claims, but for the creation of Melanesian small farmers. In urging the development of new peasant communities adjacent to reserves and near existing villages within reserves the report again suggested an attack on the structure of the reserves themselves.

Yet Report No. 81 embraced the recommendations of a special commissioner from Paris, M Garrigou, and at last proposed that the state (the French government and legislature) be requested to grant the Territory new powers, adapted from the French Code Rural, of a right of pre-emption, a right of expropriation of uncultivated land, and the statut du fermage - a system of renting or share-cropping of ancient use in France and apparently favoured by the UC to permit land-short Melanesians, and settlers, to cultivate the land of Melanesian clans, with recognition of the latter's proprietorship. Local measures were to include a tax on unexploited land. To consolidate the position of the new Melanesian peasants against the claims of traditional kin, a new succession law was proposed to permit Melanesians, still personally under the statut particulier but acquiring farms outside the reserves under the droit commun,
to follow the French rules of succession rather than customary succession.¹

Minutes of the debate in the Agriculture Commission show that the report was unlikely to satisfy the real protagonists, the Melanesian political leaders and the settlers. Settler members like M De Vellelongue of the Hienghène valley had wanted no special regard for the 'political' aspect and no special favour for any race (i.e. Melanesians) in land allocation. M Morlet (Union Démocratique Calédonienne) had grave doubts about the right of pre-emption and expropriation. M Tjibaou (Union Calédonienne) on the other hand said that the political aspect of the problem was inescapable and that first and foremost the Melanesians wanted space in which to practise their customary lifestyle. At the heart of Melanesian society the presence of 'stranger' clans was an obstacle to effective functioning of the society. He looked to a much larger plan of land redistribution than appeared to be envisaged in the report. The issue of credit was also debated, Tjibaou objecting that while it was readily available for developments outside reserves it was not readily granted for developments within them.

In the Assembly itself the report was immediately denounced by UC, PALIKA and FULK speakers as the charter of a new colonisation - a colonisation noire on the land of others, denying the Melanesians the right to allocate the land in terms of their own custom and forcing them, by the improvement conditions, the conditions on credit, the emphasis on titles under common law, and the proposed succession law, into Europeanization. M Machoro (UC) recited the historical spoliation of Melanesian land and demanded that it must be returned, at the state's expense, to the original clans without intermediary. Priority should be given to the restitution of traditional land to those clans living on reserves as 'strangers'. Europeans should not interfere in the determination of this purely Melanesian matter. M Burck (UC) feared the creation of smallholdings, as in the time of Governor Feilliet, which could again fail and fall into the hands of big accumulators. M Lenormand also doubted the worth of creating smallholdings (very marginal for European farmers) and stressed the value of traditional agriculture as a means of assuring an ample subsistence and genuine independence and dignity which was not available to peasants on the margins of the capitalist economy. This indicated how far the leaders of the UC had shifted from their earlier assimilationist statements, which had spoken of a subdivision of reserves into individual and family holdings (Saussol 1979:371).

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¹ This had been suggested by M Gaston Morlet (among others) during the debates of the Commission for Rural Economy in 1976 (Dornoy 1981: Chapter 4).
PALIKA speakers (M Gohoupl) criticized the Administration for its 'collaboration with the local haute bourgeoisie and certain local political parties, notably the intervention of the colonial forces of order in the face of actions to recover lands stolen from certain tribes'. He recalled the PALIKA policy of 'the total and unconditional recovery of the lands', in accord with ideas of the 1975 festival 'Melanesia 2000' and the demands of the Foulards Rouges of 1969 for the recognition of the Kanak identity. Pro-Administration speakers denounced the UC and PALIKA for denying young Melanesians, in the name of custom, access to property, responsibility, wealth and a place in modern culture. The Indépendantistes replied that a basis of customary ownership did not preclude entry, from a secure base, into the market economy, but they did not explain how the adaptation would be made.

At the conclusion of a three and a half hour debate the UC declined to vote on the report until the Assembly had recognized the Kanaks' 'right to live in their own homes, on their lands, following their mode of life, taking into consideration the history that they have lived and in conformity with the statut particulier recognized by the Constitution, following the principle of the right to be different'. They tabled a motion of urgency on the point. Right and centre speakers denied that the principle was in question – the reserves would continue to be respected.

Only the first motion of the report – concerning urgent operations for the benefit of tribes on contested lands – was accepted, the UC and Melanesian parties having quit the chamber. Next day the Assembly did allow the UC to put a motion stating, inter alia, that

considering the programme of operations envisaged in report number 81 is entirely oriented towards the attribution of individual lots and considering that the maintenance of the reserves and their aggrandisement are the sole means of assuring the safety of the Melanesian culture and the adaption of Melanesian society to a modern rural economy [the Assembly should demand a reform] to the benefit of the Melanesian collectivities which permits the aggrandisement of reserves and guarantees to the Kanaks the free choice of status of property (AT, Procès-verbal 22 June 1978:2).

A further two hours of debate disclosed the same polarization. Speakers like Jean-Pierre Aifa, the former UC member and now chairman of the Agriculture Commission of the Assembly, angrily denounced the motion as denying individual property to Melanesians – already well advanced with urban blockholders in new Noumea suburbs and supported by the local tribal authorities in recent rural repurchases such as the Mazurier estate. The UC and PALIKA speakers argued that
they merely wished to correct the bias of Report No. 81 and to hold out the prospect of some form of development other than the western capitalist one. The UC motion, however, was lost by 17 to 13, right and centre parties voting against the Independence parties.

The unfortunate result of Report No. 81 and the extended debate on it, was to polarize and politicize views on the land question even more strongly than before, just at a time when economic circumstances and considerable irritation in the Administration with the colons' high asking prices might have enabled some agreement to be reached, at least on the judicial means of recovering the land. By coming out so strongly on the question of the modes by which the land should be redistributed, Report No. 81 excited a contrary reaction from the main Melanesian parties at a critical time. Underlying the whole debate about agricultural efficiency and modes of succession was the settlers' realization that the reserves, and Melanesian clan rights, were the foundation and springboard of the whole Melanesian 'political' claim, whereas individual title put all races on equal footing.

Meanwhile the nationalists were also bringing pressure to bear on the land itself. The agreement the Administration believed it had reached with the hierarchy of appointed chiefs and Conseil des Anciens regarding the Mazurier property soon broke down, the supporters of the 'customary' claim blocking those Melanesians who were with the Administration in thinking that the land should be available for Melanesians from all adjacent clans who had a need, especially the young men. In 1980, three years after the acquisition, the land remains effectively an extension of the reserve with a few scattered cultivations.

The same is true for other 'hot points' in Amoa, Tiwaka and Neaoua valleys, with the added complication that old traditional rivalries between 'customary' claimants have been revived. The surveyors have been able to complete little work on the east coast. In the Territorial Assembly right and centre speakers have in consequence become reluctant to vote funds to buy land at speculative prices only to produce contention on the ground.

THE DIJOUD PLAN

It was this bunch of nettles that the new secretary of state for Overseas Departments and Territories, Paul Dijoud, tried to grasp in the second half of 1978. His statements in Noumea, that the land reform would be treated as a matter of first priority and the recommendation that the Territory should indeed assume the powers of preemption and expropriation, caused great concern among some sections of settlers. So too did M Dijoud's tour of reserves later that year, when he invited the chiefs to tell him frankly
what lands they wanted in addition and to lodge claims with the Administration. However, the official policy was clarified in a press conference by the then high commissioner, M Eriau, on 31 October 1978 (France Australe 31 October 1978). M Eriau recited the principal statistics of land-holding at that point: 950,000 ha of domaine land (mostly mountainous); 372,000 ha of réserve autochtone, 163,000 ha of it on the Grande Terre; 380,000 ha of propriétés privées, all on the Grande Terre. In Eriau's term of five years as high commissioner 5,500 ha had been added to the reserves (800 ha of it having come from former private properties, the rest from domaine land); another 5,630 ha had passed to Melanesians outside the reserves as locations or concessions.

Selective quoting of statistics is a normal part of politics. M Eriau did not mention that about 100,000 ha of locations (leases) and 40,000 ha of concessions provisoires were held by non Melanesians, in addition to the 380,000 ha in proprietorship. The UC version of land distribution is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of land, 1980 (UC figures)</th>
<th>ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Domaine land</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territory</td>
<td>941,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>9,372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations domaniales</td>
<td>150,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,101,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Propriétés privées (except towns, and recreation reserves)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concessions provisoires</td>
<td>57,596*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>443,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Réerves autochtones</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Islands</td>
<td>209,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Grande Terre</td>
<td>167,659</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>376,659</td>
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* Perhaps 10,000 ha of this is held by Melanesians. It is difficult to divide the locations and concessions according to race. Statistics available to me did not do so.

Source: L'Avenir Calédonien 15 May 1980
About 100,000 of the 150,000 ha of locations were estimated to be held by whites, plus a further 110,998 ha of mining concessions from domaine land. Together with the 443,795 ha of propriétés privées and concessions provisoires this makes a total of just under 655,000 ha held by '2,700 settlers and 20 miners', whereas two thirds of the Melanesian (40,000 out of 60,000) draw their living from agriculture. This is broadly correct, indeed official French statistics give only 970 settlers directly living on farms as their principal source of life and income, while about 24,000 Melanesians live on the 167,000 ha of the Grande Terre (INSEE 1976:41).

In his October 1978 statement M Eriaud noted that in response to M Dijoud's request Melanesians had registered formal demands with the chefs de subdivision (the Territory equivalent of sub-prefects) for a further 120,000 ha. But some political leaders were by now demanding the return of all land to the traditional claimant clans. Eriaud subdivided the land claims. There were, he said, those 'which have a political motive in the sense that New Caledonia ought to return to the Melanesians because it was their ancestral territory .... Such is the point of view of certain extremists'. In view of the presence of the 40 per cent of Europeans and 20 per cent of other minorities in the Territory this claim was not realistic and could not be satisfied. Then there were claims 'claniques'. Some were reasonable; he understood well that Melanesians would want back the village sites from which they had been dispossessed between 1878 and 1917. The third category of claims was 'economic', where the tribus were closely confined. It was essential to satisfy these.

Referring to the Melanesian claim to the large uncultivated estates of Europeans, he said the belief in the acquisition of space as the way to a better lifestyle was illusory. What was much more important was to improve the land. Nor would the matter be resolved quickly. It would take five or ten years and require close collaboration between the state and Territory, especially for finance. There was no reason for the Europeans to panic. He congratulated the minister for approaching the matter frankly.

By February 1979 Dijoud's land policy had been embedded in a comprehensive 'plan for long-term social and economic development'. The collapse of the nickel boom had produced unemployment and weakened investment confidence. The rise of Melanesian nationalism in the region and in New Caledonia had increased the sense of doubt and disillusion among the settlers. Above all they wanted massive assurance from the state that France meant to stay, and assist the Territory. But M Dijoud had to reckon with Melanesian demands as well. He sought to tackle the intensifying divisions in New Caledonia by an integrated programme of reform designed at once to repair the blighted economic fortunes of New Caledonia and to outbid and isolate the Indépendantistes.
In addition to the long-term plan, which required much detailed preparation and development of infrastructure before its effects could be felt, Dijoud offered a short-term plan to immediately boost the economy. This involved additional state funding of about $A100 million over two years; in return the Territory was expected substantially to increase local revenue, through the imposition of local income tax, for example. The divisions and vested interests in Territory politics frustrated this attempt. In September 1978 M André Caillard, then leader of the conservative coalition in the Governing Council, introduced a very minimal income tax proposal which was fiercely attacked by the UC for the privileges it afforded to the wealthy - no taxes on plus-values (secondary residences etc) or on the export of capital, and an actual reduction of taxation on properties of over 15,000 ha. The UC also wanted a réforme minière, 'because we believe that the Territory, before creating an income tax, ought to be master of its patrimony and of all its revenues' (AT, Procès-verbal 21 June 1978:43). This is a reference to the so-called 'Territorialization' of the mining industry.

In the vote on the Caillard measure the centre parties, also wanting a much lower tax threshold than that proposed, abstained and the Caillard proposals were defeated. Later, angered by a speech from the RPCR leader, Jacques Lafleur, in favour of moving to the status of Overseas Department of France, some of the centrists split from the coalition and a new Governing Council was elected under Lenormand, marking a 'return to office' by the UC after a decade in opposition. But Lenormand had no more success with financial reform than Caillard, the middle parties voting against his too radical proposals. These events indicated the importance of the centre groups.

Meanwhile, the broad lines of the long-term plan had been sketched by Dijoud himself. Details of the programme - 110 octavo pages under twenty-three chapter heads in the published version - were worked out by a team of French officials consulting with Territory officials and political leaders, including the leader of the UC. Some last minute changes were made in the commissions of the Territorial Assembly before the plan was debated in full session on 21 February 1979, with the Lenormand group still occupying the majority of non-official posts in the Governing Council.

