

THE THIRTEENTH
JAMES BACKHOUSE LECTURE
1977

PAPUA NEW GUINEA
- Third World on our doorstep

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WHAT THIS LECTURE IS ABOUT

Papua New Guinea is usually counted as one of the Third World nations and shares many Third World problems, with a rapidly expanding population, inadequate social services, a frightening rate of urbanisation, and dependence on earnings from primary products for which prices are set by the rich world. Independent since September 1975, Papua New Guinea still remains a special responsibility of Australia that has promised continuing aid at a high level for at least another five years. Modern development theories suggest that aid must go to the poorest people within the poor nations; as a World Council of Churches report puts it, we must 'bet on the weak' if we are to avoid perpetuating the injustices which are too often found within our own societies. The author argues that this is especially necessary in Papua New Guinea where a traditionally egalitarian, self-reliant society is being pushed towards elitism and dependence on foreign capital or foreign hand-outs. Peace depends on justice, in the world as a whole and in Papua New Guinea. Australian Friends must look at aid programs with a wary eye and support those which by helping the mass of the people, assist in 'taking away the occasion of wars'.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Woodward is a New Zealander who has been living and working in Papua New Guinea for nearly five years. She and her husband, Jack, are on the staff of the Papua New Guinea University of Technology in Lae. She is a member of Adelaide Friends Meeting, having lived in Adelaide for six years before going to Lae. Despite her New Zealand origin she writes very much as an Australian. In New Guinea they have spent much of their spare time travelling in the Highlands and walking through the villages in the mountains and consider Papua New Guinea to be the luckiest and most friendly place in the world.

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THE JAMES BACKHOUSE LECTURES

This is the thirteenth in a series of lectures instituted by Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends on the occasion of the establishment of that Yearly Meeting on January 1, 1964.

This lecture was delivered at the Naarmaroo Conference Centre, NSW on January 9, 1977 at the time of the holding of Yearly Meeting.

James Backhouse was an English Friend who visited Australia from 1832 to 1838. He and his companion, George Washington Walker, travelled widely but spent most of their time in Tasmania. It was through this visit that Quaker Meetings were first established in Australia. James Backhouse was a botanist who published full accounts of what he saw, besides encouraging Friends and following up his deep concern for the convicts and for the welfare of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the country.

Australian Friends hope that this series of lectures will bring fresh insights into truth, often with some reference to the needs and aspirations of Australian Quakerism.

Margaret F. Roberts
Presiding Clerk
Australia Yearly Meeting

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PAPUA\ NEW GUINEA - THIRD WORLD ON OUR DOORSTEP

The Country and the People

In the 1840s when little was known of the great island, a naturalist with a surveying expedition wrote:

'I know of no part of the world, the exploration of which is so flattering to the imagination, so likely to be fruitful in interesting results, whether to the naturalist, the ethnologist or the geographer, and, altogether, so well calculated to gratify the curiosity of an adventurous explorer as the interior of New Guinea. New Guinea! The very mention of being taken into the interior of New Guinea sounds like being allowed to visit some of the enchanted regions of the Arabian Nights, so dim an atmosphere of obscurity rests at present on the wonders it probably contains.'¹

Indeed, it is such a beautiful part of the world that there is little wonder that many expatriates who visit the country feel with the rogue naturalist d'Albortis that this is 'a land of eternal verdure and perpetual ecstasy' or 'like an enchanted castle'.²

Along with this enthusiasm has gone an astonishing ignorance or naivety about the people of Papua New Guinea, of whom it was said, 'the devil walks among them', a sentiment that seems to be echoed sometimes in present day misconceptions in Australia.³ There is too much ignorant or prejudiced talk that suggests that Papua New Guinea is not too safe for whites.

What could be further from the truth! For barring accident or misadventure of the kind to be found anywhere in the world, one may be killed with kindness but no other way. The people are the chief ornament of this magnificent land energetic, warm, inventive and overwhelmingly generous to the visitor.

I hold in my mind the people of the villages, the squatter camps and the university campus - may I be able to return to them something of what they have given me in inspiration and true friendship. How can we best stand by them?

It is little wonder that New Guinea was at first the subject of so many strange notions, along with extravagant enthusiasms, for its high mountains and

malarial swamps protected it from European invaders for centuries. When Europeans did eventually set foot there they found a land that had been inhabited for at least thirty thousand years, maybe longer, by a hardy people living in isolated villages; they were expert gardeners and warriors, still in the Stone Age, speaking seven hundred different varieties of two main languages, a fact which contributes to the separatism which is one of Papua New Guinea's present problems.⁴

The Europeans shared New Guinea out among themselves, the Dutch taking the western part, the Germans the north east and the British the south east (called 'Papua' after Australia took over). This arbitrary carving up was done, as in Africa and elsewhere in the heyday of imperialism, without reference to natural boundaries of any sort or to the wishes of the people, and with no thought of anything but the convenience of the colonial powers. It has created many problems in the uneasy situation between the two parts of the new nation and also with Indonesia.

