CHAPTER 7

BORDER DEVELOPMENT: A 'POLITICAL NECESSITY' AGAIN

J.M. Herlihy

In the relatively few years since the exigencies of international relations revived interest in the Papua New Guinea-Indonesian border, most observers and government officials have been cautiously optimistic about the new rapport between the two uneasy neighbours. With the surprise capture in Vanimo in September 1978 of OPM leader Jakob Prai, the hostility, concern and emotionalism which had swept Papua New Guinea after the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975 received an abrupt check. The Somare government, which in the immediate aftermath of the East Timor issue had moved quickly to initiate a border development programme to strengthen its influence in the area, in 1977/78 became increasingly conciliatory towards Indonesian anti-rebel activities. As these diminished with the 'hard line' taken by Papua New Guinea towards rebel sympathizers and the concurrent 'smiling policy' introduced by Indonesia in 1978 on the Irianese side of the border, the issue of border development became a priority for both countries. The new Papua New Guinea-Indonesia Border Agreement of 1979, the first to be negotiated by an independent Papua New Guinea government, made provision for a Joint Border Committee comprised of senior officials from both sides, to ensure 'balanced development'. Papua New Guinea in the same year allocated the first funds to the Border Development Programme which the Inter-Departmental Border Committee had proposed under the National Public Expenditure Plan in 1977, and formed a Division of Defence and Border Administration within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to oversee its administration.

One factor which has been consistently underestimated in the
plethora of resolutions and recommendations that has accompanied the recent interest in border development is that the response within the border zone itself will be a crucial determinant of the success or failure of the new government initiatives. This chapter outlines briefly, for the Papua New Guinea side of the border, some of the situational variables which in the past have hindered village response to government initiatives and which are likely to vitiate governmental capacity to institute effective change within the border zone. These suggest that the achievement of the Papua New Guinea government’s objectives with regard to the communities in the vicinity of the border will be a complex and costly task, the difficulties of which could well outweigh the time and resources that can be diverted to it. Previous experience and present patterns already indicate a high probability that the recent concern for border development will be a transient phenomenon, and survive only as long as the border and the tensions between the two countries over it remain national political issues.

The relevance of a border development programme to the politics of the border in recent years depends largely on the validity of several assumptions. The first of these is that it will bring about a decline in Papua New Guinean support for Irianese rebels and dissidents - which, within the border zone, is confined to a relatively small area - and that this will neutralize the long-standing conflict of interest between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea over their mutual land boundary. The second assumption is that sympathy and support for the rebel movement among border communities will show an inverse correlation with development of the area, which again is debatable. The third assumption, that the Papua New Guinea government will be able to supply the type and quantity of inputs necessary to implement an effective development programme, was a moot point even during periods of considerable colonial and later national prosperity. The fourth and possibly most important assumption for a programme that aspires to influence communal attitudes, is the hypothesis that the border communities will be able and willing to take advantage of the government’s scheme. Many social, spatial and situational factors, and a long history of lumpy and unreliable administration, make this assumption particularly suspect. The significance of these factors is examined in the following pages.

The border zone

The term ‘border zone’ is used here to refer to the 32 km (20 mile)
quarantine strip or *cordon sanitaire* which parallels the actual border across Papua New Guinea. Within this zone, border issues have a direct impact on the daily lives of the people, even though many have little knowledge of, or interest in, the political considerations. The terrain within the *cordon sanitaire* varies from the lowland swamps of most of the Western Province, through the inaccessible central cordgrass to the Sepik River grasslands, the Bewani and border ranges, the swampy alluvial reaches of the Neumeyer Plain, and northwards across the Oenake Mountains to the coastal lowlands around Vanimo. Average population densities for the two border provinces, at approximately 0.9 persons per sq km for Western Province and 3.3 per sq km for Sandaun (West Sepik) Province in 1980, are very low. Average densities along the Sandaun side of the *cordon sanitaire*, on a breakdown by census division, range from 0 to 4 persons per sq km for most of the zone with a small pocket of about 6 per sq km around Amanab. Due to the dispersed settlement pattern and uneven distribution these figures are merely indicative. Nonetheless, they have important implications for the government’s development programme, since *ceteris paribus* they mean that the costs involved in provision of services of accessibility equivalent to that in more densely populated areas may be magnified by as much as five to fifteen times.

Physical and demographic diversity within the border zone is echoed in marked cultural differences between border communities, which also inhibit across-the-board planning for the area. Most border communities, however, with the possible exception of the Wutung-Vanimo people, and, more recently, those in the vicinity of the Ok Tedi mining project, have in common their isolation from each other and from other areas of Papua New Guinea, relatively low standards of living and economic opportunity, and a history of administrative neglect and unreliability which has left deep though usually hidden resentments.