In many ways the plan did no more than draw together proposals long talked about by various French presidents and ministers and by the various Territory parties. It proposed a revitalization and long overdue diversification of the economy. This involved a new drive on nickel exports, and possibly the

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1 'Un plan de développement économique et social à long terme pour la Nouvelle-Calédonie', Noumea 1979.
opening of a second smelter, but also a renewed development of agriculture, the development of lagoon and ocean fishing, and the promotion of tourism. New infrastructure of roads and transport, scientific research, education, health, water storage and reticulation, and agricultural extension were all promised. Another chapter dealt with the increase of population to promote and sustain an enlarged economy. Others dealt with the enrichment of rural life and with support for the cultural traditions of each ethnic group - not only Melanesians but also Europeans, Vietnamese, Indonesians and Polynesians. Melanesian culture, however, was to be especially recognized and promoted through an Institute of Melanesian Studies, and the chapters on Education referred to the development of capability to teach at least four vernacular languages, first in the secondary then in the primary schools. Chapter XV, entitled 'National Solidarity' discussed the direct financing of new development by France - at the level of CFP 130 billion (about $Al,500 million) over ten years. Chapter XVI referred to reorganization of local finance and the need to raise more local revenue. The last chapter dealt with land, which was explicitly recognized as the most contentious problem and the key to success or failure of the whole design. It sketched a number of legal and financial arrangements (including the new powers of pre-emption and expropriation for the Territory) by which land could be restored to Melanesian ownership. The plan was new in that, instead of trying to minimize the difficulties and disadvantages of the Melanesians, it openly recognized their historic and continued grievances. The solution was said to be the creation of a society more equal, more just, more fraternal, but still certainly French. The plan concluded with the rhetorical words: 'Live in France in New Caledonia'.

Before introducing the plan in the Assembly M Dijoud knew he had general support from the centre and right but had lost that of the UC. This was because he miscalculated by publicly asking the UC not to seek Independence for the ten years of the plan's operation. Such an undertaking was impossible for them and, in the light of Dijoud's ulterior purposes and his condemnation of the UC for not acceding to his strategy, they felt obliged to criticize the whole basis of the plan, despite its inclusion of many features sought by the UC itself.

In his opening speech Dijoud sought to present the plan most favourably to Melanesians and to deal with some of the latent contradictions in it. From the plan, he said, Melanesians would have, in addition to their formal rights as French citizens, the reality of equality, and fraternity. They would fill posts commensurately with their numbers. The modern economic expectations of young Melanesians would be fulfilled and at the same
time in a renewed respect for custom they would find 'the moral stability of which the community has need'. Enlarged perspectives both of development, in the modern sense, and cultural deepening lay along the same path: 'The will of the Government is to permit to the Melanesians, in this land, to live happily as Melanesians, to live happily as Frenchmen'. The heart of the plan was the assuaging of ethnic differences by the promotion of the Melanesians.

On the burning question of land he attempted to steer a course between Melanesian and settler demands, and included an attack on the extremist organizations of the right:

The long-term plan states on what conditions the [Melanesian] communities will be able, whether as communities or as individuals, to recover a part of their lost land. Little by little land reform will be the basis of a compromise ... between the Europeans who live in the countryside and who will stay there and whose rights we will defend, and the Melanesian communities who live beside them. In consideration of this the many extremes of which each of us is well aware, will be avoided. In the first place there is no suggestion of questioning the colonist's right to remain in the bush and to develop and improve his position there. I say this in all solemnity, to our compatriots who live in the bush. Dismiss with scorn the demagogues who set you against your Secretary of State and the long-term plan. Gentlemen, Councillors of the Territory, I say to you and wish you to repeat it to your compatriots in the bush, the truth does not lie with some committee or other in the bush which has gathered together a group of nostalgic reactionaries. The truth is to be found with those who propose a wise compromise and sound progress (AT, Procès-verbal 21 February 1979:14).

A reinvigorated agriculture - emphasizing coffee rather than cattle - was an essential concomitant to the land reform because closer settlement would enable the needs of settlers and Melanesians to be reconciled.

M Dijoud coupled the plan with a renewed assertion of French authority. For the compromise proposals in the plan to succeed the government had to keep the radically opposed groups in the Territory under rein. Hence there was no suggestion of devolution of new powers to the Territorial political institutions. On the contrary, Dijoud stated, while New Caledonia remains French 'it is the Government of France who will command'. The plan was the will of France and France asked, 'And now, will you go with me?'.

Dijoud reiterated that rhetorical appeal particularly to the Melanesians, and to the UC. He urged them to allow themselves time to test his seriousness of purpose and his plan as a genuine programme to relieve them of humiliation and despair. He argued that commitment to the plan did not involve a total repudiation of Independence - merely that people should forego that goal for ten years and work actively with France for the reforms. Yet he also spoke of Independence as a 'vain hope ... because who could believe that in this tormented and difficult Territory, Independence could be possible without awful conflict? Who could be unaware that it is France who maintains here the civil peace? Who could be unaware that only France could support real reforms both by her will and by her means?' (ibid.:15).

Among the many notable features of Dijoud's approach are that he is the first French minister ever to openly acknowledge that the position of many Melanesians is one of humiliation and despair. That, now said, cannot easily be put aside or glossed over with a smooth coat of selected statistics. For that frankness Dijoud deserves credit, as he does for the comprehensiveness of the plan, for all its paternalism.

Predictably, successive speakers from the RPCR applauded the plan as a long-awaited deliverance. They emphasized the economic aspects and the need for stability to revive investment confidence, and they probed for undertakings on the existing budget deficit. But some were clearly unhappy about the way Dijoud had made so much of Melanesian problems, and about the extent to which his compromise leaned towards the Melanesians.

M Mouren said that the RPCR acknowledged the need to increase Melanesian land holdings where 'objective inquiry showed it to be necessary' but demanded that it be transferred as individual holdings, not augmentation of reserves where work and development were 'made impotent by a feudal system'. Land should be open to all Caledonians, conditional on use, not on ethnicity (ibid.:23-24). M Mouren's real purpose was to hold at bay the Melanesian's special claims, which led logically to handing back all land and denying the place of other races.

Nevertheless Mouren went to the core of the problem of multi-racial societies in reiterating the traditional French policy in New Caledonia. To grant equal access to land and other resources for all races would, he argued, create a society more just, united and fraternal than a 'simple juxtaposition of parallel societies living each according to its own destiny on different paths'. He conceived of all ethnic groups mixing and drawing together as the Territory drew closer to France. While he did not formally speak of 'departmentalization' of New Caledonia, he said: 'We wish that New Caledonia be France and
we indeed insist that it not only be a window of France on the Pacific but an integral part of eternal France'. Mouren's ideal involved the submergence of ethnic difference in the culture of France.

Dijoud himself found Mouren's emphases unacceptable and intervened to state that the long-term plan was not a document to be interpreted by each according to his tastes. Rather than have it open to individual exegesis he would withdraw it. All opinions had been taken and what counted was the plain meaning of what was written in the plan. If approved in the Territorial Assembly it would have the status of a contract (ibid.:28-29).

M Declercq, a French socialist of some ten years residence in New Caledonia, opened the attack for the UC. There was much, he said, that the UC approved in the plan - the restructuring of the economy, the localization of the teaching service, the plans for teaching the vernacular, the Melanesian Cultural Institute. But the UC had the deepest possible reservations about other aspects, notably the section on opening the Territory to the outside world and expanding the population. The UC had long been aware of the political and electoral purposes of that. The prospect that by the year 2000 the Melanesians could find themselves only 30 per cent of the population was gravely disturbing. As for greater solidarity with France, Declercq said that the Territory already had a superstructure of bureaucracy too heavy and too costly for its true resources. And the objectives of France did not correspond to the Territory's resources precisely because they were defined from outside, according to external norms. Speakers on the right had already revealed the existing budgetary deficit, disclosing the existing disequilibrium. The danger of the plan was that it would entrench an even more fundamental instability and permanent dependence on France. The plan implicitly, if not explicitly, incited and supported departmentalization. And the embrace of France was not made attractive by the way the state habitually used its power - as evidenced by the control of radio and television, the outdated legal code, and the subordination of the New Caledonian monetary system to that of the Métropole. It was not even clear that the CFP 130 billion for the plan was to be a free and generous gift or would in some fashion ultimately be paid by the Territory. The secretary of state should admit that behind the apparent generosity lay France's real interests, strategic and economic, and the interests of financiers in the profitability of mining. Finally, said Declercq, to ask the UC to renounce for ten or fifteen years its plans for independence was asking the impossible. The party was responsible to its constituents. On Dijoud's terms they could not support the plan (ibid.:24-28).
Several Melanesian leaders of the UC took up specific aspects. M Eloi Machoro was highly critical of the limited land reform proposed in the plan. He founded his critique on the proposition that: 'There exists in this Territory one legitimate people: the Melanesians'. They had been deprived of their lands and thrown together into tiny reserves. The object of the UC was to restore to the clans their traditional land. The official réforme foncière, however, had been deliberately confused with a réforme agraire, as evidenced by the improvement conditions attached to land returned to Melanesians and, above all, by the intrusion of Wallis Islanders into lands demanded by Melanesians. While Melanesian needs must be satisfied first, M Machoro emphasized that, far from any desire to drive them out, the UC wished to recognize the rights of Europeans who had worked many years on the land and lived there. In general, he believed, the solution to the problem of ethnic relations was not reliance on the intervention of France (as M Mouren had argued) but 'in discussion between white and black Caledonians who, conscious of the importance of an understanding between different ethnic groups in the country, would have muted their claims in the process of mutual concessions' (ibid.:31-33).

M Gabriel Paita, a veteran UC member of the Assembly since 1958, outlined how the loi cadre of 1957-58 had been amended by the laws of Jaquinot, Billotte and the Statute of 1976 and condemned 'the centralizing jacobin spirit [that] has ruined us'. 'If this is France', he asked, 'Where, in future, is New Caledonia?' (ibid.:35).

M Jean-Marie Tjibaou, ex Catholic seminarian, mayor of Hienghène and active leader of the UC on the East Coast, suggested that instead of 'vivre en France en Calédonie' the appeal should be 'vivre autonome en Nouvelle-Calédonie pour se préparer a l'Indépendance' - and that not the Indépendantistes but the other side should be asked to forego their programme. The heart of the matter for Tjibaou was the different effect upon people of having responsibility or being eternally dependent. He cited the proverb: 'The man constructs the house and the house constructs the man'; it was in that sense that the UC spoke of Independence. It was logical of the Kanaks to demand their indigenous nationality. The UC regarded them as the legitimate people of the Territory by fact and by right. He went on: 'The UC affirms that non-Melanesians who are legitimately Caledonian by French law can become legitimately Caledonian in fact by means of their struggle with the indigenous people for Caledonian independence'. This would create a movement of unity, a Caledonian conscience, and development linked to a social programme. The prospect of a 'Calédonie Française' would never become established because 'while there are Kanaks there, Independence will be demanded as a right'.
Tjibaou concluded with the wish that soon M Dijoud would be able to say to them solemnly, as he had said to the people of the New Hebrides, 'The Caledonian people will be proud to accede to national sovereignty' (ibid.:36-39).

M Yeiwéné, another young Melanesian UC member, took up Dijoud's point about the threat of violence and the necessity for France to stay to keep the peace, and neatly turned it. What a confession of failure it was, he said, that after 125 years of French rule New Caledonia still needed the French army and gendarmes to keep the peace. In any case, he said, to talk of violence was only part of Dijoud's strategy. Even if there were people with guns it was only a conjecture that they might use them. For his part M Yeiwéné believed that 'The moment the Caledonians have the responsibility for their destiny ... they are capable of organizing themselves and acting together on social planning which assures security to each, in respecting the right to be different' (ibid.:39-40).

All in all those Melanesian speakers disclosed, in addition to a quiet determination in favour of Independence, a moderate and constructive attitude and a view of 'Indépendance Kanak' 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. The granting of real responsibility to the Territory would oblige all parties to come to terms with one another in the formation of a new Caledonian society. This was the proud and profound response to Mouren's argument that such could only come in mutual subordination to the authority and influence of France.

Right wing speakers tried to answer the UC arguments. Mme Antier (RPCR) complained: 'Must liberal France include in the plan the construction of a Berlin wall to stop immigration? The salvation of the Melanesian community ... is not in the construction of such a wall, but in the long term plan, in the land reform, in the respect for custom, in the kindergartens, in maternity care' (ibid.:56-57). Such paternalism would have had some appeal to some Melanesians; but the prospect of liberal France being liberal with the Melanesians' land was about the most damaging thing she could have said - the prospect of a renewed colonization by Wallis Islanders or Vietnamese refugees or other migrants being the mainspring of Melanesian determination, and certain to provoke physical resistance. M Roger Laroque condemned what he called 'racist Independence' which would produce nothing but ruin of the Territory and dangerous confrontation (ibid.:61-62). It was not made clear why a Melanesian-led state would be more 'racist' than a French-led one. M Laroque obviously feared for his privileges.
The pro French Melanesian elder M Dick Ukeiwe (RPCR) endorsed the plan, as for the first time offering a firm prospect for the Melanesians of integration, equality and justice combined with respect for tradition. Some Melanesians certainly, fearful of confrontation and conflict, felt that the safer course was to seek the economic advantages of continued relations with France, at least for the time being.