At the time however, one observer wrote, "The only question is, by what means are we to satisfy our curiosity and turn the riches of New Guinea to profitable account?"⁵

In German New Guinea there was an enlightened Governor, Hahl, and Christian missionaries worked devotedly. But the German administration was frankly only interested in business and stated quite openly that its concern for the people of the country grew from the realisation that, 'European economic enterprise is only limited by its dependence on the possibility of obtaining labour'.⁶

The British administration was more high minded or hypocritical. Following hard on the heels of a Queensland 'coup' in 1883, British sovereignty was proclaimed by Commodore Erskine who enjoined the watching people, 'Always keep in your minds that the Queen guards and watches over you, looks upon you as her children, and will not allow anyone to harm you'.⁷

After World War One, a mandate over former German New Guinea was given to Australia on condition that 'the Mandatory shall promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and social progress of the inhabitants of the Territory'.⁸ This was to be Australia's 'sacred trust'. Papua New Guinea has developed within the framework of expressed Australian benevolence from the

very beginning. We thus have a special duty, which is recognised by the Australian Government towards this Third World on our doorstep.

With a great deal of encouragement from the United Nations and some reluctance from the less advanced Highlands people of New Guinea the country moved rapidly to self government (December 1973) and then to full independence (September 1975). The basis for future development was laid down in the **Eight Point Improvement Plan** which was approved by the Parliament in 1973 (see Appendix 1). It is based on the principles of decentralisation, rural improvement, equitable distribution of incomes, and self-reliance and is similar to the idealistic programs drawn up by other countries entering on independence. Will Papua New Guinea be able to achieve its eight aims, or will it like these other countries be pushed by events in the opposite direction"?

So much for the background. Now I would like to share with you my own experiences during five years in New Guinea, including some of the hopes and disillusionment of that time. I shall speak about the university campus at Lae where I lived and taught, about the nearby Markham Valley where I did my field work and about the mountains which form the backdrop to Lae and which gave us inspiration and relaxation at many difficult times.

The University at Lae

Experience at the University of Technology has been a complete life in itself: we have lived like a village community in close contact every day with all the staff and students of the university, something that is not possible in similar institutions in a city. There were many rewards, more problems and the emergence of some unpalatable and disillusioning realities.

The university is six miles from the coastal city of Lae, once the centre of the extraordinary air lifts to and from the rich goldfields which Ion Idriess describes in *Gold Dust and Ashes*. As soon as one enters the gate, a new world appears, different in every way from the bush and the villages outside, with smooth lawns and palms, modern buildings, some airconditioned, first class laboratories, a well stocked library and comfortable houses equipped with washing machines. What are the thoughts of the village people as they trudge by on the road outside, the women loaded down with their net bags of vegetables and with perhaps a baby on top? Nobody asks.

This life, satisfying like that of other enclosed communities, contained within itself many of the problems of aid and development that emerge with rapid and somewhat too easy access to the Western idea of progress.

The university is a very recent development. The Australian administration was at first committed to 'uniform development' throughout the country, with no elites and supposedly no headaches. In many ways this was a sound idea, but it would have taken many years of patience to allow people recently contacted to advance equally with others; it could have been a recipe for eternal white supremacy, and it was inevitable that it would change with pressure for early independence and the need to train leaders for a new nation. In the mid-fifties more attention was paid by the administration to education and secondary schools were begun. However today only about half the children of school age in Papua New Guinea attend school of any kind, two-thirds of these 'drop out' at Standard Six, half of those who go to High School must leave at the end of two years, and only a handful complete the normal secondary school course of four years: fewer still attend one of the national high schools which continue to Form 6. Our students are therefore a highly selected and fortunate group.

The University of Papua New Guinea and an Institute for Higher Technical Education (which eventually became the Papua New Guinea University of Technology) were established following the Currie Report, in 1966, in an attempt to provide the specialist skills to build an independent nation. These are prestige institutions with absolutely no precedent in a village-based, pre-literate community, bringing technology and philosophies requiring a prodigious leap from the Stone Age to the Industrial Revolution. Is it any wonder that our students have many difficulties in their studies? We do not wonder at their problems, we are proud of the achievements of the young men and women who are often the first literate member of their clans.

A greater problem is that these universities depended for their establishment and maintenance entirely on outside aid and guidance. Of course modern technology and world views are required if there is to be any 'development' at all, but it is now a truism to say that these must be appropriate to the new country. Here we are in a dilemma, for who is to decide what is 'appropriate'? The national of the country, as in Papua New Guinea, cannot be familiar with the range of technology available; the expatriate knows about the techniques suitable for his own society but cannot readily understand the attitudes and requirements of the developing country.

There is a further difficulty because many of the expatriates who come to universities in the developing world are not concerned with these problems at all. They come for the good salaries and conditions which are necessary to attract staff to distant places. Some do not mind describing themselves as 'academic mercenaries' and making it obvious that they consider idealism either hypocritical or foolish. Such people cannot be blamed for making the most of a situation in which greed is considered to be the prime motivation for work in a developing country. Remember, the positions are widely advertised. If more well trained 'service' oriented people applied there would be fewer 'profit' oriented ones. It is a fact that now that conditions are less favourable because of financial stringency it is proving almost impossible to fill posts. When we live in a greedy capitalist society, we must expect the motive of profit to be as important to those who go overseas as it was at home. We must look first to the standards in our own society before expecting idealism to be general elsewhere.

The staff of the University of Technology now come increasingly from other developing countries, especially from India and the Philippines. Many academics from those countries have found it hard to obtain employment at home, in spite of the obvious needs there. Do we see in this situation another kind of neo-colonialism? Western-style, inappropriate training has produced more academics than one poor country needs, and those academics are now coming in great numbers into another poor country. Will they repeat the process by handing on this very type of training? The decision will be made by the people of Papua New Guinea - themselves. If there is one lesson that we have learned during our stay, it is that expatriates cannot make the decisions, they can only ensure that a true choice is possible by presenting alternatives to the western-oriented type of technology now increasingly being found wanting even in the west, but easily represented, parrot fashion, as the mark of true progress.