Most traditional communication and trade routes for the zone, such as they were, ran east-west rather than north-south, so that contacts across the border were more important for some communities than linkages on the same side. These ‘traditional’ contacts, nonetheless, probably are less significant in the overall context of border diplomacy than the emphasis given them in recent negotiations (Papua New Guinea *Foreign Affairs Review* 1(2):5) suggests. Though some villagers still have kinship links and land or hunting rights on both sides of the border, their range is fairly limited. Formal linkages inland on the
Papua New Guinea side around the main crossing points of the Bewani-Kilimeri area rarely extend beyond a few kilometres. Far more extensive, and of far greater political significance, is the residue of contacts established through more sophisticated exchanges and movement to and from Hollandia, which prior to the Indonesian takeover of Dutch New Guinea was one of the largest and most attractive urban centres on the entire island (Garnaut and Manning 1974). As Jayapura, the town suffered a period of relative stagnation in the early years of Indonesian control, but by the 1980s it was once again attracting increasing numbers of visitors from the Papua New Guinea side (Sydney Morning Herald 2 May 1983).

For most villagers within the border zone, however, movement beyond traditional boundaries, and knowledge of living conditions and attitudes outside that range, are relatively slight. The loose identification of mutual interest which some villagers feel as a result of the difficulties they have been caused by the manoeuvres of their respective governments usually is subordinated to commonplace considerations of survival. Despite the apparent contiguity between cross-border sympathies and the ‘Melanesian brotherhood’ theme on which many members of the educated elite, including parliamentarians, have based their support for the Irianese cause, the latter is of little importance to border villagers. Many in fact have criticized elite articulation of the Irianese issue, with good reason, as political opportunism. As the 1977 and 1982 election results demonstrated, the Irian Jaya situation per se has very little electoral pull by comparison with pragmatic parochial concerns.

Many of the border communities are basically hunter-gatherers. Cultivation usually is regarded as a secondary activity (Gell 1975) though most communities, especially in the mountains, maintain small gardens, and the swamp dwellers depend heavily on natural or cultivated stands of sago. This means that cash-cropping, the central component of most development programmes for rural communities, involves a double transition: the first to permanent or semi-permanent settlement - with all that entails in terms of land use capacity and cultural readjustment - and the second to the stability of production required by the monetary economy.

The hunter-gatherer mode of production also encourages a relatively high level of individualism, and is thus frequently at variance with the assumptions of the Papua New Guinea stereotype in relation to communal bonds. As in other areas of the Sepik, village elders can
advise and exhort, but cannot control (Thurnwald 1916; Huber 1977). Mobilization for a communal activity is difficult and infrequent. In areas which operate on a particularly narrow survival margin, welfare matters such as care for the sick and elderly usually are a personal or familial concern rather than the communal responsibility that they are elsewhere. In some cases those without nuclear family support or first degree kin may be left to fend for themselves.

A variety of cultural factors also reinforces locational isolation and inhibits development in the border area. Notable among such factors are the multiplicity of languages, the dominance of sister exchange marital alliance, and, for the Kilimeri area in particular, the pervasiveness of sangguma or assault sorcery.

The Sepik provinces contain approximately one third of Papua New Guinea's listed languages. The population to language ratio is about half the average for the rest of the country, and drops to approximately 500 speakers per language in the border area (Laycock 1973). A sample of Kilimeri people taken in 1975/76 showed very little contact with neighbouring linguistic groups and no knowledge of their language patterns, though 96 per cent of males and 75 per cent of females could communicate to some extent in Pidgin. As levels of literacy are exceptionally low (only 4 per cent of the Kilimeri sample could read or write even at an elementary level), effective communication is restricted to word of mouth. While oral information flows through kinship networks and migration, usually one of the most efficient links with the modern sector (Lasaga 1972; Allen 1976; Young 1977), in the border zone they are relatively ineffective. Physical and cultural isolation, the paucity of government patrolling, the closing down of the indentured labour system, the dearth of employment and educational opportunities, and, overall, the lack of cash severely constrain both the quantity and quality of information available to border villagers.

In many areas of Melanesia ties of kinship and marriage are the major determinant of informal village access to political and economic power and, paradoxically, of village ability to do without them. Even in the border zone, villagers with wide-ranging ties on occasion are able to substitute kinship obligations for cash to gain access to development opportunities outside their immediate vicinity. Rigid adherence to traditional sister exchange marriage in some border areas, however,

1 The Kilimeri data quoted in this paper is drawn from fieldwork carried out in the area by the author between 1975 and 1977.
severely constrains the outward spread of such ties.

Sister exchange marriage in the border zone is almost entirely endogamous, and dissociated from the cash economy. As it tends on the whole to reinforce the dependence of young people on their village elders, the ability of young working-age adults to innovate or provide an impetus for change and development often is seriously curtailed. Under sister (or daughter) exchange a man who wishes to marry must supply in return a female relative as wife for a male member of the family or clan from whom he seeks his wife. Though traditionally the system was fairly flexible, the social structure which has resulted is now characterized by older men married to one or more young wives while the young men, lacking female relatives or female children from an earlier marriage, often wed widows many years their senior, who were unclaimed by their previous husband’s kin. The result is poor marital cohesiveness, a tendency for productive young males to migrate more or less permanently, and a very narrow spread of kinship ties within operative range. In the Kilimeri sample all adults had married within their own area, with about 50 per cent married to someone from the same village and the bulk of the remainder no further afield than a neighbouring village. Kinship reciprocity in consequence rarely operated to their developmental advantage. Many Kilimeri villagers, for example, were unable to utilize the school at Bewani station when opportunistic Bewani villagers began to impose cash charges, such as land rents for school children’s food gardens, on villagers to whom they had no kinship obligations. Similar problems arose when Kilimeri villagers wished to establish cattle on land outside the cordon sanitaire, where the rent demanded was equal to 50 per cent of a beast’s sale value (then equivalent to approximately $40 per annum for about two hectares of unimproved pasture).