M Dijoud himself, summing up, bitterly criticized the UC, accusing them of betrayal in having participated in discussion of the plan but not supporting it in the Assembly. He denied that extensive immigration was intended, claiming that the plan was referring to demographic increase. He argued also that the plan would generate self-sufficiency for the Territory, not greater dependence, and that after ten years it would be able to pay for its own services. He denied also that France was in New Caledonia for its own interests or those of financiers, pointed out that the wishes of the Isle of Pines people not to have the Club Méditerranée build a resort there (a subject of recent controversy) would be respected. France was in New Caledonia only because a majority of Caledonians wanted France to stay, and because if France left there would be schism and bloodshed. Nor did he require of the UC that it cease to contemplate its goal of Independence, only that for ten years it leave that objective in abeyance and work with him in building the new society (ibid.: 62-65).

But the UC in the end abstained from voting. The radical socialist, M Jacques Violette, quit the chamber before the vote. The four representatives of FULK, PALIKA and the UPM had signified their hostility by non-attendance throughout. For all of these parties good government, or the promise of it, had come too late to be a sufficient substitute for self-government. Moreover it was coming in a form that implied a new threat of increased Melanesian subordination in the same measure as material prosperity increased.

The first consequence of the adoption of the Dijoud plan was the demise of Lenormand's Governing Council. The plan was deemed to have become Territory policy and, because they opposed it, Lenormand and his colleagues were asked to resign. This they declined to do and, organized by Jacques Lafleur, the right and centre parties in the Assembly passed legislation (drafted in Paris under M Dijoud's direction) providing for a premature dissolution on 1 March 1979.

The new laws embodied provisions that the right had been pressing in the National Assembly for two years. Parties which polled less than 7.5 per cent of voters inscribed on the roll (the original proposal was 10 per cent of votes cast) would not
be entitled to share in the distribution of Assembly seats. Secondly, the Governing Council would be elected by majority vote, not proportional representation, of the Assembly (Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 19 April 1979).

The new electoral law was designed, according to its promoters, to produce a stable majority in the Territorial Assembly and the Governing Council, necessary to implement the fiscal reform and the Dijoud plan. After twelve months' confusion about the budget and fiscal reform there was a case for this. Some of the centre party leaders had misgivings at the rather drastic interference with the Territory's electoral system, and there can be little doubt that the large and relatively tightly organized RPCR expected to benefit at the expense of the fragmented Melanesian parties (PALIKA having gained only 6.5 per cent of votes cast for its two seats in 1977 and the UPM 3.8 per cent for one seat).

However, if this was the conservatives' strategy it did not entirely succeed, because the various factions supporting Independence (the UC, PALIKA, FULK, the UPM, and the small Parti Socialiste Calédonien represented by Jacques Violette)\(^1\), quickly came together to form a Front Indépendantiste (FI) campaigning as a single force and offering one list of candidates in the four electoral circonscriptions. Its campaign statements were rhetorically anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist and for an Independence both Kanak and Socialist. What this meant in terms of detailed internal policy was not very clear, but it did include the goal of immediate and unconditional return to the clans of their traditional land and the 'Territorialization' of mines.

The centre parties also came together under the presidency of Jean-Pierre Aifa to form the Fédération Pour Une Nouvelle Société Calédonienne (FNESC), from the former Union Nouvelle Calédonienne, Union Démocratique (of Gaston Morlet), Parti Républicain Calédonien and Avenir Jeunesse de la Calédonie. Its policy was liberal-democratic, for the Dijoud plan and a reduction of 'privileges'; against Independence and against departmentalization. Essentially it wanted a continuance of Territorial status, but on a 'contractual' not 'hierarchical' basis, and saw the Dijoud plan as substantially contributing to that end (Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 30 May 1979).

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\(^1\) The socialists split during the preceding year. Many white trade unionists support the Fédération Socialiste Calédonienne, led by M Claude Fournier, and are anti Independence. Violette and his group have apprehended and accepted the Melanesian Indépendantistes' point of view and work closely with them.
In the elections of 11 June for the parliament of the European Community, New Caledonian voters were presented with the lists of Jacques Chirac, Simone Veil and François Mitterand. Some indication of political allegiances was provided though only from a low turnout of voters (only 66 per cent of those on the rolls). Veil's group scored 45.87 per cent, Mitterand's 28.94 per cent and Chirac's only 19.56 per cent. Surprisingly, 1,082 voters were entered for the Parti Communiste (Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 12 June 1979).

Campaigning for the Territory elections centred openly on a choice for or against Independence, both sides having reasonable access to radio and television late in the campaign but with both newspapers (France Australe, partly owned by the Société Le Nickel, and the more conservative Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes) inevitably giving total support to the anti-Indépendantistes. In a tense but violence-free election, with 73.5 per cent of voters turning out, the RPCR emerged with fifteen seats and the FI with fourteen. This was the same number of seats as the various parties of the FI had held in the previous Assembly. Moreover, because of the way the FI had ranked its candidates in the four circonscriptions, the distribution between UC, FULK, PALIKA, UPM and PSC – indeed the very personnel – was almost the same as before. In that sense Lafleur's electoral strategy had failed. Moreover – again at the behest of the right in the National Assembly – one more seat had been given to the Southern circonscription and, although the RPCR had gained one extra seat above the fourteen held by the RPR/RPC in 1977, they had in the meantime been joined by the two members of the Movement Libéral Calédonien. They should have had sixteen or seventeen seats on their own reckoning. The fourteen seats of the RPCR therefore could be seen as showing a loss of votes to the FNSC. The FNSC had won seven seats and, as in the debate on the Dijoud plan, coalesced with the RPCR to form a clear majority and provide the seven member Governing Council. The veteran Melanesian anti-Indépendantiste, Dick Ukeiwe (RPCR) became vice president of the Council1 (Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 2 July 1979).

A number of other parties offered full lists of candidates, including the Unité Wallisienne et Futunienne, the Fédération Socialiste Calédonienne (the non-Independence wing of the socialists), the Rassemblement Populaire Calédonien et Métropolitain and the Rassemblement Démocrate Chrétien. None of these gained enough votes to win a seat. They (especially the Fédération Socialiste Calédonienne) fell victim to the new electoral law. New Caledonian politics has thus produced a differentiation of three broad alternative groups, two of which oppose Independence. In percentage terms 65 per cent of those who voted supported the

1 The high commissioner is president ex officio.
conservative coalition - the Governing Majority - and 35 per cent the FI. This provides a formal mandate in favour of continuing the existing relationship and implementing the long-term plan. It was hailed as such by President Giscard d'Estaing on a visit to New Caledonia in late July and by M Dijoud, though both were equally emphatic that France would stay in New Caledonia only as long as a majority did wish it. This was not an entirely comforting doctrine for the right, or for any settlers who wanted the question of Independence to be totally excluded as if the July elections were a constitutional referendum in favour of de facto departmentalization, not subject to changing electoral will. Yet the French Government had, in this sense, interpreted the result correctly, for the FNCL, while opposed to Independence had also opposed departmentalization. The constitutional relationship of New Caledonia with France remains that of an Overseas Territory but its future is open to debate and evolution.

Meanwhile the FI has challenged the legitimacy of the anti-Independence majority. They can show, from an analysis of the electoral returns commune by commune, that the predominantly Melanesian communes voted strongly for the FI and that the support for the National Majority came mainly from Noumea and its environs, and some small towns. Moreover these areas (especially Noumea and the Southern circonscription) contain many transients (servicemen and officials on their tour of duty) and many recent immigrants who have retained homes in France and are already returning there in a steady trickle. The FI claim with much justification, that these people ought not to be determining the future of the true Caledonians - that is those who have been born in New Caledonia or whose commitment is wholly to it. Indeed if one discounted the 25 per cent of the population not born in New Caledonia (including, by 1976 census figures, 20,000 out of the 50,000 Europeans and 50 per cent of Wallis Islanders) the 65 per cent majority would be likely to shrink considerably. Indeed it would shrink to insignificance if voting age is kept in mind; very few Wallis Islanders over 18 years were born in New Caledonia. A precise estimate cannot, however, be calculated on racial lines because between 15 per cent and 30 per cent of Melanesians did vote for parties other than the FI and an indeterminate number of non Melanesians (for example Violette's group of socialists, the remaining European supporters of the UC and some Tahitians) supported the FI. 1

1 This much would be broadly agreed by a number of scholars, officials and politicians with whom I discussed the matter in Noumea in July-December 1979. Estimates of the percentage of pro Independence Melanesian voters vary from 85 per cent (the FI view) to 65 per cent (the view of some officials). Many did not vote. On the other hand many Melanesians will say that all Melanesians are pro Independence at heart, but some are frightened of confrontation.
However, the forced nature of the election, and the role of the non-permanent voter has certainly, in the eyes of the Indépendantistes, justified their non-acceptance of the electoral result. Their radical wing, PALIKA, immediately launched a new campaign of demonstration and protest particularly during the visit of President Giscard d'Estaing in late July. On the East Coast this involved barricading roads with tree trunks and felled telegraph poles. A campaign by PALIKA involving demonstrations and strike action was also launched to challenge the paucity of Melanesians in the teaching services and the assimilationist nature of the curricula. One such demonstration at the Lycée La Pérouse on 22 August, against the replacement of a temporary Melanesian teacher by a permanent teacher from France, resulted in a large crowd of high school students (obliged to collect outside the school gates which were closed against the demonstrators) being violently dispersed by baton-wielding police and gardes mobiles. New demonstrations to protest this action began to draw counter-demonstrations organized by a new Mouvement Pour l'Ordre et la Paix (MOP) comprising elements of former committees of similar nature. When the MOP issued a call for the brousards to come into Noumea for a mass rally against the Indépendantistes the situation became menacing and the high commissioner temporarily banned all manifestations. Calm returned to the capital, which was not really broken by the Melanesians' mass meeting on 24 September. In this context the UC leaders were also responsible for successfully arguing moderation and protest within the law.

On the international plane the FI has sent missions of its leaders to countries and organizations deemed likely to be sympathetic, or important, to their cause, particularly the neighbouring independent Pacific states, Algeria, and France itself. Organizations approached included the South Pacific Forum, the Organization for African Unity, the League of Rights of Man and the Ecumenical Council. At the UN the ambassadors of Algeria, Libya, Bulgaria, Guinea, Conakri and Madagascar were contacted. Within France strong statements of support were given by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and from the French Communist and Socialist parties. In early 1980 Mitterand's colleague, M Franceschi, the Socialist Party's spokesman on Overseas Territories, visited Noumea. It is likely that some of the independent Pacific states will seek to have New Caledonia reinstated on the UN list of countries for decolonization. Meanwhile, within New Caledonia the Evangelical Church, a predominantly Melanesian organization, has come out in favour of Independence.

On the other hand is there evidence that the Dijoud plan will be implemented sufficiently to win support for the continuance of the Territorial relationship? In August 1979 the first moves were made through the creation of the Promotion Mélanésienne headed by an energetic Melanesian member of the Governing Council, M Frank Wahuzue. M Wahuzue is a former Foulard Rouge, but he favours
entrepreneurial economic development and was concerned at the divisions which have appeared in Melanesian society, especially over the land redistribution, and the threat of increasing violence already manifest in some physical clashes over the allocation of repurchased land. He believes that there is much to be done in terms of the ordering of society and resolving of such contentious matters before Independence can be contemplated. Hence his support for the RPCR and the Dijoud plan. In this he is sincere, but his opponents argue that he has allowed himself to be made a pawn by Jacques Lafleur and the right, and that his support for the promotion of Melanesians under the paternalistic aegis of the Administration involves their continual denial of real responsibility and is a betrayal. The FI have therefore boycotted the Promotion and denounced Ukeiwe and Wahuzue as puppets.

In late August 1979 the Promotion organized an extended colloquium to which the chefferie and other interested persons from all over New Caledonia were invited. About 150 came. The discussions were rather dominated by the ten or twelve educated Melanesians in Administration posts or in the National Majority parties of the Assembly. There was also a number of European members constantly giving advice. However, this did not stop the Melanesians saying some strong things in criticism of French policies and elaborating a thoroughgoing set of demands - in respect of land, law, education, culture, women's rights - which filled out much of the important detail of which the Dijoud plan is devoid, and which closely paralleled many of the particular demands of the FI.