The kind of choice to be made will depend on the kind of leaders that emerge. Here I think we must question the total effect of very generous Australian aid as it affects the universities and the country as a whole. Aid amounted to nearly \$229 million for 1975-6, a gift making up 43% of the PNG budget. Money aid solves some problems but creates others,⁹ and even *Time* magazine has written (March 1, 1976) that in Africa 'European aid remains a major factor in perpetuating European influence' - another type of neo-colonialism. Alas! The simple answers retreat. Is it impossible to do the right thing?

One may conclude that 'less aid' is not of itself any kind of answer but that 'different aid' may be. Friends' programs have always been based on grass roots projects and I am more than ever convinced that this is the constructive way.

One serious difficulty in the type of university training that has developed is that aid has been used to provide living standards and to encourage attitudes that hasten the alienation of the leaders from their fellows. The standards are western ones, why should the new elite not aspire to the same levels? While many young people begin with high ideals and a few maintain them it would be unrealistic to expect self denial that has not been shown by the expatriates. Rene Dumont deals with this problem at length in his book, *False Start in Africa* (Sphere, 1968) and describes conditions in former French Africa where politicians and public servants earn in a month or so as much as a farmer earns in a lifetime. He equates this with conditions in France before the French Revolution. Franz Fanon in a more biting style labels the new elites as 'good for nothing parasites on the uneducated mass' and claims that 'nationalism means the transfer to the peasants of injustices inherited from the colonial period.'

It is all the more regrettable because Papua New Guinean society was traditionally an egalitarian one. In a fine speech to university students in 1974 the then Chief Minister (now the Prime Minister) Mr Michael Somare, said:

'Equality has always been important in Papua New Guinea societies. We have had our big men and even chiefs in some societies, but we have never had the great contrast between rich and poor that you can see in some modern societies. If we were poor we were all poor together and the Big Man did not forget his obligation to those less well off. . . . '

Our students still feel at one with their village brothers; there is not even the degree of class consciousness found between Australian students and working class young people and nothing remotely like that found in India or other parts of Asia. The simple village community has not yet become complex enough to create too much differentiation and change is no doubt inevitable, but it is a matter of speed and degree of division. The university as it has been set up is hurrying and increasing the gap between the elite and the people.

One brake on the process has been the community work encouraged by some staff and chaplains on the campus. This has created a link with the villages and squatter camps which surround our luxurious little island and brought us in

touch with one of the most worrying aspects of 'development' in Papua New Guinea, the drift to the towns.

Lae, like all the other urban centres in the country, is expanding at an extraordinary and alarming rate. There were only 12% of the population living in towns in 1975 but the drift is so pronounced that Housing Commission experts estimate that 60% will live in towns in five years' time. Lae had 13,000 citizens in 1966 but today has 57,000, more than four times as many within ten years. Most of these people are not driven by poverty; they come for better social services like clinics and schools, for the bright lights and cowboy pictures, to escape sorcery or traditional disciplines and with the hope of finding work which will never be available for about a third of them.

There is no lack of government planning to deal with the situation. The Eight Point Plan laid special stress on the need to prevent excessive urbanisation through 'decentralisation of economic activity, planning and government spending, with emphasis on agricultural development. . .' The revised Five Year Plan also emphasised rural development needs. There is a Rural Improvement Fund and a Village Economic Development Fund; a Village Task Force operated briefly. Most recently (October 1976) a new 'National Development Strategy' has been announced to find ways of dealing with the gap between town and village development. Some hopeful projects are under way (for example palm oil and rubber plantations) but in practical terms there is absolutely no sense of urgency. The trend towards urbanisation has to be seen in the context of a rapidly growing total population which will certainly double within twenty-five years from its present figure of some 2.5 million. As the greatest increase will be amongst those under 15 years of age, there will be a heavy burden in terms of social needs upon the income earning group.

Yet the problem is an urgent one, for quite apart from the misery and human waste represented by the figures (which mean thousands without work or the prospect of work) there are terrible problems of law and order. Stealing is already a serious problem on our campus (pathetically, food and clothing are the most popular items) but in Port Moresby the so-called Standard Six drop outs have formed gangs which are more sophisticated and more violent.

Here is violence with its roots in injustice, something that Friends will readily understand. Speaking to a recent seminar on crime prevention, in Port Moresby, Bernard Narakobi, well known to many Friends, raised a storm by asserting that as long as the rich continued to be greedy and as long as society did

not provide work or a decent living for others, the poor had the right to redress even by stealing from the rich. That was bluntly put but at least it is obvious that stealing is inevitable while society is so divided.

This worry continues, but there is a great deal of hope also in the settlements we have visited regularly. Many of the camps have been planned by welfare officers and by the people themselves. In this Papua New Guinea may lead the world.¹⁰ Whether the good basic planning can be maintained in the face of the expected surge to the towns remains to be seen.

Another encouraging development in the camps is the formation of natural village units which gather round good leaders, men without formal schooling or traditional authority, gaining respect through their own personality. I have seen these men settling disputes in the evenings, sitting on the bare earth by the light of a lantern, circled by all who care to attend. The people are attentive, and the leader listens carefully to each one in turn, not hurrying nor impatient. Usually he will find a solution acceptable to all parties. If that is impossible, the matter may then go to the police or another court. Students have gained immensely through contact with these men and have been able to sit and talk over many of the problems and sometimes to help.