The inhibitory effect of sangguma on societal cohesiveness, entrepreneurial innovation and response to external development stimuli is also a major problem for the border area. Border villages on the whole do not have the tradition of endemic violence which characterizes other parts of Papua New Guinea, though warfare was a recurrent pre-contact hazard. Possibly as a result, very few border villages have become actively involved in the OPM guerilla campaigns and, unlike some of the highlands communities, they exhibit little serious interest in the military defence of the border. Though outbreaks of overt violence in the mountainous Telefomin area caused periodic concern, covert violence by sangguma was more common for most
border villagers, and more widely feared. *Sangguma* practices along the border vary from the 'death threat' or magic forms familiar in many parts of the country to the ritualized execution of the Kilimeri. Unlike most variants, for which counteractive rituals are available, Kilimeri *sangguma* is irrevocable. Villagers claim that, until the suppression of warfare, *sangguma* was a 'last resort' method of social control and rarely used; but that now 'we are afraid to talk strong, we are afraid to try anything new, it is *sangguma* that holds us back'. The actual strength of this variable is still unknown. Estimates by government, mission and other observers in 1976 of the importance of *sangguma* to the development of the area ranged from 'very little' to attributed responsibility for about 80 per cent of deaths in Kilimeri, a range matched only by the wildly fluctuating estimates of support for the OPM. While fear of *sangguma* certainly is used at times as an *ex post* rationalization for inertia or developmental inactivity, the awareness that one's neighbours could become a *sangguma* squad is, equally certainly, a strong disincentive on any activity that is not in accordance with communal norms.

Nutrition is one such case. For most of the border area, problems of isolation and access are compounded by very serious levels of malnutrition which, *inter alia*, reduces tolerable distance to services by its effect on energy and work capacity. In some villages malnutrition, especially among young children, is the accepted communal norm. The well-nourished child, by this criterion, is 'abnormal'. Whether his condition is attributed to sorcery, white man's magic or simply to new and strange feeding practices, villagers tend to regard it as a contravention of the norm and the nutritionally aware parent or parents as eccentric if not socially disruptive. Improved pre-natal nutrition in some areas is also seen as a threat to community survival. Some traditional pregnancy *tabus*, notably on protein sources, are designed to restrict foetal growth in small, malnourished mothers and thus safeguard the life of mother and child during the birth. Some medical workers in areas where pre-natal maternal nutrition has resulted in an increase in infant size at birth have reported an increase in the number of difficult births requiring specialized hospital care. To many border villagers, whose access to such care is limited, improved pre-natal nutrition involves an unacceptable risk.

Improvement of nutrition has been a perennial aim of the West Sepik administration, but for the border area in particular has proved very difficult to implement. Partly this has been due to the spasmodic
and often inappropriate nature of official attention to the problem, and to the difficulty of isolating the causal social and economic factors. A study in 1962 identified nutritional deficiencies in the Bewani area which were more serious than those of the Wosera and other known problem areas of Papua New Guinea (McLennan n.d.), but its findings were not followed up. A decade later other studies, based primarily on clinic records\(^2\), confirmed that malnutrition was a problem for the majority of inland border stations. In some cases the level of malnutrition exceeded by a considerable margin that for the province as a whole which, with an average of 63 malnourished children per 100 attending clinics and up to 80-90 per cent of children under two years malnourished in some areas (Salfield 1973; Korte 1974; Korte and Kamilakai 1975), is among the most seriously malnourished in the country. In the Kilimeri area the poor nutrition and general low level of health care was reflected in 1975/76 in a crude death rate of 3.8 per cent. One third of these deaths was among women of child-bearing age.\(^3\) Over one third of children died before they reached maturity, with 69 per cent of child deaths in the under six months age bracket and 83 per cent under two years. The high mortality, however, was disguised to some extent by a relatively high birth rate, 6.7 per cent, which held the rate of natural increase to 2.8 per cent or approximately the average level for the country. This in turn has tended to conceal the fact that the age-sex structure on the border often is inimical to effective community involvement in the standard type of government development programme.

**Border development**

*The early phase.* Though border issues, including border development, have been a recurrent government concern for most of this century, the border is still one of the most backward and administratively neglected areas of Papua New Guinea. To a large extent this is attributable, ironically, to the preoccupation of government officials

\(^2\) A comparison of village data with clinic records in 1976 indicated that the latter underestimated the degree of malnutrition, largely as a result of poor or irregular clinic attendance, lack of awareness among many villagers about nutritional deficiencies, and the tendency of some mothers to hide malnourished children from health staff to avoid criticism or interference.