The land section of the Promotion's demands was ambivalent as to the principles to follow; it supported both a systematic location of old clan territories and a survey of the claims with a view to determining greatest need. It was noted that considerable difficulty might be expected in locating the true 'maîtres de la terre' of any lands, given the confusions of the last hundred years. The Commission debated at length the issue of whether land should be reallocated as aggrandisement of reserves or in individual European-style titles, and proposed a new alternative. Declaring (like the Indépendantistes) that customary landholding was no necessary barrier to development of individual enterprises, it called for the legal recognition of propriété clanique - something between the titles of the droit commun and the tribu and much more traditional. Conseils de Clans consisting of the family heads (both of 'ancient' and 'new' families in a given locality) should regulate land matters, with Conseils des Chefs de Clan and a Conseil de Grands Chefs for appeal and in the event of interclan disputes. This was an effort to establish some kind of Melanesian authority in land matters which would be respected more than the French-created official chefferie and Conseil des Anciens (Commission pour la Promotion Mélanésienne: 1979).
After a period of some months of uncertainty, with the metropolitan French budget itself held up, the promised financial reforms began to emerge. In December 1979 Paris confirmed a budget of CFP 16.2 billions (approximately $A190 million) for 1980 — the first time in many years that the Territory had a definite budget before 31 December. Included in this was 2.5 billion for the state primary school system (previously funded by the Territory). M Dijoud promised approximately CFP 55.5 million per year for ten years for the repurchase of land (Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 15 December 1979). That is about double the rate of spending in 1979. Moreover, the electoral reform — or a sharper realization among the right and centre of the need to collaborate — produced a more stable majority and in January 1980 that majority finally passed into law a proposal for personal income tax — albeit a low and regressive one of 15 per cent on salaries earned above CFP 370,000 per month (about $A54,000 per year). This, and comparable taxes on business turnover and bank interest, will produce a contribution of about CFP 200 million ($A2.44 million) largely to be spent on promoting agriculture and capital works. Moves are under way for a special entry programme to rapidly increase the number of Melanesian teachers (at present only 193 out of 950) in the state primary schools. The Melanesian Cultural Institute was set up in 1980 with staff to make preliminary studies in four of the major Melanesian languages and ethnomusicology. Consideration is being given to extending social security benefits in some form (child endowment, increased maternal allowances, or old age pensions) to the rural subsistence farmers — the Melanesians — who have hitherto missed out on the benefits paid to salariés. However, this has been talked about before and there is a danger that it will appear as a clumsy attempt to buy the support of Melanesian elders.

In general, although these measures will make some contribution to reducing the gulf in material standards between rich and poor, between white and black, they are too limited to effect real structural change in the lopsided New Caledonian society. Because of this, because the reforms are under the direction of the bureaucracy and the Governing Majority in New Caledonia, and because they imply closer integration with France, they will not capture the imagination and involvement of many Melanesians. M Wahuzue and the Promotion Mélanésienne have found themselves too limited in

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1 Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 8 January 1980. Six billion of this is for the services of the state itself (army, navy, state public servants) and ten billion for matters essentially Territorial (education, health, technical services, the development fund FIDES, subsidy for the nickel industry, etc.).
funds and too circumscribed by the established areas of the bureau-
cracy to achieve their bolder aspirations; Wahuzue wrangles publicly
with some of his conservative French colleagues and occasionally
makes statements that show his sense of urgency about Melanesian
rights, and the likely consequences of their non fulfilment. The
funding of primary education by the state implies the closer embrace
of France which, for the Indépendantistes, is an unacceptable price
to pay for improvements in the service. It evokes echoes of the
fierce controversy which raged in 1976 when the state substantially
took over funding - and hence, to some extent, direction - of private
education. 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, and occasional confrontations with the forces of
law and order.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN LAND POLICY

The framework established by Dijoud's intervention has pro-
duced a number of important shifts of policy on the land question.
The Commission d'Etudes des Problèmes Fonciers set up in late 1978,
though justifiably somewhat sceptical of the attempt to establish
a finite picture of traditional clan distribution, has responded
to Melanesian demand and is attempting to reestablish clan locations
as at the beginning of colonization. Researchers of ORSTOM (Office
de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer) are systema-
tically seeking to determine, from aerial photographs, old maps,
archeology and interviews with the traditional elders, the distri-
bution of taro and yam cultivations and village sites throughout
the Grande Terre, and the migrations - forced or otherwise - since
colonization.

There has also been more flexibility in the modes by which
land has been redistributed. In September 1979 the Territorial
Assembly approved purchase of thirteen parcels of land, totalling
1,250 ha mainly acquired from the Catholic Church, for a total
price of CFP 25.5 million (approximately $A283,000) (AT, Procès-
verbal 11 September 1979). Of those only three were specifically
stated to be for subdivision into individual lots; two were for
tribal groups organized as agricultural societies; seven were for
various clan or family groups who in some cases already occupied
them, outside the reserves; one was expressly for aggrandisement
of a reserve, and destined for subsistence agriculture. All were
paid for by a grant from the Fonds d'Investissement de Développe-
ment Economique et Social (FIDES), a fund which had hitherto been
used strictly for lands being commercially improved.¹ All in all

¹ The other important state development fund which has assisted
in recent years is the Fonds d'Aide au Développement des Iles
et de l'Intérieur (FADIL).
1,500 ha were granted under common law titles in 1979 and 3,200 ha under customary law. In 1980 (to October) only 600 ha were attributed under common law and 5,200 ha under customary law (information from Service d'Etudes et de Législation 4 November 1980). The hard line demands of the RPCR and Report No. 81 of 1978, that the land be returned only in individual titles under the droit commun, have thus been set aside.

Attribution under the customary law has been facilitated by the adoption of legislation for the legal recognition of a propriété clanique as demanded by the Promotion Mélanésienne. The draftsmen of the text very shrewdly produced a simple and minimal definition - which nevertheless recognized the family as an integral unit of the clan - and specified a mechanism by which the clan would act. Given that the question of definitions of groups for landowning purposes is one of the most vexed and intractable problems in the Pacific, the text is worth quoting in full:

The land of the clan is the common property of the family groups of which it is composed. These family groups are represented by the customary chiefs of the family who constitute the clan Council.

The clan Council regulates the use and division of lands among members of the clan as well as the specification, where applicable, of the proprietary rights of the clan, according to customary law.

It may equally, with due respect to customary rules, and in ways which it will determine, in this context authorise the tenure freely or for payment, of persons stranger to the clan (AT, Arrêté 21 May 1980).

The last provision imparts a necessary flexibility, for any onus or impulse under the law to give a strict definition of a 'clan', or any other customary group, inevitably distorts and damages the fabric of subtle flexible institutions and processes, and produces acrimonious division. Even so the debate in the Territorial Assembly produced some anxious criticism that 'the clan' was going to be difficult to establish in practice, and certainly the application of the law will not always be easy (AT, Procès-verbal 14 May 1980: 31ff).

It is important to note that the propriété clanique is a form of landholding under the droit coutumier not the droit commun. The Territorial Assembly has no power to legislate such basic matters under the common law. It does have the power to define the modalities of the customary law.¹ This meant that some early plans for

¹ I am indebted to M Somny, Chef du Service d'Etudes et de Législation, for this explanation.
the new form of title to be subject to alienation by mortgage or lease, for example, could not be established. Attributions of clan property thus tend to reinforce Melanesian custom rather than impel assimilation to French property concepts and usages, much to the disgust and disappointment of some members of the right. The FI speakers' objections to the legal recognition of the clan seemed a little forced, and obviously stem from the commitment to opposing all such measures from the paternalist state, rather than from intrinsic weaknesses in the law.

The FI speakers' objections to the legal recognition of the clan seemed a little forced, and obviously stem from the commitment to opposing all such measures from the paternalist state, rather than from intrinsic weaknesses in the law.

In the context of the réforme foncière, however, by far the most important issue is the power of pre-emption and expropriation. In March 1980 a bill, or avant-projet, to grant such powers to the Territory in respect of unused or under-used land was leaked in the Noumea press. Not surprisingly, in view of the strength of their reaction in 1958, the settlers again reacted vigorously to the introduction of such measures - this time by their erstwhile protector, the French state. Divisions opened among the Governing Majority, the FNSC generally favouring acceptance of the measures as necessary and many of the RPCR being bitterly opposed, especially to expropriation. A delegation went to Paris to seek modifications and M Di joud returned to Noumea for a discussion in camera with the Territorial Assembly. The terms of the avant-projet were revised in an effort to diminish the authority of the French state in the application of the reform and to try to keep it largely within the control of the Territory Assembly and Council. They were republished on 30 May.

The text acknowledged that, in the context of general agrarian reform and revival, the Melanesians had a special need. It specified that the reserves would not be affected and affirmed the right of choice of Melanesians to live under the droit coutumier or the droit commun. It affirmed support for the development of uncultivated or insufficiently exploited lands, notably through the constitution of family enterprises and for food production, and for the transfer to Melanesian collectives, family groups or individuals of enough land to enable them to satisfy their needs, their custom and their traditional mode of life. Articles 2 to 5 provided that the state, the Territory and, where appropriate, the communes were to collaborate for the purpose of acquiring the necessary land, if possible by agreement. An incentive for this would be the provision of compensation and pension arrangements for farmers sixty years of age or more (later reduced to fifty years or more) who ceded their land to the programme. When proprietors voluntarily offered an estate, the Territory would have a three months' right of pre-emption; where there was failure to agree on price, the price would be fixed by the court of first instance. The high commissioner (later the chef du territoire) in council would have power to declare an estate abandoned or uncultivated; the proprietor would be given time in which to improve the land. Where agreement was not reached the Council of Government could issue a declaration of public need and
expropriation; an inquiry would then follow by a commission presided over by a magistrate and including representation of the state, the Territory, the commune, the Melanesian authorities and rural proprietors and farmers; if this commission recommended affirmatively the declaration would be promulgated by the high commissioner. If the land so acquired were not used within three years for the purposes defined in Article 1, the former proprietor could apply to have it ceded back to him. Lands acquired would be attributed under modes defined by the Territorial Assembly, either under the droit commun or the droit coutumier (Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 30 May 1980; AT, Procès-verbal 2 September 1980: 29-43).

However circumscribed, the expropriation principle is intolerable to many settlers. In theory the law can be applied to any property, where the Melanesians' needs are deemed serious enough, not just to undeveloped property. In this sense it is a stronger measure than, say, the Undeveloped Freeholds Ordinance 1969 in Papua New Guinea. Although modelled on the Code Rural of metropolitan France it seems to many settlers to strike at their constitutional property rights and to open the way to what are considered the 'political' land claims of the Indépendantistes, not just their 'economic' claims. The MOP opposed the avant-projet and a new organization called RURALE (Ruraux, unis pour une réforme agraire libérale et équitable) was formed to continue the lobby.

A new feature of the opposition is its manifest belief that the French state is selling out those whom it should primarily be protecting. In this context the events in nearby Vanuatu have fed the fires of opposition. There too the state, despite much rhetoric from M Djoud about protecting the settlers and their properties, had signed a constitution which returned the proprietorship of all land to the Melanesian customary owners and in the end was not able to secure automatic leases for the settlers against a determined Vanuatu drive to review all titles. Several hundred refugees from the defeated rebellion, in which settlers had participated in order to try to retain control of land, came to New Caledonia and joined in the opposition to the avant-projet and the criticism of the Administration.

On the other hand Jean-Pierre Aifa and Gaston Morlet, settler members of the FNCS, strongly defended the reform in a series of public meetings as necessary to the rectification of historic Melanesian grievances and the stability of New Caledonian society. Frank Wahuzue of the Promotion Mélanésienne also defended it against attacks by his more conservative colleagues in the RPCR. In the National Assembly the law has been strongly supported by Lionel Cherrier, New Caledonia's senator and a centrist in politics.
The avant-projet for the réforme foncière went to the Territorial Assembly on 2 September 1980 for its expression of opinion and after furious debate was approved by eighteen votes (of the Governing Majority) to fourteen. The FI voted against, as did M Guillemand, a most determined settler opponent (two other members of the Governing Majority abstained). During the debate settlers organized by RURALE crowded the chamber, chorused objections against the speakers of their own parties, like Morlet, who were supporting the proposed law, and afterwards gave Guillemand a hero's welcome. Afterwards RURALE, working through Jacques Lafleur, the RPCR deputy in the National Assembly, lobbied for an amendment which would remove the special emphasis on Melanesian claims and needs and promote settlement by all races with development conditions on the title.

The law went before the National Assembly in Paris in December 1980. The debate there showed the sharp polarization between the centrists, like Cherrier, for whom the law was primarily political in objective, seeking to rectify the historic injustice of the Melanesians, and those of the right, who wanted it confined to the economic needs of smallholders of any race. The former view admitted the acquisition of land already improved. Cherrier was bitterly denounced by RURALE for his 'treason' to the settler cause. In the end the law was passed with an amendment limiting the extent of any single property expropriation to 50 per cent of each property affected.

Nevertheless the open adoption by the state, and by people like Cherrier and Morlet, of a 'political' aspect to the reform may be an important breakthrough. It is the first real sign that the Dijoud reforms will tackle the structural and historical legacies of the colonial order and radically realign land redistribution with recognition of the Melanesians' claims. The question is whether, in application, it will go far enough.

In the meantime the Administration can show that, despite the continued intransigence of some, there has been a very considerable amelioration of the settlers' attitude since 1977-78, to the point that they are prepared to contemplate any land reform at all. Indeed Morlet lauds 2 September 1980 as the day the Territory demonstrated its coming to maturity. In 1980 the land reallocated from the private sector, as compared with domaine land, was in the order of seven to one, a direct reversal of the proportions of 1979 (information from Service d'Etudes et de Législation 4 November 1980).

The intention of the Administration now is to transfer land to Melanesian hands at the rate of 10,000 ha per year for ten years. Leaving aside the concessions and assuming that most of the land transferred comes from settlers rather than from domaine land,
this would make the proportions of land held by Melanesians and by settlers more or less equal. Many settlers on the East Coast have in fact had life made uncomfortable for them by Melanesian pressure - and will be glad to sell out. The question is one of price, and the reserve expropriation power is no doubt being sought by the Administration, as it was in Papua New Guinea, to bring down the settlers' speculative asking prices as much as to secure any particular piece of land.