It would be more encouraging if the university really supported community action and accepted it as a part of its work. Such is not the case at either university, in spite of a University Report (the Gris Report) which spoke of the need to 'establish lines of communication with the general population . . . and facilitate the effective interaction of all levels of society to avoid unnecessary elitist stratification within it'. Lip service has been paid when it was convenient - mere 'maus wara' or 'tok bilas', surface decoration. At Lae the work, such as it is, has been done in people's spare time. Engineering and business development projects has been carried out by staff with little encouragement of any kind.

Advantages for Papua New Guinea

Before I turn to my personal experiences in the Markham Valley and the Mountains, it may be helpful to consider the prospects for the country as a whole and to say rather more about the problems of aid.

In Appendix 2 I have commented on the country's dependence on primary products: in other ways too it shares many of the problems of other Third World

countries, as we have seen: population growth, educational gaps, unemployment, urbanisation, inadequate control of her own resources and a vulnerable trading balance. But she is still a fortunate country compared with the rest of the Third World in her largely untapped mineral wealth, traditionally egalitarian society and benevolent Australian aid policy. These apparent advantages do, however, bring their own problems.

Natural Resources

Papua New Guinea's trade balance has improved dramatically because of her copper exports; one way forward for the country is the development of such resources and this is one reason for regarding her as an extraordinarily fortunate country; rich in minerals and natural gas, she can consider herself to have 'money in the bank'. These resources mostly remained in the ground during the time of unabashed imperial exploitation - only the gold has been taken. Now, in more sensitive times, there will be checks on the terms offered to the big overseas companies, the multinationals whose capital and expertise will be needed to get the minerals on to the world market.

'Whenever a country has a project that is so big and so profitable, the country's leaders must look closely, to be sure that the project provides enough benefits to the people And we must be sure that the government has enough control over the project so that it will contribute to the kind of development that we want', said the Chief Minister, speaking in March 1974, after the announcement of an unexpectedly high profit for the Bougainville Company.

The original agreement was negotiated in the days before self government; it was renegotiated in 1974 and later adjusted in deference to Bougainville separatism, whose spokesmen were allied with more radical spirits who saw in the mine operations a threat to the cornerstone of the Eight Point Plan, the hopes for a continuing egalitarianism in Papua New Guinea.

Traditional Egalitarianism

So when we examine this particular aspect of Papua New Guinea's good fortune we see that there is, as it were, a sting in the tail, for the development of large mining enterprises entails reliance on foreign companies and the uneven development of parts of the country and parts of the population. The provision of super highways, good schools, hospitals, air conditioned buses and sporting facilities at Kieta and Arawa are as stark a contrast to living conditions in most of

the country as are the high salaries paid to the skilled New Guinean tradesmen and professional people to wages elsewhere.

Here is a threat to what is one of the strengths of Papua New Guinea - its comparative egalitarianism. Papua New Guinea has so far avoided many of the most terrible problems found in other developing countries because of this egalitarianism.

In the traditional Papua New Guinean communities there was no hereditary wealthy class and no individual ownership of land. Within the village groups which were the basis of society until the white man came, primitive affluence was sustained by a kind of primitive communism in which all men contributed to the community and the leaders and respected men were measured by what they gave rather than by what they took. The man who acquired many pigs by skill in trading, or by marriage arrangements, traditionally extended his power not by his own family's conspicuous consumption but by a communal feast which strengthened the obligation of villagers towards him.

It was a very simple social organisation that came into first contact with Europeans. Increasing sophistication within a basically capitalist economic system makes some degree of inequality inevitable; developments like Bougainville hasten the process. The apparent great advantage of Australian benevolence may have the same effect.

Australian Aid

There is absolutely no doubt about the effect of Australian aid in the last three decades in raising the living standard in Papua New Guinea and maintaining levels much above those of other Third World nations. The contrast with Irian Jaya is stark. Much goodwill and idealism has been poured in at both an official and a personal level and the level of money aid is all the more remarkable because it has gone as a gift, not as a loan with a long term burden of debt.

Before World War Two Papua and New Guinea, governed as separate territories, were expected to pay their own way. 'Development' and 'foreign aid' were not then in the administration vocabulary and whatever social services there were were provided by devoted missionaries. There was a different atmosphere after 1945. Independence was in the air in Africa and Asia and colonialism was not a respectable word. Australia was expected now to take the 'sacred trust' more

seriously and aid figures have escalated sharply from \$989,000 in 1946 and \$4,463,000 in 1947 to the current figure of over \$200 million.

Why is Australia so generous, especially during a depression? Genuine goodwill and affection must not be discounted, but in some ways Australia must feel that she is riding a tiger in supporting Papua New Guinea to such an extent. It was easy to get on, but how does one get off?

Aid to Papua New Guinea and the development it has produced is an immense prestige project for Australia. To abandon it would harm Australia's world image. Moreover, any attempts to limit aid, even a little, will lead to outraged protests from Papua New Guinea, as the Labour Government discovered to its cost in 1975.

Any reduction of aid in the near future would lead to a reduction of living standards, unemployment and social unrest. Yet in some ways, aid creates nearly as many problems as it solves. It creates a 'beggar mentality' so that a country may automatically hold out its hand instead of rolling up its sleeves. Rene Dumont wrote that there had been a 'false start' in African independence. Has Australian aid, with the best intentions in the world, contributed to a false start in Papua New Guinea?