\(^3\) Division of District Administration (DDA), Pagei, Patrol Report 2/75-76.
with the political ramifications of border administration. While these resulted in a theoretical commitment to border development, in practice the outcome was a sequence of ad hoc, reactive decisions and the relative neglect of the developmental constraints and areal idiosyncracies that were reported regularly by field staff. The gap between policy objectives and practice was aggravated by official difficulties in reconciling observed needs with available resources. In 1947, for example, the then district officer stressed the importance of border development to amicable border politics and recommended ‘continual urging to improve their living and health conditions’, but felt unable to divert staff to the area.\(^4\) Government officials in later years, cognizant of the logistic difficulties of cash crop development, regularly evaded the issue by announcements that government would concentrate on improvement of subsistence - an even more difficult task and one rarely followed through.

The inhibitory effects of the government’s policies on border development were evident as early as the transfer from German to Australian control after the First World War. The first consequence of this was that the Sepik area was no longer seen as the ‘centre for future agricultural development’ (Whittaker *et al.* 1975:263) that it had been to the German administration, but as a peripheral administrative district. A second consequence was the removal of all settlers on the coast between the only significant centre, at Aitape, and the border in an attempt by the district officer to prevent illicit communication via the Dutch between German settlers and their home country (Rowley 1958:42). This meant that the westward spread of developmental demonstration effects from Aitape was halted almost entirely, and a communications lacuna was formed between the border and the eastern Sepik area which has lasted with little improvement to the present day.

Until the Second World War European influence on the border area came mainly from Netherlands New Guinea. Government supervision on the Papua New Guinea side was represented by a border surveillance post which was opened at Vanimo in 1918 and which provided (for the periods in which it was staffed) a desultory check on trade and contact across the border. Restrictions on trans-border movement tightened after the Second World War, when a patrol officer was posted to Vanimo ‘mainly to prevent Indonesians from cros-

\(^4\) Sub-district office (SDO), Wewak, file 30/2-23, 12 May 1947.
sing the border’. At the same time, rumours that the Dutch intended to establish a city at Hollandia triggered proposals for the development of the New Guinea side, ‘otherwise they [border villagers] may tend to prefer the Dutch administration to ours’. This rivalry, and the desire to prevent movement either from the western side to the eastern or vice versa, became - though the rationale behind it varied over the years - a recurrent theme. The possibility of an Indonesian takeover in Dutch New Guinea brought a further flurry of restrictions. Officially the Australian government in the 1950s favoured the ‘side-by-side’ development of east and west New Guinea based on the view that ‘the peoples of the island of New Guinea were one people... [and] the hope that they would find one destiny’ (Hasluck 1976:362). Nonetheless, after a report in 1953 of projected Indonesian activity in the Dutch territory, a directive was issued in 1954 that ‘natives from across the border, or villages now regarded as under Dutch influence were not permitted to enter employment’ on the Australian side.

After the transfer of control over Netherlands New Guinea to Indonesia in the early 1960s, the Australian administration, in what later became the standard response to shifts in border equilibrium, announced a massive development programme along the border. New patrol posts were opened, schools and health centres built, local government councils introduced, and an intense campaign of ‘political education’ commenced. Money was poured into the area to win the support of local people who in many cases had exhibited a marked preference for the material benefits they had gained from Hollandia under the Dutch. The result of this, complained one patrol officer, was that the people afterwards expected to be paid for everything. At the same time, however, an instruction to border officials that ‘border surveillance is to be maintained as a priority over all other activities’ ensured that border development, such as it was, was effectively subordinated to political considerations. The development programme, apart from the improvements it brought to the border stations and to the living

5 SDO, Wewak, file 30/2-23.

6 Department of District Services and Native Affairs (DDS & NA), file NLB 31/1-1407, 6 December 1954.

7 DDA, Wewak, patrol report 5/69/70.

8 District Commissioner (DC), Wewak, file A2-2-10/376, 6 September 1963.
Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Dr Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, and Papua New Guinea's acting foreign minister, Tony Siaguru, in Port Moresby for the signing of the new Border Agreement, 1984. Photo—*Post Courier*
Border marker number 1, at Wutung  Photo—Times of Papua New Guinea
and working conditions of border administrative staff, soon flagged. Official attention for some time thereafter focused on the political gamesmanship of the small community of Sekotchiau (later Skotiau), which was the centre of most movement across border tribal lands in the early to mid 1960s and which shrewdly played one government against the other to its considerable material advantage and the envy of neighbouring villages.

In the late 1960s the peripheral border villages began to complain of their exclusion from administrative attention and from the anticipated benefits of the border development programme. By that time it was clear that direct benefits such as education and health facilities, and flow-on benefits such as income-earning opportunities from the Bewani patrol post, accrued mainly to the 19 per cent of the administrative area in its immediate vicinity. Vanimo and the border posts were a poor substitute for Hollandia as a source of trade goods, and had insufficient attractions to overcome the distance constraint involved for most border villagers. One consequence of the development of the border stations, however, was that villagers outside their range became more sensitive to the inferiority of their ‘catechist schools’ and unreliable health facilities vis-a-vis the new ‘certificate’ schools and government health centres, and utilization of the former declined. Resentment at being ‘left out’ mounted after a government order that shotguns, the most valuable and coveted possession of a subsistence hunter, were to be kept to a minimum on the border to reduce the chance that they might be sold or used to support guerilla resistance to Indonesian control on the western side. These resentments intensified when cash-cropping activities, which had been promoted by the mission network and the new councils, were discouraged by government officials. ‘Be extremely wary on the introduction of crops’, the district commissioner advised his staff in 1963, ‘I do not want these people to get a cash-crop idea, we will never get the stuff out’.