A further ingredient in the land reform programme is the new law on succession to real estate held under the droit commun, outside the reserve structure, by Melanesians who in most cases will be personally under the statut particulier. This was foreshadowed in debates in 1976-78 as part of the drive to create and sustain a class of Melanesian smallholders, but has become more urgent in respect of people who have acquired suburban houses. In some cases brothers or members of the wider kin group, basing succession claims on custom, have overborne the claims of the immediate family of the deceased. Regardless of any larger social objective it appeared only just, to the Administration as indeed to many Melanesians, to give more legal protection to the succession rights of widows (or widowers) and children of the deceased. Accordingly an arrêté of 15 September 1980 provided that citizens of the statut civil particulier could opt (in writing on a prescribed form), only in respect of property held under the droit commun, whether the mode of succession would be customary (and regulated by the Clan Council) or according to principles specified in the arrêté (derived from French common law principles). The main parts of those provisions are as follows:

- The children or their descendants succeed to [the common law estates of] their father and mother, grandfather or grandmother, or other descendants, without distinction of sex or of primogeniture. They succeed by equal portions and by head when they are of the first degree [of descent] and recognised by their Chief.

- The spouse [conjoint] has the usufruct of the estate or of that part of the estate appertaining to minors.

- In the absence of an eligible child the surviving spouse [conjoint] inherits the estate.

- In default of any heirs according to the above principles succession proceeds according to customary usages. Where the formal choice had not been exercised the deceased would be presumed to have opted for customary usages. (AT, Arrêté 15 September 1980).
The last provision indicated the limits to which the Administration wished to push Melanesians towards French concepts of property, even property held under common law title. For this they were criticized in debate by M Guillemard (of RURALE and the RPCR) who was clearly unhappy about any tendency for individual property to be drawn back into the customary system. But few politicians, even of the right, are now as assimilationist as M Guillemard, at least in their public statements. For their part the FI objected to any modification of custom at all.

Indeed there is one adverse effect of the new succession law which may become serious; it is the same as that which British law relating to Maori land produced, and also French practice in Tahiti. The principle of succession by all children in equal proportions is a recipe for fractionation of the estate over two or three generations into uneconomic interests, and into an almost unmanageable number of owners. This problem has greatly bedevilled land administration in New Zealand, the Cook Islands and French Polynesia, putting much land beyond efficient use. It now threatens to arise in New Caledonia for precisely the same reasons: an attempt to be equitable (according to Western European concepts of equity and law, to which the administrators feel bound) to the direct issue of the deceased. It sets aside, with potentially unhappy consequences, the customary principles which operated to eliminate certain parties - particularly non residents with property elsewhere - from the succession.

The attitude of the FI to all of this activity has been ostensibly disdainful or hostile. The Administration has made it clear all along that it does not accept the most fully developed FI claim - the 'global' claim¹ that all the land should be returned to the traditional claimant clans without condition. As both sides aver, that would be tantamount to a transfer of sovereignty to the Melanesian people. Nor does the Administration yet propose even to hand over whole zones of land (domaine land for example) to let the Melanesians sort out for themselves. It believes that the bulk of the land should be held for public purposes such as forestry or water reserve, or for tourism or other forms of development by non Melanesians. This includes the zone maritime which in French Polynesia has been suppressed in favour of the customary claimants.

¹ The phrase was used by M Machoro in debate on the avant-projet (AT, Procès-verbal 2 September 1980).
and which the Melanesian parties in New Caledonia have also demanded should be suppressed, especially in respect of the Loyalty Islands and the Ile des Pins.¹

Moreover, even where the land is handed back to Melanesians, although the modes of attribution have recently become more flexible (as indicated above) the Administration seriously doubts the capability of Melanesians to sort out the competing claims of various clans in view of the conflicting customary claims in the first place, the bouleversement of the clans since colonization, and the difference of opinion between Melanesians pursuing an 'economic' claim and those wanting priority to be given to the 'customary' claimants, with primacy to traditional agriculture. For these reasons, and because political allegiances and factions run through the whole situation, the Administration has tended to keep land reform fairly much in its own hands, hoping that the formally recognized clan authorities - including the new Clan Councils - can sort out the attribution.

The FI, however, consider that the whole reform - with the land still theoretically open to non Melanesians - leaves them still under a form of colonization - a colonisation noire where the land is to be attributed to Wallisians or Indonesians, or to Melanesians favoured by the Administration and the official chefferie. The Indépendantistes have hitherto brought pressure to bear - including threats of sorcery or physical confrontation - to frustrate some of the official subdivisions. The issue was sharply revealed in mid 1980 when the Administration proposed to

¹ The zone maritime or zone de cinquante pas géométrique (actually 81.20 metres) is a coastal strip measured above high-water mark, reserved to the French state to be used for public purposes. It was introduced into pre-revolutionary France by Colbert, and while it has lapsed in France itself it has been instituted in many French colonies. It has been suppressed round parts, but not all, of the New Caledonian coast. (I am indebted to M Somny, Service d'Etudes et de Législation, for this information.) The anxiety about returning domaine land came out strongly in debate in January 1979 when, with Lenormand briefly holding office as vice president of the Governing Council, the Assembly was asked to approve the return to the Kunie people of the Ile des Pins of 20 ha of land on the Kuto peninsula, held by the Territory since the days of convict settlement. A motion to defer the Lenormand proposal was defeated by only sixteen votes to thirteen. The land was a focus for debate about possible development by Club Méditerranée or other tourist organizations and it is unlikely that it would have been returned by the Assembly as constituted after the July 1979 elections (AT, Procès-verbal 25 January 1979: 11-48).
reallocating a repurchased estate near Dumbea to Wallis Islanders, characteristically prolific and land-short. The FI responded through a public letter from Madame Pidjot claiming the land on behalf of the clans dispossessed in the colonization — to whom it is intolerable to see the land again reassigned — and by vigorous island-wide lobbying against the Wallisians. The scheme has lapsed, in a climate of mounting tension between Melanesians and Wallisians (including a major brawl during the annual grande braderie in Noumea) and serious second thoughts among some Wallisians about their position as clients of the French.

Meanwhile the FI has tried to set up its own land reform. This rejects the procedures evoked by Dijoud, whereby land claims were invited on a needs basis and some clans claimed nothing while others claimed adjacent land, regardless of the traditional claimants, thus intensifying the conflicts at the base of Melanesian life since the cantonnement. The FI reform is to be based on a systematic region definition of old clan territory and its recovery by systematic pressure on the Administration and on the settlers, including direct occupation of land. The recovery of clan territory would not preclude continued occupation of the land by 'stranger' clans, or by longstanding European and other settlers, provided that the underlying traditional right was reaffirmed and reestablished. In practice, however, the FI has found it difficult to disentangle the rival claims, and traditions are not as clear-cut as had been hoped by many — including the anthropologist Jean Guiart, brother-in-law to Lenormand, who is in strong sympathy with the FI approach and more confident of the abilities of the Melanesians than of the bureaucracy or official chefferie to sort out land claims. There is some need of technical expertise in tradition, archaeology, mapping, etc., to help establish the claims. For this reason the ORSTOM research has become caught in the political crossfire. Because they are essentially working for the Administration the ORSTOM scholars cannot readily publish, or pre-publish, their findings; but they rely in part on access and information from Melanesians. Some of the clans cooperate but others (especially the 'stranger' clans) are reticent about disclosing where they came from, if the implication is that they must return to remote or possibly poor land. The research is coming under increasing criticism from the radical sections of the FI. Meanwhile the parties of the FI are urging their own local sections to press ahead with efforts to sort out their interclan disputes and establish priorities of rights, and to continue pressure on the land, including direct occupation of land claimed.

The land reform is thus gravely weakened by the division of fundamental purpose between the FI and the Administration and its supporters, and the lack of cooperation between them. The attempt by Dijoud to push ahead more boldly with a reform from above has
probably come too late. Twenty years ago, before Independence had become a clear-cut goal, a very generous restoration of land both to clans and to individual smallholders might have satisfied most land grievances and even built substantial support. When the push for reform did become more vigorous the Administration still felt unable to involve substantially the Melanesians grouped in the FI because it saw the Front's goals as reaching beyond land reform to political ends. In turn, though acknowledging that some of the recent developments - the propriété clanique for example - may be useful, the FI formally rejected the official programme.

If the FI and the Administration are not likely to agree on the fundamental principles and goals of land reform it is also unlikely that either side will achieve its whole purpose, for neither has the political or physical power fully to overbear the other. The question of physical force was publicly discussed early in 1980 when the MOP wrote an open letter to the high commissioner (with copies to President Giscard D'Estaing, M Dijoud and others) calling for a much tougher enforcement of law to discourage the 'fauteurs de guerre'. They instanced the unlawful occupation, by Melanesians, of the land of a M Lacroze who, they said, had had shots fired at him (Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 19 January 1980).

To this M Charbonniaud, the high commissioner, replied acknowledging that, despite the daily efforts of the police and gendarmes, the situation was not everywhere satisfactory. He no longer hesitated to say that in a Territory three times the size of Corsica the forces at his disposal did not permit, in certain regions, the assurance of a presence sufficiently 'dissuasive et sécurisante'. Still, he said, whatever the tensions 'in a certain zone', the statistics showed New Caledonia to be relatively peaceful, compared with certain regions of France, and the forces of law and order, strengthened at his request, were ample to bring back to reason, when necessary, 'the agitators and extremists of all horizons who would trouble the public peace' (Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 21 January 1980). Certainly the police forces are strong enough to prevent any widespread open campaign of occupation of land and the FI have not yet attempted this. However the kinds of pressure used since 1977 have succeeded in securing a higher rate of return of land and a modification to the previously narrow modes of attribution. On the East Coast and the north of the Grande Terre Melanesian pressure will continue to the extent of making settlers uncomfortable and willing to sell, and the Administration will use its new powers to relieve 'hot points' or to transfer land before the problem becomes too 'hot'.

In the process some Melanesians will gain satisfaction. In some respects, however, land reform since 1951 (the Dijoud programme included) has actually increased tension among Melanesians - among
rival claimants or people having different views of land use. In some places this is so serious as to halt the reallocation of land already acquired from settlers. No doubt many settlers are not unhappy to see the Melanesians so divided: the internal divisions over land certainly, in the short run, hinder their capacity to organize for larger political goals. But it would be too cynical to say that the Administration also welcomes this, if only because they are well aware that, in the larger view, unrelieved Melanesian frustrations and tensions find expression in hostility to the authorities. Indeed there are strong latent anti Administration sentiments among even 'official' Melanesians. It was, after all, the firm demand of the Promotion Mélanesienne that resulted in the concepts of propriétaire clanique and clan councils being approved. This will go some way to transferring responsibility to wider circles of Melanesians, hopefully crossing political lines and helping to secure agreements on the allocation of land.

However, there is still a possibility that the clan councils and the creation of propriétés claniques will be regarded by many of the FI as too official and too circumscribed. Certainly Wahuzue, Parawi-Reybas and other 'pro Administration' Melanesians distrust the capacity of their own people to make an equitable distribution. They import a strong 'economic' element into their views on land redistribution and suspect that the Indépendantistes' concept of returning to the pre-colonization distribution will disadvantage some of the more populous land-short groups. The official land reform could lose much of its potential for satisfying 'political' grievances by allowing such divisions to emerge among Melanesians in its application.

There is therefore much to be said for the view that some FI spokesmen and the anthropologist Jean Guiart are now trying to impress upon the Administration, namely, that a bold strategy is required of using the new legal powers to buy out settlers in entire districts and return the land, including the domaine land and the zone maritime, to the Melanesians, of all persuasions, leaving them to work out their own clan distribution. Once assured that they can reestablish their basic customary rights, Guiart argues, Melanesians will be generous, as they were in the Tchamba valley experiment of 1960-61, not only to other land-short Melanesians but also to bona fide farmers of the old settler families. This is almost certainly correct. A bold redistribution, probably larger than the 10,000 ha per year now proposed, would go a long way to satisfy historic grievances in whole districts, giving full responsibility to Melanesians and obliging them to fully confront their own divisions, hopefully as a prelude to resolving them.

Some officials are certainly not unwilling to approach this view of reform, especially for the East Coast. It is not beyond
their imaginations that - despite the widespread settler prejudice against black landlords - settlers may eventually become tenants of Melanesian clans (as was accepted by M Dijoud in the construction of the Vanuatu constitution). Certainly there has been a notable willingness among some officials to be flexible and innovative in land matters, and to modify some of their national habits of over-regulated, over-precise, over-supervised administration - habits which have historically been the obstacle to devolution of responsibility in most French Territories.

But the implementation of a bold strategy in land reform should also involve keeping the settler community more or less in support, for to override settler hostility too drastically is to further increase the enmity between settlers and Melanesians and destroy whatever meagre chances remain of creating true community among the diverse peoples of New Caledonia. Certainly, at present, the centrists - Aifa, Morlet, Cherrier, etc. - are in the ascendant and they have committed themselves to a 'political' land reform. To push much harder involves a risk of the breakdown of the Governing Majority. The centrists, and the French government, would not be at all unhappy if a new alignment could be made with the UC, and indeed overtures have been made to the UC leaders. But they are holding firmly to the FI and to the concept of Indépendance Kanak.