The most serious problem created by Australian aid is the alteration to the old egalitarianism of society mentioned earlier. We have yet to see whether the new 'native elite' will serve or use' the mass of the people.

There is already a great gap between the urban elite of Papua New Guinea and the rural people, between workers in big enterprises, especially Bougainville Copper, and unskilled people like house servants, between our students and their less educated or uneducated cousins and brothers. The very high living standards of expatriates is a bad example, in spite of the differential in wage structures established in 1964, and who can wonder if Papua New Guinean public servants and professional people expect to reach the same level as their white predecessors? There is a luxury development on prestigious Tauguba Hill, in Port Moresby; houses there were recently advertised for rent at K1,300 per month*. Will the black or the white elite occupy these?

[* The PNG Kina is roughly the same as an Australian dollar; in October 1976 the Australian buying rate was 0.95.]

These problems are recognised by aid agencies, many of whom now recommend a change in the direction of aid, so that it can benefit the poorest sections of the poor world.

Stewart and Charlotte Meacham referred to this problem and to the new direction being taken by aid programs in the previous Backhouse Lecture. They quoted Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank, as saying:

'We are talking about 40% of entire populations. Development is simply not reaching them in any decisive degree. Their countries are growing in gross economic terms. But their individual lives are stagnating in human terms.'¹¹

This is the danger which can be seen developing in Papua New Guinea in spite of the relatively favourable starting point of an egalitarian system. While the investment in Bougainville Copper of over \$300 million boosted the Gross National Product and while bountiful Australian aid has built fine government offices in Port Moresby, the life of the village people has stagnated and independence has made little difference in day to day terms.

The Markham Valley

Returning to my own direct experiences, an important part of my time in New Guinea has been spent in field work in the nearby Markham Valley, one of the few extensive areas of flat land suitable for farming in the whole country. It stretches more than 100 miles inland and was viewed with some awe by early German patrols. Berghausen, the leader of an expedition in 1905, wrote of 'those legendary plains of the interior, that large steppe which. . . is the stage for the mysterious stories of the old New Guinea bush people'.

It is a magnificent valley. Twenty miles from Lae one breaks through the tropical forest belt to a breath taking vista of clear, sun coloured plains (much like South Australia) with high blue mountains rising on either hand.

It had long been a battlefield (Papua New Guineans are great warriors) and fighting raged up and down the length of the valley when Europeans made the first contact. Friends will appreciate the stories of pacification. Many strong, well armed German patrols were sent by the administration to punish, and so deter, the tribes in the interior who bid fair to exterminate some of the coastal groups. Their efforts were completely, sometimes ludicrously unsuccessful and it was left to Lutheran missionaries and the anthropologist Neuhaus to bring about peace. This

they did by journeying up the valley and leaving presents of cloth and steel hanging on bushes as if on a Christmas tree. Not a man was sighted when the gifts were left although we know from the elders that the warriors were watching carefully 'hidden under the leaves'. In due course these people then made peace with the coastal tribes and requested that a mission station be established inland. As missionary work spread, fighting stopped right up the valley, whether in hope of steel and other European goods or for more high minded reasons is a matter for debate.

Contact with other Europeans was sporadic and unhappy, the valley being a happy hunting ground for recruiters from time to time and remote from government control. It was the Lutheran missionaries who watched over the welfare of the people.

The fighting during the Second World War was of course more savage than anything the 'uncivilised' local people could have imagined possible but it helped to open up the land and after the war nearly a quarter of the land was sold to the administration for leasing to expatriate settlers. Land alienation is always a sensitive matter but my researches into the process here lead me to say that all was done as fairly as possible, given the wide differences in culture and the entirely unequal status of the owners and the buyers. Strict fairness could only have come from no sales at all but such self-denial by the settlers could scarcely have been expected.

It is a fact that in Papua New Guinea as a whole only about 2% of the land has been alienated - largely due to the enlightened policies of the Australian administration but especially of the Minister, Sir Paul Hasluck, who consistently referred to the welfare of the people. A larger part of the land has been sold in the Markham Valley because of its suitability for European style cash cropping.

Developments there are a sobering commentary on the future for Papua New Guinea. For years the administration - first the Australians and now the national government - have been urged by enthusiastic farmers to develop the valley as a storehouse of food. In the past the people had referred to it as a 'haus kai kai', a rich area for both hunting and gardening. However most of the hopes are unfulfilled. It is an extraordinary situation that Papua New Guinea a nation of gardeners, with fertile land lying idle and thousands of urban unemployed, dependent moreover on Australian money to balance the budget imports an increasing amount of food from overseas. Rice and fish were introduced as food for plantation labour in the German times and continued as a convenient diet for a

labour line, and are now preferred to home grown food. Last year over K8 million was spent on rice imports alone. Sugar, meat, processed vegetables and fruit are also imported and the costs are rising each year. Only generous Australian aid makes this possible. One is struck by the contrast in a country like India. The words of the Eight Point Plan about self-reliance make hollow reading in the circumstances.

The Markham Valley could produce sugar - the canes grow in every village and good stock was taken in the past to improve canes in Queensland and North American plantations. Fifty years of talk have not produced action. Peanuts were in fashion for a time but prices were high and production for maximum profit depleted the soil. Lae shops sell Planter's peanuts and Eta peanut butter, though a small amount is now processed at a hopeful new factory by a local company far up the Valley. At one time the local people grew huge amounts of vegetables both in the nearby mountain villages and on the plain but the project collapsed, partly because of the difficulty of obtaining title to land which was wanted by expatriate farmers for more profitable cattle. The infrastructure of reliable transport and marketing has never backed up the numerous recent plans.