The tendency for administrative convenience to dictate border development practice, if not policy, has been a recurrent and often unavoidable necessity. Administrative problems were compounded in the area by a very rapid turnover of staff, the spasmodic use of border

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9 DDA, Wewak, file 67-3-7, 5 April 1965.

10 DDA, Wewak, file 67-3-8, 12 July 1963.
stations as ‘exile’ or training posts for ‘difficult’ or inexperienced officers and, especially in recent years, by the youth and inexperience of many indigenous officials. Delays in departmental funding, irregular availability of staff, and the burden of office obligations were reflected regularly in the postponement of patrols. In addition, the simple logistics of patrolling a large, sparsely populated area meant that over a given period the client coverage which staff in the border area could achieve was less than half the national average. Such problems were exacerbated by the changes which occurred prior to and during Papua New Guinea’s decolonization, notably the relatively rapid ‘localization’ of administrative positions, the concurrent decline of the *kiap* (patrol officer) system of administration, and the introduction of provincial government. On the border, as in other areas of the Sepik, the consequent lumpiness of administrative operations created a vicious cycle of diminished government effectiveness at village level and diminishing village enthusiasm for government intervention. At the same time a number of factors, including lack of political sophistication, the scarcity of alternative sources of development assistance, and the official discouragement of visitors to the sensitive border area, meant that power in the border zone was increasingly concentrated in a narrow administrative spectrum.

*The cordon sanitaire.* The major government-initiated constraint on economic development of the border area, both for government officials and for villagers, undoubtedly has been the *cordon sanitaire.* The bulk of the border population lives ten or more kilometres away from the actual border. Most border villagers have little contact with the border patrol posts and little comprehension of, or interest in, border political issues. For all practical purposes, due to the land tenure system, these villagers are locationally bound into a situation from which they gain little if any advantage but as a result of which they are, in effect, subsidizing development elsewhere. They bear a large part of the costs of quarantine protection for crops and herds in other parts of Papua New Guinea and, since the Indonesian side has no equivalent arrangement, they also provide a buffer zone which enables Indonesia to evade responsibility for containment of its communicable diseases and pests. Since the existence of the *cordon sanitaire* reduces the likelihood of conflict between representatives of the two countries over quarantine matters, the border villagers are paying, through the restrictions on income-earning opportunities that are available to all other Papua New Guineans, for a benefit that accrues mainly to the
diplomatic levels of Indonesian, Papua New Guinean and even Australian governments. In addition, maintenance of the quarantine strip has allowed agricultural and health staff on the Papua New Guinea side to avoid the expense and difficulty of regular field patrols and active quarantine supervision. It has also provided government officials with a blanket excuse for neglect of border development. Villagers have been told that in the absence of cash crop and livestock projects regular visits by agriculture staff would be superfluous, and that such assistance would only be necessary after they had established economically viable projects.

In the early 1950s moves were initiated by the Dutch and Australian colonial governments to establish uniform quarantine regulations and procedures on both sides of the border (Hasluck 1976:360). When these were aborted by the Indonesian takeover of Netherlands New Guinea the Australian administration, fearful of the possible threat to Australian as well as Papua New Guinean immunity, tightened the controls on the Papua New Guinea side of the border. The effects of the cordon sanitaire thus were felt most severely at a time when the border development programme and the accelerated pace of cash-crop and pastoral development in other parts of Papua New Guinea had aroused widespread interest in such economic development among border villages. Villagers were particularly anxious to start coffee and cattle projects, which they knew had been successful in other parts of the East and West Sepik. Some, undeterred by the lack of government assistance and by the difficulties of transporting their produce, established plots of rice, coffee or cocoa with planting materials brought back from other areas, built local material fowl runs, and endeavoured to replicate the projects that they had seen elsewhere. These efforts usually were short-lived.

Responsibility for the quarantine zone devolved primarily upon the Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries (DASF, later DPI), a specialist and somewhat autonomous department which was singularly ill-attuned to the political ramifications of border management. By virtue of its control over quarantine and stock movement, however, DASF was one of the most powerful political forces in the area. For some time confusion in DASF ranks led to a series of conflicting directives as to what could and could not be grown or kept within the border zone. As a result of this, and of inconsistent and unreliable DASF sponsorship of various projects, border villagers soon became very sceptical about DASF advice. Further confusion arose from pol-
icy conflicts at senior levels of the Department, and the consequent uncertainty among DASF field staff as to which policy they were to pursue. On one occasion, for example, DASF proposed to allow pig and poultry projects on the border, but in its general policy and staff training discouraged these because of their low economic returns, need for close supervision, and competition for foodstuffs required for human consumption - all factors of particular relevance for the border communities. Many villagers came to regard the quarantine zone as a ‘total development ban’ (West Sepik Province 1976:16).