In the last resort, the shape of the land reform thus depends upon, rather more than it will determine, the outcome of the larger political/racial struggle. The central tenet and minimal demand of Indépendance Kanak is Melanesian primacy. For many of the FI, land reform is only a facet, perhaps the major facet, of a struggle for full autonomy - political, economic and cultural - for the Kanak people. Not even return of all the land would necessarily satisfy that demand.

On the other hand the settlers cannot feel easy about their future in a Melanesian-dominated regime. Perhaps the concept of Indépendance Kanak as defined by the UC might just satisfy some of the settlers. It is easy to believe, in talking with Tjibaou and his colleagues, that the Melanesians will indeed be reasonable and not discriminating against non Kanaks who are bona fide workers for a Caledonian society. But most settlers are apprehensive that the attitudes of the Melanesians are essentially racist and that the position of non Kanaks will be very insecure once the 'multi-racial' approach that has legitimated white dominance is abandoned.
THE OUTLOOK

Prediction is hazardous, given the complexity of the situation, but assessments of likely developments are constantly demanded by Australians concerned about the region. The following is offered as an individual interpretation of the situation according to the evidence up to 1980.

The evolution of politics in New Caledonia will be determined by the balance of physical strength and will of the three distinct cultural groups - the representatives of the French state, the Caledonian settlers, and the Kanak nationalists. It will be convenient to look at each of these in turn, then at their interaction.

(a) The French state

The depth of the political polarization in New Caledonia between Kanaks and non Kanaks is largely the result of selfish and maladroit policies by the French government in the Gaullist period. Up to that point Paris had sought to mute the underlying conflict between resurgent Melanesians and defensive white settlers by rejecting, for example, the establishment of separate electoral colleges for black and white, and by opening up, through the application of the loi-cadre, increasing devolution of political responsibility to the Territory. The UC, then a fully multi-racial party, offered scope for the aspirations of both main races to be channelled into normal political-administrative processes. The society would have become in time more and more Melanesian in character, but with legal adjustment of issues like land, with racial tolerance, and with continued links with France. The quasi-coup of 1958-63 stultified those processes and forced politics into more radical channels, encouraging Kanak nationalism and the deline of the UC as the party embracing the broad middle ground of politics. The conservatives sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind, and they continue to do so.

In engaging itself so strongly in the period 1958 to 1969, and holding most real authority in its own hands, the French state entered upon powers and responsibilities which it will have difficulty in relinquishing even if it wishes to. The threat of racial violence, easily controllable in 1958, has now become very real; so has the Territory's fiscal dependency on the French grant. The more France assumes the responsibility, the greater the dependency of the Territory, as the FI points out. It is a self-justifying prophecy which has suited French interests.
The costs in money, opprobrium and perhaps blood of such a situation would normally have led the British to try to divest themselves of direct rule, while seeking to retain national advantages by other means. Not so the French. The reasons are complex and often subtle—more so than many 'Anglo-Saxon' observers recognize, and worthy of closer scrutiny.

From 1958 to the early 1970s certainly, naked self-interest was dominant. French ministers did not seek to cloak the importance of nickel as a strategic metal. The direct participation of the French state in the Société Le Nickel, and between French politicians such as President Pompidou and the Rothschild Bank, explain the frank subordination of the New Caledonian economy to the interests of the métropole, and the assumption of the necessary political control to ensure it. Even the businessmen of the right in New Caledonia complain of the extent of this control, particularly in the tight regulation of nickel production, and the exclusion of foreign investors from the nickel industry.

This is still largely true today. In National Assembly debates on New Caledonia, government speakers still refer to the importance of nickel and the need for France, not the Territory, to control the mining industry (see statement by Dijoud, AN, Procès-verbal 25 November 1978:3696). But it is an obviously declining importance. Whereas in 1976 France acquired about 75 per cent of her nickel from New Caledonia, in 1980 the proportion had fallen below 45 per cent, and for 1981 France (which controls quotas under the loi Billotte of 1969) has ordered a further reduction in production. Since the devaluations of the North American dollar in the mid 1970s and the opening of new mines in Indonesia, nickel from Canada and Indonesia is more competitive. This is one of the reasons why some of the local directors of the SLN have flirted with Independence, which might enable them to cut free of ties with the French franc, French quotas and French salary structures, and perhaps again become competitive.

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. The National Assembly debates refer also to the exploitation of the new oceanic resources accorded by the 200 mile territorial waters. They also refer to the nuclear testing programme centred on French Polynesia which is regarded as an ensemble with New Caledonia and the Territory of Wallis and Futuna. For the Giscardians as for the Gaullists, and perhaps the Socialists too, French Oceania represents France in the world at large, sustaining her self-image as a world power, particularly as an independent maritime and nuclear power. (See, for example, statements in AN, Procès-verbal by Dijoud, 12 May 1978: 1666; Debré, 13 May 1978:1661; Gaston Flosse, 16 November 1978: 7695, 31 October 1978:9238; Piot, 31 October 1979:9239; and Lafleur, 31 October 1979:9241.)
In this context the ancient rivalry with the 'Anglo-Saxon' world is a vital and powerful force. The reluctance of Frenchmen, including those who favour decolonization, to see New Caledonia become an area of 'Anglo-Saxon' - particularly Australian - influence is very real.

Moreover, it is important that New Caledonia is the last remaining French Territory which is deemed a settlement colony. Although the government explicitly states that Territory interests would in the last resort be subject to the superior interests of the métropole (AN, Procès-verbal: Dijoud, 12 May 1978:1666; Flosse, 16 November 1978:7695), and the French public is normally indifferent to the interests of a few thousand settlers at the opposite end of the globe, the concept of the right of French nationals to be protected is a powerful political symbol, for the Gaullists in particular, and could be used to embarrass any government which overrode them too blatantly.

Thus, even though in strict economic terms New Caledonia may already be a net liability, France's conception of her place in the world is a very substantial reason for her continued presence. Even though the Socialist and Communist speakers denounce the colonial nature of the economic system which creates a condition of imbalance and underdevelopment in New Caledonia, a government of the left would be very reluctant to open itself to charges of diminishing French power and influence or abandoning French citizens. It could not easily offer Independence in the absence of an electoral majority for Independence, whatever its sympathies with Kanak claims.

Finally, there is a strong commitment still to a concept of 'civilizing mission', of the duty of France, by means of her culture and her institutions, to subsume narrow sectional interests and to instil order. The racial claims of non French are regarded as narrowly atavistic and dangerous, to be muted in the spread of French enlightenment. Views such as these are sometimes stated in the National Assembly (for example AN, Procès-verbal 10 June 1980: 1689) and are certainly held passionately by, for example, young French schoolteachers in New Caledonia.

Thus, although the government officially states that it will remain in New Caledonia only as long as a majority wishes it, there is little sign as yet of a weakening of resolve to play the paternalistic role. M Dijoud and metropolitan officials both exhibit some disdain for what they see as the petty and sectional quality of the party leaders in New Caledonia and express a firm determination to oblige them to make concessions and come to terms with each other. Moreover, M Dijoud and successive high commissioners have frequently stated their determination to use force to suppress extremism and enforce the law. And indeed there is little doubt that the state retains ample police power to restrain
systematic extra-legal action and violence. Although there has been excessive use of force by police, as at the demonstration involving lycéens on 25 August 1979, the present high commissioner, Claude Charbonniaud, has shown some skill in the use of state power in potentially explosive situations. For example, on the morning of 6-7 January 1980 a police inspector named Ferriot, living at Mont Dore, east of Noumea, (and according to Roch Pidjot (AN, Procès-verbal 12 January 1980:35) a member of MOP) shot dead a Melanesian named Theodore Daye and wounded another, apparently after the inspector and his wife and child had been accosted and assaulted by a group of drunken Melanesians as the French family drove home from town. The violence of the incident, on both sides, is a not altogether surprising product of an endemically sour situation between Melanesian squatters on the beach, sometimes drunken and volatile, and the prosperous bourgeoisie in the houses above, sheltered behind strong fences and signs saying 'Propriété privée' and 'chien méchant'. This in turn exemplifies the divided society, the mutual distancing, hostility and contempt of the two main races, and the siege mentality of many settlers, which are the product of 123 years of unhappy colonization. M Charbonniaud acted quickly to defuse the situation. Ferriot was arrested and tried for murder. He was found guilty only of manslaughter and sentenced to five years imprisonment. This did not entirely satisfy the FI, but the rule of law looks rather more even-handed than it did when Kamouda was killed in 1975.

As long as France is prepared to use the police and gendarmerie coolly, and to back them with the continued presence of about 2,500 troops, political militancy is likely to be contained though sporadic acts of violence will not be entirely prevented. (Since this text was written, M Pierre Declercq, secretary-general of the UC, was shot dead in his Noumea home on 19 September 1981. Serious rioting and large-scale political rallies subsequently occurred in both Noumea and rural areas. A young French settler has been arrested and charged with Declercq's murder, amidst Melanesian claims that groups of armed settlers have 'hit lists' of Indépendantiste leaders.)

(b) The settlers

Many of the recent migrants who have settled in Noumea and experienced mixed economic fortunes are not strongly committed to New Caledonia. More are now leaving than are coming in and if political violence developed many more would hasten to catch their planes. The old settler families, and others who have invested deeply, are another matter. Their ties with the country, indeed with particular farms or townships in the bush, are strong and emotional. Many would be as loath to surrender their land and their way of life as their Australian or New Zealand counterparts, and would be prepared, given sufficient opportunity, to
fight to preserve them. This (among other less admirable things) was demonstrated in Algeria and in the rebellion in Vanuatu.

The rebellion on the island of Espiritu Santo was essentially a move by French and other settlers and American speculators, playing upon local indigenous prejudices against central government authority, to force constitutional rearrangements which would support their property interests. The constitution agreed upon in October 1979 had cancelled all previous proprietary land titles held by non-indigenous citizens, and the victory of the Vanuaku Party (which for years had been campaigning for the return of plantation land to the customary owners) suggested that even leaseholds might not be readily forthcoming. Some French officials foolishly became implicated in the rebellion and Dijoud's statements about ensuring that French lives and property would be protected served to encourage the rebels. Some of the settlers in New Caledonia, having similar concerns about land and the place of settlers vis-à-vis resurgent Kanaks, inevitably sympathized with the rebels - some of whom were close friends and kinsmen. The right-wing press raised the possibility of a 'Nouméa-Santo axis'.

The defeat of the rebellion threw into New Caledonia a wave of settler 'refugees' who complained bitterly not only about the militant Kanaks but about what they saw as a betrayal by the French state and by Dijoud in particular. They have lent their support to the opponents of land reform in New Caledonia and they are widely believed by the FI to be armed and to have the elements of military organization. With organizational bases in Noumea as well as the bush townships, these new settlers do not trust the state to safeguard their interests and some certainly contemplate the possibility of independent action to take power rather than concede authority to the Melanesians. Most Melanesians are contemptuous of their actual capacity to do so, but until the victory of Mitterand in the French presidential elections of 1981 some of the FI were apprehensive of the possibility of ill-considered actions by radical Melanesians being used as the pretext for a rightist coup, as in 1958. Since Mitterand's victory the possibility of such an outcome has all but disappeared.

It should be recognized, however, (not least in Australia) that while many of the Caldoche (white Caledonians) are narrow, greedy and illiberal people, many others are not. Those who are not include, for example, many who were in the UC but who feel that the concept of Indépendance Kanak cannot be supported because its emphasis on the primacy of one race would render the situation of other races - even longstanding Caledonians - subordinate and precarious. They do not regard metropolitan France as 'home' and some of them want to create a Caledonian society, autonomous, and liberal, but essentially multi-ethnic. Many have left active politics, disillusioned with the frustrations and the
sectional passions which have been generated by the pressure-cooker effect of the abrogation of the normal channels of political expression and responsibility. France would do well to recreate the conditions under which such people might reengage in active political life.

The Wallis Island and French Polynesian settlers are key sections of the population. Many of them have become disillusioned with being clients of the French in an economy which cannot provide enough jobs. They acknowledge the pressure the Melanesians can bring to bear to prevent them taking up land, and many also acknowledge the validity of Melanesian customary claims based on concepts identical to their own. Some are willing to enter into dialogue with the Melanesians in order to determine whether their future might be better in a Melanesian-led state.