It was said that the development of expatriate farming in the area would encourage and teach local farmers - a 'spin off' theory often used as justification with some reason for expatriate developments. My conclusion in the Valley however has been that expatriate farming which was individualistic, profit-oriented and mechanically aided was not suitable for villagers who were used to cooperation and who did not understand a cash economy any more than they understood the tractors and trucks which they bought with their purchase money for land, but could not maintain.

A patrol officer recorded that after an accident involving a tractor the villagers concluded that it must be inhabited by a marselai, or bad spirit, and they took revenge by filling up the sump with salt! Apart from this, the farms drew away labour that was needed in the villages if development was to take place there. The German Administration had recognised that village agriculture and expatriate plantations were incompatible and bluntly stated that European development was to take precedence. The Australians gave lip service to the reverse order of things but achieved little.

In the country as a whole, expatriate farms still produce most of the cash crops - in copra, cocoa, rubber and tea especially - the big cattle stations are also in the hands of expatriates.

In the Valley there are of course hopeful changes; peanuts and other crops flourish in several cooperative ventures, and there are a number of big poultry projects. More questionable are the cattle projects which have been recommended and partly financed by the World Bank. These have been extremely popular ... a steer is a bit like a 'super pig' and pigs have always been supremely important. However these enterprises are capital intensive and individualistic; they require a fair amount of management which is not simple to understand. Today many unfenced and overgrown areas tell their own story and there has been trouble with pests. To my mind this is one of the bad developments coming from 'easy money'.

Friends will see that here as elsewhere, mere money aid does not in itself guarantee anything. Projects based on the real will of the people may be small and apparently insignificant - but for me that is where hope lies. All up and down the Markham Valley my friends are the shrewd kind village people. If they are to develop they will do it in their own way. A national government, only just finding its way, will probably be more effective than a benevolent colonial administration from outside.

Mountains

Here we have spent the happiest and the most intensely rewarding hours of our New Guinea experience.

The Huon Peninsula consists largely of mountain ranges, shaken from the sea in geologically recent times. Behind Lae the Saruwaged Range rises magnificently to a height of over 4,000 metres. ridge after ridge, blue and beautiful through mist, moonlight and changing patterns of shadow; in the ferocious thunder storms that shake Lae at some times of the year we see the mountains at their best through lightning flashes. The mountain people believe that the spirits of the mountains are very real and active and at such times we almost believe it too.

Walking in the mountains has been our chief delight. It has given us many friends, an insight into the life of remote villages and the opportunity for village projects which we think useful. We have heavy hearts at leaving these friends and this work, and this lovely country.

One project in which we have been involved is in a high village called Baidoang, far up the Sanem River, on the slopes of the Saruwageds. The area in which it lies, the Nabak, includes extremely rugged country. The main rivers flow in steep sided valleys with bush clad ridges between them. With an annual rainfall of over 2,000 mm (78 inches), the rain comes down every single afternoon, there is thick bush, ranging from tropical woodland to moss forest and the upper valleys are shrouded in mist and cloud for a good deal of the time.

There are 32 registered villages in the Nabak with a total population (in 1972) of 11,313 people. Even then, 43% were recorded as absentees and the proportion must be higher now. Baidoang is the second largest village in the area with a population of 594 of whom 296 were absentees at the time of the census.

Although the measured distance from Lae is short, the difficult country makes access a problem and the area has had little development. Most of the men and a few of the women speak Pidgin but only an occasional person speaks English. Coffee, probably introduced by the Lutheran missionaries who came to the area in 1917, is the only cash crop but because most of the young people are absent the gardens have been declining. The staple diet is sweet potato, yam, taro. Pineapples grow and the ground would produce many vegetables like potatoes, beans, cabbages or pumpkin. It is however pointless to grow anything in quantity because of lack of access to markets.

Villagers here, as elsewhere in the mountains, feel strong resentment that development seems to be passing them by and they have a special hunger for roads although because of the difficult terrain they are unlikely to get any. For many years, airstrips at centres requiring four hours' strenuous walking gave the only contact with the outside world.

In 1972 a primary school was established by the government. Mr Juhonewec Yang was appointed as Headmaster. He was a well trained teacher and had spent some time in Australia. With his young wife he has settled in the village and worked with the village people and councillors in some remarkable projects.

The most outstanding achievement has been the construction of an airstrip on a terrace somewhat below the existing village. Over a period of four years everybody in the village and most people from the surrounding area worked with hand tools to level and consolidate the strip. The government contributed one thousand kina to buy wheelbarrows and shovels but the people feel that there has been little other official support or sympathy.

While the airstrip was being built, work started on a new primary school. The government bought the materials but the people had to manhandle the roofing iron, steel trusses and cement from an airstrip six kilometres away over a steep ridge with a drop into the Tuembi River and a stiff climb up the other side. An iron cooking stove for the head teacher was carried in at the same time. Carpenters have supervised the erection of the new school but most of the work of erecting the six new classrooms has been done by the village people. Now there are plans for further improvements and we have given some assistance.

'Your talk on operating village power stations made us so interested,' wrote Mr Yang in a letter to the University of Technology, 'because we have several streams running down the slopes we are thinking that it would be best to ask you to send someone who knows a lot about how to operate power using these rivers to come and see. We need your assistance to come and see if in future this new station will have a power generator or not'.