The 1970s saw increasing recognition of the futility of a ban on cattle and coffee, which could be controlled, when disease could be carried by dogs, pigs, deer and people, whose border crossings could not be policed. This led several government officials and West Sepik politicians to press for a relaxation of the policy. Several alternatives were mooted, including the establishment of sentinel herds and the realignment of the perimeter, but these were rejected by agriculture and health officials in Port Moresby. Citing international precedent, DASF advised that it considered that twenty miles was the minimum acceptable for a cordon sanitaire and that preferably the zone should be widened.11 This intransigence reflected adversely on village relations with other government officials, in particular Division of District Administration (DDA) field staff, who were forced to justify a government stance which many personally opposed.

The renegotiation in 1979 of the Papua New Guinea-Indonesia border agreement brought initial indications that Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Australia were beginning to see certain advantages to a syndicated approach to the quarantine problem. In the face of the complexity of the issues involved, however, this was not followed up though the establishment of sentinel herds (for quarantine rather than income-earning purposes) was included in the border development programme for 1982. Once again government officials in Papua New Guinea concentrated on administrative infrastructure for border development, and on the promotion of economic activities such as rubber, fisheries and crocodile farming, which did not entail significant changes to quarantine policy. The new, albeit shaky, rapport between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea over the border brought little indication that the burden of the cordon sanitaire on border villagers would

11 DASF, Port Moresby, file 1-14-103, 27 December 1972.
be eased; indeed, it gave some disquieting hints that the problem could intensify. The massive Indonesian transmigration programme, the proximity of the major trans Irian Jaya highway construction to the Papua New Guinea side of the border, and the important resource projects of Ok Tedi mining and Vanimo timber are fraught with possible problems for quarantine, which could well make the *cordon sanitaire* a serious political issue in the long term.

*Cash-earning in Kilimeri.* For the Kilimeri, as for much of the border population, regular cash earning activity in the mid 1970s was almost non-existent. The scarcity of cash, however, meant that the overriding development priority for Kilimeri villagers was cash-earning opportunities. To many villagers, aware of their locational, educational and governmental difficulties, the economically optimal choice was the ‘minimal involvement’ one. In 1972, when foreign ownership of land was becoming a major political issue throughout the country, one Kilimeri village astounded government officials by offering land for any available European businessman to start an enterprise of his choice in their area.\(^{12}\) The same year brought an outbreak of chain letters, which originated in Rabaul and Australia and which promised enormous returns for a tiny investment.\(^{13}\) Visiting resource assessment teams were welcomed for the relatively high prices they paid for supplies and services, and for many years villagers placed their main hope in recurrent government promises of imminent exploitation of the Vanimo/Pual River timber resource.

As village hopes for large-scale development were repeatedly disappointed, some turned to ‘self-help’ initiatives. Lack of knowledge of the availability of government-sponsored self-help schemes, however, and the chronic shortage of cash and manpower which these usually demanded as the village contribution, meant that these often were poorly conceived and difficult to manage. The unreliability of government direction and encouragement resulted in many cases in imitative gestures and confused efforts to replicate projects that villagers had heard about or seen in operation elsewhere.

\(^{12}\) DDA, Pagei, patrol report 4/71/72.

\(^{13}\) The chain letter problem reached such proportions throughout the country that chain letters were declared a prohibited import shortly afterwards (PNG Government Gazette 93, 26 October 1972).
Most of the ‘cash crops’ reported by the Kilimeri sample had been encouraged at one time or another by government officials, but none had received much, if any, attention past the planting stage. Though 16 per cent of the sample claimed to have coconut plantings (two thirds of which were immature) and 3 per cent had minor crops such as cocoa, chillies, coffee or spices (mostly in minute quantities and usually the untended remnant of experiments from many years earlier), none had ever received any income from their holdings. Two people claimed a share in a cow or domesticated feral pig as ‘livestock projects’. Ten were ‘businessmen’ with an interest in a trade-store, though in seven of the ten cases the store was temporarily or permanently closed, and the remaining three were ‘just starting’ and had done little if any business. The expenditure of $6 on a council licence to operate a trade-store, however, was an important status symbol and some of these businessmen maintained a current licence though they had not held for some time, and could not afford, any trading stock. Twenty-seven per cent of the sample kept chickens, which originally had filtered into the area from Hollandia, but these were generally regarded as the nucleus of an economic enterprise and too valuable for domestic consumption. Moreover, villagers could not afford to purchase chickens from each other, as the standard asking price was based on DASF charges for imported breeding stock and many owners feared a government rebuke if they set their own price. The fact that three men in 1975/76 had sold poultry to passing government patrols was sufficient to maintain the asking price and the general interest. Total income for the area from all these sources in twelve months was $34. This amounted to an average of $5.67 for the six income earners concerned, or approximately nine cents per capita for the entire sample.

The only other significant non-wage source of income for about 20 per cent of the sample was the infrequent sale of game, sago grubs or other wild produce at the nearest station. Some other border areas were more fortunate, largely as the result of their ability to ‘capture’ government or mission interest. Long before the Ok Tedi development created a need for nearby sources of foodstuffs, villagers in Oksapmin, encouraged and assisted by their patrol officers, were producing European vegetables for markets in Vanimo and Wewak. Villagers in Green River, who unilaterally started a rice project, were

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14 DDA, Aitape, patrol report 6/48-49.
able to tap mission transport when the freight charges out were found to be higher than the returns for sale of the crop. Development in both cases was discontinuous, highly personalized and heavily subsidized - and resented proportionately by less fortunate areas - but enabled the two centres to win preferential treatment in the subsequent search for economically viable projects to include in the border development programme. For most parts of the border, however, the difficulties of access, high freight costs, staff turnover and local preferences have given spontaneous attempts to promote income earning activities a relatively brief life.