(c) The Kanaks

There is still among some settlers a dangerous tendency to think of the Independence movement as something essentially dependent upon the actions of a radical minority. Such a view seriously underestimates the extent to which Melanesians throughout the Territory have been fired by the prospect of emerging into full self-determination. Most Melanesians are strongly committed to the concept of Indépendance Kanak. Anything less than that - Indépendance Calédonienne for example - is distrusted as likely to involve the continued subordination of Melanesians to white settlers. The freedom and dignity and self-respect involved in Indépendance Kanak is a much richer prospect than the material gains or the state patronage of Melanesian culture which the Dijoud plan offers, and the French government would be very foolish to believe that it can easily supplant the one for the other. Perhaps France has had a deceptive success in French Polynesia. There the indigenous people appear, for the present, to have succumbed to the flow of spending which accompanied the nuclear programme and the granting of local office and limited local autonomy; they have left the outer islands, emasculated their ancient culture for the prospect of good wages in Papeete, and muted the earlier demands for Independence. But this success depends on continued economic indulgence, and, in any case, Melanesia is different. Melanesian cultures have shown themselves to be more closed, less willing to compromise in essentials. Moreover, in New Caledonia the indigenous people lost more and have much more to regain. The leaders of what is after all still much the largest ethnic group in the Territory - the majority group until nearly 1960 and, with the discontinuance of migration, slowly increasing its proportion of
the total\(^1\) will be loath to settle for less than primacy in some form of emergent New Caledonian state. The very threat implied in the Dijoud plan, that new development and new immigration will further reduce the Melanesian proportion of the population and will cause their opportunity to pass, certainly makes many Melanesians more determined not to cooperate, and makes some of them likely to be more reckless in their methods if their objectives are frustrated by obviously manipulative devices such as were used in the past.

Moreover, for most Melanesians *Indépendance Kanak* appears increasingly imminent and inevitable. This is largely the result of their interpretation of the historic forces of decolonization in the world at large and in Oceania in particular. Continued French rule appears more and more anomalous. The Independence of Vanuatu is seen as presaging that of New Caledonia. Coming on top of the sympathy expressed towards FI emissaries by Pacific governments, the success in Vanuatu of a Melanesian (and regional) military intervention against right-wing reaction was a heady experience. In 1980 it appeared to many Pacific Islanders that New Caledonian Independence must indeed be imminent, and some FI leaders were emboldened to set dates for a Declaration of Independence (24 September 1982 and Christmas 1983 have been mentioned). Their diplomacy within the region has intensified as has the redoubling of effort to organize Melanesians at local level within New Caledonia. There is also discussion (though not adopted policy) of forming groups of Melanesian ex-soldiers and rifle clubs because 'they' (the settlers) are armed (Union Calédonienne, Report of the XI Congress, 1980:3).

But the expectation that the success of Independence movements in the region will somehow logically lead to the Independence of New Caledonia is misleading. In the last resort (in the absence of a common frontier with another such struggle) the New Caledonian Independence movement must be worked out essentially *within New*

\(^{1}\) The projections for 1985, based on existing natality rate and a nil balance of migration are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Projected Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>52,561 (34.3 per cent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanesians</td>
<td>67,306 (44 per cent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polynesians</td>
<td>20,278 (13 per cent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>12,516 (8 per cent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>152,661</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(Service de la Statistique, 'La population de la Nouvelle Calédonie, Notes and Documents No. 4', February 1980.)
Caledonia. Given the continued determination of both the French government and the settler majority in New Caledonia, and their willingness to defy external disapprovals, 'Indépendance Kanak' is not yet assured. A premature Declaration of Independence, while likely to be of considerable propaganda value to the FI, is also likely to get the participants arrested. None of the regional powers has offered sanctuary for a government in exile and, hopefully, none would take on the French army. The FI from time to time talk of support from Cuba or Algeria or Libya. It may come, in the form of money, or even in smuggled arms or bombs to be exploded in Paris. But there is no close base for actual military support and the regional powers, including Australia, would unanimously reject assistance from such quarters. The FI threat to dally with such people, while not to be taken lightly, may in the end prove counter-productive.

Nevertheless there are some trends within New Caledonia which favour the FI cause. These are partly demographic; the proportion of French and other settlers in the population will continue to fall (unless there is an unforeseeable economic miracle) while that of the Melanesians grows. Secondly, the Melanesian population is very young - half of it below the age of twenty-five. These young people are now passing through good education but into unemployment, and into sub-standard living conditions both on the reserves and the Noumea suburbs. In short they are becoming both more aware and more dissatisfied. They are becoming a more volatile proletariat, much less constrained by the customs of their fathers and the moderate politics of the older non-violent leaders like Roch Pidjot. They are a dynamic force which will strengthen, not abate. At present they are ill-organized but brooding and hostile. The potential for conflict between them and the adamant right is considerable. Unfortunately, now, so is their distrust of all non-Kanaks. They too are part of the harvest that the conservative, colonial-minded power-brokers will reap.

(d) The interaction

The outcome of the interaction of the forces outlined will be a matter of power and of political will founded upon deep cultural values. In the immediate future France, and the settlers, will concede to the Melanesians, via the land reform, much of the rural area, especially the East Coast. They will not, however, readily concede their control of the south or of the overall political process. Despite increasingly militant acts by radical Melanesians, which must come, the combination of metropolitan and settler power will contain any widespread or systematic attempt to challenge the existing political order through extra-legal means. Indépendance Kanak will not be won, in the short run, by direct action or external diplomacy, though a continuance of such diplomacy, and existing Fabian tactics internally, will win further recognition of Melanesian grievances.
The Independence parties must rely largely, for the pursuit of their cause, on the electoral processes. In this regard it is just conceivable that, with the departure of some of the settlers, the attainment of voting age by more young Melanesians, and the switching of votes by some of the Polynesian migrants (provided the Melanesians make them a clear and generous offer of access to land and citizenship under Indépendance Kanak), the Indépendantistes could win a majority in a future election. There remains, however, the possibility that the settlers would attempt to frustrate such an electoral verdict by means of a coup, as in 1958 or more recently in Santo. Much would then depend upon the attitude of the French government and army; but the possibility of civil war—race war—would be high.

Such an outcome, opening New Caledonia to extremist politics and international adventures of right or left, would be unacceptable to the region, and to Australia, as it was in Vanuatu in 1980. What precisely would be done about it would depend upon France's willingness to accept a democratic result and (if necessary) the willingness of her partners in the Western alliance, including Australia and the United States, to remind her where her honour as a defender of democratic liberties truly lies.

But it is unlikely that New Caledonian politics, in the next few years at least, will produce an electoral majority for Indépendance Kanak. The root dilemma, and one to which more and more Caledonians will be addressing themselves, is whether one must conclude that one or other race in New Caledonia must be dominant, and exploit the others, or whether a genuine Caledonian community with some sort of acceptable multi-racialism can yet be achieved. It is now dangerously late to hope for such an outcome; such is the legacy of conservative, colonial and anti-democratic politics of previous decades that Melanesians and settlers are now largely polarized (notwithstanding a minority of Melanesians like Ukeiwe in official positions). But not to work for it seems to doom the island to intensifying confrontation, or at best to a formal stability achieved only out of common fear of French police power, to sullen muted hostility and apathy instead of dynamism. That must indeed be a melancholy prospect for thoughtful Frenchmen to contemplate.

What prospects remain, however, for the creation of genuine community between the ethnic groups in New Caledonia? This is clearly the expressed wish of those centrist politicians who are genuinely supporting reform, and no doubt it is also the real preference of the Mitterand government.

The unfortunate paradox is that the very direct involvement of the state in trying to engineer such an outcome, inherently threatens, as much as promotes, a sense of community in New Caledonia.
This is partly because the state — any state but especially the French state, remote as it is and represented essentially by officials on tours of duty — is an unsubtle instrument for handling inter-cultural problems of the utmost intricacy, like the land question or multi-cultural education. Schemes developed 'from outside', by the most talented and well-intended officials, are inherently unlikely to apprehend the intricacies of a society as distant from the European as is the Melanesian society. Moreover, some officials are basically out of sympathy with what they consider to be outrageous and reactionary Melanesian demands, and respond to them only sluggishly.

But the more fundamental weakness of state paternalism is the inevitable fact that, because the state takes the responsibility, and withholds it from (in this case) the New Caledonians, extreme demands are encouraged rather than discouraged, and community weakens rather than grows. Part of the problem, as mentioned earlier, is that the concepts of the Dijoud plan are too late and too limited. Over the last decade the FI has emerged and formulated its position and programme. Its basic demands — for a devolution of authority leading to Independence — having been denied, it holds aloof and rejects intrinsically good measures one after another. M Dijoud regularly invited its leaders to participate, but on terms which, to the FI leaders, involved denial, or at least fatal delay, of programmes for which they had been elected.

For these reasons important groups of settlers — businessmen and intellectuals — have again begun to talk of 'Indépendance Calédonienne'. Senator Lionel Cherrier has spoken of a 'Commonwealth' relationship, and among officials and politicians discussion of a further revision of the Territory statute is widespread. Some suggestions have been made that it should go as far as the Cook Islands model, but most reference among the settlers and officials is to the statute of French Polynesia. This involves a responsible Governing Council elected by the majority in the Territorial Assembly and deliberating without the high commissioner. It could involve ministerial direction of the civil service. A bold and progressive Governing Council could also conceivably increase taxation and reform salary structures to reduce the dependency upon France, promote 'Territorialization' of education, and institute economic measures which reform the colonial nature of the economy.

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1 The essential feature of which is that the Cook Islands may opt for full independence without any necessary reference to the New Zealand parliament.
Some members of the FNSC glimpsed these possibilities. Some even approached the UC about forming a new and progressive coalition. But the UC declined. Anything short of full Independence is unacceptable to all the Melanesian parties, and the radical sections of the FI denounce moves leading to a 'bourgeois independence'.

In the short run then, the policies of the centrists like Cherrier and Morlet are likely to be frustrated. But there has not yet been a serious attempt to build a Caledonian society with a genuine accession to political responsibility. There are important elements of fluidity in the situation still. Many of the Melanesians are strongly opposed to the use of force, both on principle and for fear of its futility and danger. They will continue to work within the electoral process. The reform programme, while unlikely to command widespread support, may have the two-fold effect of inducing some Melanesians into positions of responsibility and simultaneously convincing them of the selfishness, bankruptcy and dangers of the politics of the right. Many Wallis Islanders and Tahitians have become disillusioned with French paternalism and would almost certainly welcome a genuine devolution of power to New Caledonia itself.

Among the Europeans there are old divisions between petits blancs and grands colons, between Caldoche families of three generations and recent metropolitan arrivals, and between socialists and communists on the one hand and Gaullists or Giscardians on the other. They are greatly divided and uncertain. All that the 1979 election showed was that they are, for the most part (despite M Lafleur and his group) opposed to departmentalization with France and to Indépendance Kanak as hitherto presented. Disillusionment with the Djoud plan paradoxically reinforced the common ground of the Caldoche, even of the right, and the Indépendantistes on the key point: a dislike of paternalistic metropolitan direction. The debate on the réforme foncière actually produced some dialogue between the two, and an affirmation from speakers of the FI that they would rather be given the money and allowed to deal directly with the settlers - and that they had no desire to evict longstanding and genuine bush farmers.

It is just conceivable that out of all this, and out of the positive encouragement of a liberal revision of the Territory statute, combined with the policing of actions outside the law, New Caledonian politics could be contained within legal/democratic channels and that new political constellations could form. There would seem to be clear advantages to the Kanaks to continue with their hitherto highly successful Fabian tactics, seeking support from sections of the Polynesians and the whites, and to avoid actions which could precipitate a debacle. Certainly they must apprehend that their goals can only be attained by securing
recognition of their views within New Caledonia; the friendly reception given to their outside diplomacy, while important, is no substitute for this given the limited capacity of other states to bring pressure on France, especially in the absence of an electoral majority for Independence.

Conversely there would seem to be many advantages to the non Kanaks in understanding what 'Indépendance Kanak', as defined by Tjibaou and the UC, really means, and perceiving the advantages it could offer in terms both of the dignity of self-responsibility and the material advantages of reduced exploitation by the métropole.

This phase of dialogue between the moderate Kanaks and the progressive settlers has scarcely begun, but assuming that the Kanaks cannot win alone - or not at least without going through a physical confrontation of unpredictable outcome - they must win support from a substantial section of the settlers for the concept of shaping a new autonomous New Caledonian society, which may, in the normal course of politics, give Melanesians a preponderance commensurate with their numbers but would not simply override the combined interests of the settler groups. The exigencies of the situation may, however, have to reveal themselves more starkly before the proponents of 'Indépendance Kanak' or 'Indépendance Calédonienne', of 'bourgeois' or 'socialist' models find common ground in the renewed pursuit of an autonomous Oceanian society.