Since this letter was received several parties of staff and students have gone to the village to survey the possibilities for a small hydro power station. People want an aid post too, a regular mail service, a trade store with a communal freezer, a poultry project and many other simple things that would make life in this remote place more pleasant. If the small hydro power scheme can be installed the other improvements may follow.

Meanwhile, we should honour the headmaster and the other teachers and village leaders who are living and working under hard conditions to bring about changes that no paper Improvement Plan can achieve.

The airstrip was officially opened on Independence Day, September 16, 1976. Two thousand people walked over the mountain ridges to take part in a grand celebration. Food was cooked in the traditional manner and a big pavilion was built for the official guests from the government and area authorities who had been invited to honour this example of self-reliance. Alas, not one of them came!

Friends and the Future of Papua New Guinea

We can see that Papua New Guinea is an exciting country with many of the problems common to places in the Third World but with some extraordinary advantages. The biggest danger to my mind is that undue reliance on foreign

capital and outside aid will hasten the growth of a dependent, unjust society, with the creation of a rich elite and a large number of village and urban poor. Whether within one society or in the world as a whole, if we want peace we must work for justice.....'Development is the new name for peace' - but what kind of development?

Julius Nyerere says:

'We have the knowledge and resources which could enable us to overcome poverty. The real problem - the thing that creates misery, wars and hatred among men is the division into rich and poor.'¹²

In Papua New Guinea we can see the whole process in action. The hope for a more constructive change lies with the people of the country. Our own experience with the leaders in the squatter camps in town and with the people of the mountain villages gives us pride and confidence. These are the people who have sat down to talk to us, who gave us food when we were hungry, shelter when we were wet; they showed us the path when we were lost and carried our packs when we were tired. May the future be good to them.

Aid programs from outside should be geared to aid development through these people. Friends' programs have always had this aim. Many aid agencies now emphasise 'aid to the poorest' and a recent World Council of Churches report urges us to 'bet on the weak'.

Australian aid also is to take this direction. A report from the Australian Development Assistance Agency which coordinates all Australian aid programs has this to say:

'It is imperative to give increased attention to development strategies which benefit the poorest groups, who are the majority of the population in most developing countries. Previous approaches to development have largely ignored this aspect and yet one cannot really speak of 'development' if the poor majority are neglected. Accordingly, Australia wishes to channel an increasing proportion of its aid programs into programs which will assist in raising productivity and living standards of these people. To a large extent this means increasing emphasis on aid to the rural sector.'¹³

This approach must be supported. What more can outsiders do? Our own experience suggests that although people of goodwill can offer support, technical knowledge and example, the fate of Papua New Guinea depends squarely on the

energy, dedication and resolve of the people themselves. Any outside" help will be useful if it encourages the people but not otherwise. We have seen plenty of examples of the harm done by easy money. Within Papua New Guinea our role is limited.

In our own country we can do more. For example, looking at Australia, Friends are aware of the need to alter trading patterns. Papua New Guinea needs to sell its tea, to develop its own sugar mills, to process its own raw material why should dessicated coconut on sale in Lae shops be packed and processed in Sydney? It is not of course a simple matter to suggest that Australia should not grow tea, or that the Queensland sugar market should be limited. Money aid is easier.

Apart from this it seems to me that many of the unhappy developments in Papua New Guinea and other developing countries simply mirror or exaggerate the faults of the society we ourselves live in. We may regret the selfish patterns emerging in Papua New Guinea and wish for more dedication to the poor, for less indulgence in trivial conspicuous consumption: for more evidence of practical activity to solve problems and less reliance on grand words. Let us look (0 the pattern of our own society before we judge.

Perhaps one of the faults of do-gooders, Friends or non-Friends, in Papua New Guinea may have been that we looked for more idealism among the leaders and the young in this developing country than we found in our own. There is no revolutionary fervour in PNG. Australian kindness and natural good fortune seem to make it unnecessary. Here on our doorstep we have a Third World country in our own image. Should we give thought to improving the original before expecting the image to change?

So I urge Friends to continue, first, to support aid programs which 'bet on the weak' and to encourage our own government's aid policies which now lay emphasis on 'aid to the poorest'. We must also recognise the need to improve trade patterns if there is ever to be a change from dependence on Australian bounty.

Finally, I feel that our real task lies within our own society, for the world is truly one world, and what we wish for others we must try to achieve ourselves,

Our five years in New Guinea have given us a great love for the country, a respect for the people, and confidence in the future. I am glad to share these feelings with Friends.