By far the most important contribution to income in the Kilimeri area was wages. From the Second World War to the end of the contract labour period in the 1960s, wage labour on plantations provided a steady trickle of goods and cash into the area, an escape from the hardships of the home environment, and a much more reliable source of income than the dubious development prospects offered on the border. As this source dried up, the horizon for wage migration narrowed and employment-related moves outside the West Sepik dropped from approximately 80 per cent to 50 per cent of total movement between 1965 and 1975. More men began to compete for the few job opportunities closer to home. For a few years they were able to earn enough for their basic needs from predominantly casual labour in Vanimo or at government, council or mission stations nearby, but these sources also diminished in the 1970s. New regulations imposed, in the nationalist thrust of imminent independence, by the new National Investment and Development Authority (NIDA) drove Goldore Timber Company, the West Sepik's largest private employer, out of the province. Increases in the basic wage, intended to improve the relative position of the unskilled labour force, made employers of casual labour more selective and less prepared to spend money on additional labour for minor or unproductive tasks. The rapid localization of public service posts, followed after 1974 by general financial stringencies, also reduced severely the amount of money released to the casual or unskilled labour force. At the same time, monetary requirements for council rates, education expenses, purchase of trade store goods and other domestic expenditures increased. Acquisition of saleable skills, either through formal education or through informal channels such as work experience, had always been a problem for border villagers. As the employment situation tightened across the country and the national education system was adjusted to limit the num-
bers of unemployed 'drop-outs', border villagers were further handicapped. Many, reluctant to settle for an inferior role in the modern world and seeing one avenue after another close down, have turned their backs on the partial solutions proposed by government officials and resigned themselves to wait for better days.

*Development in the East Timor aftermath.* In 1975/76 Indonesian intervention in the then Portuguese territory of East Timor revived old fears about the possibility of Indonesian expansionism. Perceived parallels with the Indonesian takeover of Netherlands New Guinea directed these fears, in particular, towards the security of Papua New Guinea's border with Irian Jaya. At the instigation of the secretaries of the Prime Minister's Department and the Department of Defence, and with the support of the influential and opportunistic Sir John Guise, the issue of border development became a priority. This resulted in the preparation of a new set of 'border development proposals', which purported to 'represent the views of all sectors of the border community' (West Sepik Province 1976:1) but which in fact was largely the work of one expatriate administrator. Predictably, it concentrated on upgrading the border stations and on improving administrative conditions and capacity. Essentially this was a repetition and extension of the 1960s development programme, for much the same reasons, and was carried over a few years later into the National Public Expenditure Plan.

As with the earlier programme, the 1976 proposals and the development programme which was initiated under the auspices of the Department of Foreign Affairs were limited in their ability to meet the main perceived need of border villagers: wage employment. In 1975/76 49 per cent of total cash income for the Kilimeri sample came from the earnings of two unskilled labourers. A further 33 per cent came from casual labour, rarely of more than two weeks' duration, and from quasi wage sources such as stipends and allowances. Since the sample had an annual median and modal per capita cash income of zero, and an annual mean per capita cash income of only $5.42, for most villagers even the lowest wage or stipend represented enormous riches. This was reflected in the very high proportion (79 per cent) of adult males between ages 20 and 45 who in the previous year had actively, albeit unsuccessfully, sought employment. By comparison, very few were prepared to walk the same distance to receive medical treatment, and none had done so to seek advice or assistance from government officials. For most villagers the dramatic difference between average
wages for full-time wage-earners in their vicinity and average cash incomes from other sources (Herlihy 1981) made involvement in the government’s development programme a decidedly inferior option. In addition, wage employment even for very brief periods was a socially acceptable means of cash-earning for any age cohort, allowed the participant to enter and leave the monetary economy at little or no cost and in harmony with seasonal subsistence obligations, and usually entailed less disruption of the traditional socio-economic system than did cash-cropping.

In this situation the development of the Ok Tedi mineral resource in the Star Mountains and of the Vanimo/Pual River timber stands opened opportunities that were not easily matched by the more egalitarian proposals for border development. In the idealism of the early 1970s, however, this was not at first recognized. While official hopes for major economic development in the West Sepik rested on these projects in the late 1960s and again in 1976 (Hinchliffe 1976), government policy under the first Somare government favoured improvement of rural life styles, village participation and equalization for less developed areas. On these criteria, Ok Tedi mining and Vanimo timber did not rank highly. Several analyses of village capacity to benefit from the projects reported that the likelihood of significant local advantage from copper mining, even for the Min people in the immediate vicinity, was very small (Rendell & Partners 1975) and that the population of the Vanimo/Pual River timber area was insufficient to develop the deforested area. For the border people, who had been inundated for a decade by consultations, official requests for cooperation and promises of enormous returns at an ever-receding future date, government procrastination over the two major resource developments was a major constraint on any other form of development, and correspondingly resented. As with the cordon sanitaire, inadequate explanations and weak rationalizations for the delays in exploitation of the timber resource, in particular, severely damaged the government’s credibility in the area and in Kilimeri resulted in a marked lack of enthusiasm for government development proposals.