What is the likely attitude of the métropole to this process? In the light of its recent defence policy statements the Mitterand government will presumably continue to pursue a modified version of France's traditional Pacific region policies, which, in turn, relate to the determined assertion of French power in the world, based on the independent nuclear/military capacity. France's commitment to a 'multi-racial' position for New Caledonia has been partly to underwrite her continued presence in the Pacific, partly out of concern for the settlers in New Caledonia, and partly from convictions about the universal applicability of French values and institutions. These attitudes carry the grave danger that the portended changes of policy in New Caledonia will be only a variant on existing ones: too ungenerous, too settler-oriented, too set on emphasizing France and French culture rather than New Caledonia and New Caledonian culture and as such unable to draw off Kanak militancy into legal/constitutional channels. There is still a risk of over reliance on repression and on the maintenance of the old colonial structures with their inherent instability.
(d) **Implications**

If the above analysis is an accurate assessment of the situation in New Caledonia, two conclusions would appear to follow. First, it would indeed be dangerous for the French state to relax its authority abruptly or prematurely; secondly, while the French state does remain in strength the emergence of true community in New Caledonia is not possible. The resolution of the paradox is to be found in the certain and progressive withdrawal of the authority of Paris over a stated period of time and after it has instituted genuine structural reforms. Ultimately the spokesmen of the UC during the debate on the Dijoud plan are correct: there will be no true drawing together of the ethnic groups until they are obliged to accept responsibility and work out compromises in the evolution of a fully self-determining autonomous society responsible for its own land distribution, its own economy, its own education system, its own levels of salaries and social welfare benefits, and eventually its own police forces and enforcement of law and order. Only with responsibility will come real wisdom. In this regard the FI would have much to think through. How will they distribute the land among contending customary claimants, after a century of relocation? What land rights or citizenship conditions will they offer the ethnic minorities, including the French and the Wallisians? For their part, the other groups would be obliged to decide what conditions they consider essential and what they can realistically expect in an autonomous New Caledonia, with the gendarmes and soldiers withdrawn. That would be normal healthy politics; and it would be entirely possible if the French state were to say, not 'We are here for ten years during which we will prove Independence to be a futile goal', but 'We are going to be here for five or ten years at most, and during that time we shall help you, Melanesians, French, Wallisians and others, to work out the basic structures of your emergent Oceanic society with ultimate constitutional arrangements open to review'. In that society, while Kanaks may come eventually to a primacy commensurate with their numbers, it should be entirely possible for non Melanesians to live securely and in moderate prosperity. At this stage only a minority of Indépendantistes want the French to go; rather they want the rule of France and white exploitation to end. If that distinction could be made clear and grasped by more Frenchmen in New Caledonia the existing tensions would greatly relax and much constructive thinking ensue. The responsibility for communicating the distinction lies largely with the FI, but the representatives of the French state could also do much to promote it, instead of breathing portents of bloodshed and slaughter. Nor would living standards collapse with the withdrawal of massive French subsidies. If mining and other major companies registered in France and taxed in France were instead taxed in New Caledonia, if income tax was at reasonable levels, if even half of the investment presently placed outside New Caledonia by Lafleur, Pentecost, Laroche and others was placed inside the country, locally-based enterprise
could be well-founded and local services maintained at a reasonable level. Certainly the lavish metropolitan salary levels would decline, but so too would the inflated costs of goods and services. In arguing for a genuinely locally-based economy, with its appropriate levels of revenue and expenditure, the UC speakers in February 1979 had economic reason on their side.

To embrace such a policy and establish a timetable of careful evolution towards self-government and Indépendence Calédonienne, would seem to offer only advantages to France. First, she would avoid the opprobrium of sustaining an essentially colonial relationship and gain the international credit of shaping a democratic pluri-ethnic society - albeit perhaps with the Melanesians *primus inter pares*. Such a goal, one of the most prized and elusive in human history, is yet possible under the aegis of a heritage of liberal French traditions and institutions, provided that basic Oceanic realities are also recognized and recognized promptly. Secondly, France need not lose any of her essential national interests: naval bases, fisheries and oceanographic and other scientific research, agreements for the acquisition of strategic minerals, would all be entirely possible under agreements with an autonomous New Caledonia. Thirdly, France would escape the risks of being involved ever more deeply in police or military action, as is probable if Melanesian radicalism increases. Fourthly, French Caledonian settlers could remain secure and the influence of French language and culture remain welcome and strong in this region.

This is not to say that the French state has no constructive role to play in the immediate future. On the contrary. The land question illustrates this well. Given their way, as they largely were from 1958 to 1978, the conservative settlers would conduct no land reform which recognized specific Melanesian grievances; allowed to realize their 'global' land demand, radical Melanesians could well precipitate confusion and injustice. The state does have a key role in getting a reasonable process of land redistribution moving and has sought to do that. Up till very recently it has lost much of the potential goodwill of that endeavour by seeking still to direct the land reform too closely in too narrowly conceived directions. It has thereby alienated a good many while genuinely satisfying very few. The application of the legislation of 1980 will show whether the state has learnt that it must, while prodding the excessively conservative and restraining the excessively militant, still allow the real protagonists in the Territory to exercise responsibility. It is not an easy task. Some officials and politicians deserve recognition for having got as far as they have.

But certainly France would make reform more acceptable by not presenting particular reforms as designed to forestall or frustrate
any one ultimate political/constitutional outcome and to engineer
another. In the grand design as well as in the particular the art
must be to enable and to encourage Caledonians to take initiatives
and make compromises but not to prescribe the outcomes too closely.

Australia's responsibility

The people of the small states of Oceania are inevitably con­
cerned with Kanak nationalism in New Caledonia, from ties of colour
and culture and shared rejection of colonialism. They all look
increasingly to Australia for her response to the situation.
Indeed Australia has a considerable capacity to encourage or to
restrain the Oceanic states in their attitude to the French presence.
In the event of any more serious crisis in New Caledonia, Australia's
attitude would be crucial and Pacific Islanders are prone to ask
where Australia would stand in such an eventuality.

On the other hand, French people in New Caledonia are prone
to accuse Australians of unwarranted interference in the Territory -
of blatant anti-French and pro-Indépendantiste attitudes. Certainly
some of the Australian media statements have been crude in their
analysis and arrogant in their advocacy. Moreover, Melanesians as
well as settlers are well aware of Australia's dismal record with
the Aborigines and prone to reject Australian professions of concern
as hypocritical. There is too a very real apprehension that
Australia, which has historically had imperialistic designs of her
own in the South Pacific, seeks to replace French influence with her
own;¹ even those French who favour the granting of Independence
genuinely fear this when Australians voice their opinions.

Australians, therefore, while defending the right to an opinion
in the affairs of their own region, have to exercise considerable
care and responsibility in the expression of that opinion. They
need not, however, remain mute. The suggestion that Australians
have disqualified themselves from a right to speak because of their
treatment of the Aborigines (or New Zealanders in respect of the
Maori) is facile. Of course Australians and New Zealanders must
continue to put their own houses in order, but proportions do alter

¹ An extraordinary novel Le Général Chez les Canaques by the popular
novelist Pierre Nemours (Editions Fleuve Noir, Paris 1975) develops
its plot round a conspiracy by Japanese and Australian businessmen
to divide the region under the façade of a Melanesian Confederation,
ousting France in the process. The novelist occasionally adds
rubrics purporting to be scholarly. One, referring to London's
pressure on France to leave the New Hebrides adds: '... an evident
aspiration by Australia to leadership of this region of the world
is one of the components of this situation'.
cases. Aborigines, and Maoris, are small minorities in Australia and New Zealand; Kanaks are nearly 44 per cent of New Caledonia's population and decidedly the largest ethnic group. Furthermore, if moral right becomes the test then Australians and New Zealanders have a moral right - that earned by 100,000 war graves on French soil (1,000 alone in the war cemetery at Bourail north of Noumea itself); graves of Australasians who died in defence of the liberties of France and of New Caledonia against militarism and fascism. With this in mind Frenchmen - and Melanesians - should not be surprised if Australian concern is still displayed in respect of stability and peaceful self-determination in their own region.

For that after all is the real basis of Australian interest. New Caledonia is a pivotal part of Oceania, of which Australia and New Zealand are also part. The stability of the region is crucial to Australasian security. While many French settlers in New Caledonia retain homes in France and intend to go back there, Australasians will not be going home to Europe. They are of the Oceanian region and they will certainly claim an entitlement to be concerned about what happens in New Caledonia.

Yet equally Australians must have regard for the interests of the French in New Caledonia - of the many French families already two and three generations old, and of the concern of the proud and ancient French civilization to preserve its place in the world through its language, its laws, its liberal traditions, its naval power. Nor are these things necessarily antithetical to the region's interests; looking at the question only from the narrow view of regional defence Australasians would need to ask whether they could, for example, themselves fill the vacuum left by the withdrawal of France from the region, against the manifest Soviet desire to establish ties with the small Pacific states. Indeed some Australians probably are (wittingly or unwittingly) affected by the sentiments of 1940, when an Australian cruiser helped the Gaullist settlers overthrow the Pétainist administration, and by the subsequent years of alliance.

However, while giving due recognition to the French role in regional defence and to the rich contribution French culture can make when freely offered and freely accepted, Australians are nevertheless entitled to point out that these advantages are fundamentally undermined if they are established only through anti-democratic and white-supremacist policies. Litvinov vainly argued about the time of Munich that 'peace is indivisible'; one can go further and argue that the social justice which is the basis of peace is also indivisible. And in New Caledonia now social justice demands recognition of the special claims of the largest single ethnic group, the indigenous people of the Territory.
The whole region joins with the FI in proclaiming that; Australia can scarcely do less.

This work has argued that recent reforms in New Caledonia are inadequate to achieve social justice and stability there, largely because of the ulterior political motives against which they have been couched. It has further suggested that responsible Frenchmen both in the métropole and the Territory are themselves aware of this. It is unrealistic, however, to expect Frenchmen suddenly to accede to Indépendance Kanak, either by persuasion or threat of force.

Australian influence in the region should therefore be directed towards three principles: first, to assuring the Oceanic peoples, including the Kanak people of New Caledonia, that Australia recognizes the rights of the Kanaks, by virtue of their numbers and their status as the indigenous people of the land, to object to further immigration into New Caledonia and to become primus inter pares in a democratic, autonomous state; secondly, to reaffirming to France and to the region that actions subversive of the legal-democratic process, such as occurred in the Santo rebellion, and which threaten to admit either tyranny and oligarchy of the right or adventurism of the non-democratic left are unacceptable to Australia; thirdly, to reassuring France and Caldoche settlers that Australia recognizes longstanding and reasonable French interests in New Caledonia, and the role France still has to play there, while encouraging the swift, genuine and generous devolution of responsibility to the Territory, leading to full Independence, though without prescription of ultimate political/constitutional relationships between New Caledonia and France.

It is very largely the lack of that responsibility which has promoted the politics of race and prevented the proponents of Indépendance Kanak and Indépendance Calédonienne from finding their common ground. The assumption that Kanaks and settlers are locked in perpetual antagonism, and that therefore responsibility cannot be devolved, dooms New Caledonia to at best a stultifying, debilitating subordination to overriding metropolitan control, and at worst to cruel racial strife, affecting the whole Oceanic region. This work is based on the opposite assumption, that some common ground exists or will develop among Kanaks and settlers working to build an autonomous society, but that only prompt and genuine reform, accompanying true devolution of responsibility, will enable the interlocuteurs valables of both sides to gain requisite influence.
Postscript

This text was substantially completed by January 1981. It has been amended in the light of the victory of François Mitterrand in the French presidential elections of May 1981 and the murder of Pierre Declercq, secretary-general of the Union Calédonienne, on 19 September 1981. But neither event has required that the analysis be fundamentally changed. Basically the argument remains that the politics of racial confrontation is intensifying in the Pacific, largely as a result of French colonial policies, and that it is an urgent and an exacting task of both French and regional statemanship in respect of New Caledonia to prevent the ugly sequence of action and reaction from worsening.

Vanuatu serves as a warning. Colonial exploitation of Melanesian land led to a sharp reaction, via the Melanesian nationalist movement, producing constitutional provisions limiting citizenship and perpetual land titles to ethnic Melanesians and their descendants. In turn the settlers, with encouragement from some local officials, rebelled and were suppressed, not by metropolitan forces but by Papua New Guinea forces with Australian support. Vanuatu has since been so distrustful of white influences that even bona fide settlers, including those mindful of their place in a Melanesian society and respectful of its laws and its people, are finding it difficult to establish themselves and contribute to development. Meanwhile pan-Melanesian race consciousness and militancy towards the French in New Caledonia verges on adventurism and flirtation with the non-democratic left. These attitudes threaten a division within the region which would be dangerous to its stability and security, and ultimately threatening to Melanesia itself. New Caledonia is the focal point of these attitudes. Only very prompt, generous and determined policies by France herself, aimed at a New Caledonian Independence which recognizes Melanesian primacy while seeking liberal terms for non Melanesians for whom New Caledonia is home, can intercept the cycle of racist or ethnocentric action and reaction and make it possible for some kind of community to develop across racial and cultural lines, both within New Caledonia and in the region as a whole.
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From the late 1960s radical groups among the Melanesians of New Caledonia began to campaign for Independence. By the mid 1970s three Melanesian political parties championing independence held seats in the Territorial Assembly and in 1977 the multi-racial Union Calédonienne also opted for Independence. The French government has recently sought to meet the pressures with a wide-ranging programme of economic and social development. Central to the programme is a renewed réforme foncière aimed at returning substantial areas of land on the main island to Melanesian ownership and control. There is considerable agreement that this is urgently necessary. But there is great disagreement about the extent and location of the land to be affected, the terms on which it will be acquired and the manner on which it should be reallocated among Melanesians. These matters underlie current New Caledonian politics and strongly affect the independence issue.

Alan Ward's monograph examines the reform programme, and the land reform in particular, in relation to New Caledonian society and politics, including the colonial background. It then relates the New Caledonian situation to Australia's regional interests and responsibilities.

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