NOTES

- 1 Narrative of the Surveying Voyage of HMS Fly, commanded by Captain F. P. Blackburn, RN, in Torres Straits, New Guinea, and other Islands of the Eastern Archipelago, during the years 1842-1846, by J. Beete Jules, M.A., F.R.G.S., Naturalist to the Expedition. Vol1, pp 289-91. Quoted in *New Guinea, a highly promising field for settlement and colonisation...*, by J. D. Land. Royal Society Transactions, NSW, 1871. Land wanted to arrange a company to colonise New Guinea and other W. Pacific islands so that Sydney could be, like Miletus in Ancient Greece, 'the mother city of a whole series of flourishing colonies'.
- 2 d'Albertis, *New Guinea, What I did and what I saw*, London 1880, Vol 2, p 94.
- 3 Antonio Galvano, *The Discoveries of the World from their original until the year of our Lord, 1555*, Bethune, .ed. London,] 862. p 202.
Quoted in *Documents & Readings in N.G. History*, Whittaker, Gash, Hooker and Lacey, Jacaranda Press, 1975.
- 4 Article by Elizabeth Johnson, *The Australian*, September 18, 1976. 900 groups, if we include Irian Jaya.
- 5 A. K. Collins, Lecture on New Guinea, given at the Masonic Hall. Sydney, April 13, 1867, bound with speeches, Mitchell Library, pp 11-12.
- 6 Annual Reports, 1912-13, p 1.
- 7 Quoted in Documents & Readings, p 491.
- 8 Treaty of Peace with Germany. Covenant (2). Article 22 of the Treaty stated 'To those colonies and Territories which as a consequence of the late War have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which arc inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well being and development of such peoples forms a sacred trust of civilisation.'
- 9 E. K. Fisk and Maree Tait, '*Less Aid for Niugini?*' in *New Guinea Quarterly*, Vol 7, 1972, p 36 ff.
- 10 Neville D. Quarry, *Patterns and Precedents in Papua New Guinea Housing*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Housing for the Emerging Nations, Tel Aviv, Dec. 1974.

- 11 Quoted in the 12th James Backhouse Lecture *Imperialism without invading armies: peace, justice and the multinationals in Southeast Asia*, 1976, p 23.
- 12 Christian Action, Viewpoint, 1972, p 1.
- 13 Australian Development Assistance Agency, First Annual Report, 1974-5, Australian Government Canberra, 1975, p 4. (The agency continues with this title pending legislation to change it to an aid bureau within the Department of Foreign Affairs.

APPENDIX 1

The Eight Point Improvement Plan

- 1 A rapid increase in the proportion of the economy under the control of Papua New Guinean individuals and groups in the proportion of personal and property income that goes to Papua New Guineans;
- 2 More equal distribution of economic benefits, including movement towards equalisation of incomes among people and towards equalisation of services among different areas of the country;
- 3 Decentralisation of economic activity, planning and government spending, with emphasis on agricultural development, village industry, better internal trade, and more spending channelled to local and area bodies;
- 4 An emphasis on small-scale artisan, service and business activity, relying where possible on typically Papua New Guinea forms of economic organisation;
- 5 A more self-reliant economy, less dependent for its needs on imported goods and services and better able to meet the needs of its people through local production;
- 6 An increasing capacity for meeting government spending needs from locally raised revenue;
- 7 A rapid increase in the equal and active participation of women in all forms of economic and social activity; and
- 8 Government control and involvement in those sectors of the economy where control is necessary to achieve the desired kind of development.

APPENDIX 2

Dependence on Primary Products

In the bad old days, the role of the colonies was to be producers of raw materials for the metropolitan imperialist power; this was, after all the very reason for acquiring colonies although the notion of 'the white man's burden', later the 'sacred trust', provided a convenient gloss.

Papua New Guinea and the other Third World countries are still primary producers; all their trade is dependent on obtaining good prices for raw materials although they must then purchase manufactured goods which are much more expensive. 'Coconuts were king' was true for many years. Diversification was achieved only as the result of hard work and enthusiasm on the part of the Department of Agriculture, the missions, and expatriate farmers. Now coconut products stand second on the list only to the newly produced copper which earns as much as every other product and every other source of income for the Government added together - a dangerous 'single crop' no less than coconuts were. The figures speak for themselves:

1975 Trade Figures in thousands of kina: Value of Exports

Copper ore and concentrates		236,657	(cf 1974 – 311,909)
Copra	29,287		
Copra oil	14,286		
Other copra products	<u>1,210</u>	44,783	
Cocoa		40,377	
Coffee		33,513	
Tuna		10,189	
Timber		7,480	
Palm oil		6,785	
Tea		3,828	
Rubber		2,575	

(Adapted from PNG Bureau of Statistics
'Abstract of Statistics' June 1976 pp 6-8.)

In the lecture I referred to the anomaly that Papua New Guinea imports so much food when it is well placed to grow its own. These imports continue to rise rapidly. The situation is highlighted by the following figures:

**Value of foodstuffs and tobacco produced in
and imported in 1974-75, in millions of kina**

	Locally produced	Imported
Fruit and vegetable products	8.1	4.9
Rice	0.28	8.3
Sugar	Nil	7.2
Tobacco	0.17	2.8
Meat	2.83	22.2

(Source: Programmes and Performance 1976-7, Table 18.1, p 78)

Papua New Guinea's reliance on primary products means, as we have seen, that like the other third world countries she is dependent on prices set by the rich countries for her survival. To this extent she cannot be independent.

Her trade balance has altered a great deal since Bougainville copper began producing in 1972. Until then, the balance was consistently unfavourable, that is Papua New Guinea imported more than it exported. However the figures show a considerable reduction in the deficit in 1972. In 1974 and 1975 the balance has been favourable as a result of the large income from the mine. The figures show the changes very clearly:

1970 deficit	\$119,491,000	
1971 deficit	\$152,667,000	
1972 deficit	\$129,248,000	Value of copper exports \$ 22,284,000
1973 deficit	\$ 10,636,000	Value of copper exports \$ 125,694,000
1974 surplus	K133,866,000	Value of copper exports K311,909,000
1975 surplus	K 59,209,000	Value of copper exports K236,657,000

(Adapted from Compendium of Statistics, p 68 and Abstract of Statistics. June 1976, p 5.)