The damage to social welfare and economic development in Kilimeri from almost twenty years of government procrastination over the timber development was such that, by the 1980s, villagers saw any form of timber exploitation as less destructive than continuation of the status quo. Until the discovery of minerals in the Star Mountains the Vanimo/Pual River timber stands, one of the largest in Papua New
Guinea, were considered to be the West Sepik’s only economically exploitable asset. A detailed survey of Pual River potential was carried out in 1963, after an inquiry from Japan for logs\textsuperscript{15}, and by 1965 discussions had reached the point of proposals for reafforestation, since a ‘world-wide shortage of increasing severity’ was predicted ‘at least as far ahead as 2000 AD’.\textsuperscript{16} A firm of international consultants from the United States was retained to advise on the development of a large industrial complex at Vanimo. By the end of 1966 the Department of District Administration (DDA) regarded the acquisition of the timber rights as ‘urgent...as time becomes the essence of success in this project’.\textsuperscript{17} Frequent visits from survey teams for major timber companies and for a plethora of departmental analyses kept village expectations high for a few years, and in 1967 Goldore Timber Company, a subsidiary of New Guinea Goldfields, commenced small-scale operations on 14,000 hectares near Vanimo. The proposed multi million dollar complex, however, failed to materialize.

By the 1970s many villagers, not fully understanding the reasons for the difference between the initial payment for the timber rights and the subsequent six-monthly interest payment on the investment of the balance (in 1975/76 this payment, when divided among each recipient group, varied on average between 20c and $1 per capita), pressed for immediate payment of the full balance so that they could use it for other development projects. Further, since life expectancy in the area was very low, villagers were beginning to realize that those involved in the original negotiations might never see the lump sum repayment on maturity of the investment in the years 2007 and 2008. As inflation in trade store prices curtailed the real value of the interest dollar, and as its monetary value per head decreased with the rate of growth of the population, the interest became little more than a token compensation for the loss of the use of village land. An additional source of dissatisfaction was that timber lease land could be cleared only for traditional subsistence use (which, for hunting communities, was slight), while most land which was not leased was marginal or unsuitable for cash-crops.

\textsuperscript{15} Department of Forests, Port Moresby, file 87-8-10, 23 November 1964.

\textsuperscript{16} Department of Forests, Port Moresby, file 88-0-0, 4 February 1965.

\textsuperscript{17} Department of Forests, Port Moresby, file 88-0-5, 31 October 1966.
In the late 1970s the new Sandaun provincial government, through its business arm, established a logging operation on 8,000 ha in the erstwhile Goldore area near Vanimo. When the national government, through the National Investment and Development Authority (NIDA), once again sought foreign investment for the large-scale development of the resource, the provincial government expressed fears that its infant industry would be ‘frozen out’ by multi-national interests (Post-Courier 24 January 1980). In February 1981 the announcement that a proposal by an unknown Philippines company had been accepted over the recommendations of the Department of Forests sparked accusations of ‘back door dealings’ (Post-Courier 5 February 1981) and an inquiry by the Ombudsman Commission. The Sandaun provincial government, which had recommended the company ‘because they have the money - and that is important’ (Post Courier 2 February 1981) and which at first had supported the proposed contract, asked that the negotiations be postponed pending further consultation. The provincial government’s Forestry Steering Group was reluctant to involve people from the timber area in the committee set up to handle negotiations, however, or to approve independent consultation with them.

The controversial deal was eventually signed during the last months in office of the then Chan government, and the firm given five months to submit detailed proposals for the timber development. But as had happened so many times before the deal collapsed. Shortly after the new Somare government took office in August 1982, the prime minister announced in Vanimo that the timber contract was to be renegotiated.

The 1982 elections. The West Sepik by 1982 had a ten-year tradition of ‘missing the boat’ in its attempts to select representatives who could tap national power and resources on behalf of the province. In some parts of the province a vigorous outmigrant wage-earning tradition meant that kinship linkage, the standard unit for political mobilization, was often distorted by migrant worker ties. For border villages, which usually lacked the community of cropping, pastoral or other business interests that formed the basis of political pressure groups elsewhere, and which traditionally tended to acephalous political organization, representatives often were selected on the basis of local entrepreneurial skills. Until the division of the Sepik in 1966 into East and West, and the emergence in the 1968 parliament of party politics, such representation was reasonably effective. With the formation of
the radical new Pangu Pati, the Sepik politicians divided. Paul Langro, West Sepik regional member, resigned his position of assistant ministerial member in late 1969 and joined Pangu, but the Pangu stance on early independence proved unacceptable to the bulk of his electorate. Four of the five West Sepik parliamentarians in 1972, including Langro, aligned themselves with the United Party, which opposed early independence and which prior to the 1972 elections was expected to form the government.

In April 1972 Somare and Pangu put together a coalition government. Throughtout the life of the 1972 parliament, the emphasis which the coalition placed on improvement for less developed areas was vitiated for the West Sepik by the province’s association with the parliamentary gamesmanship of the opposition. The consequent lacuna at national political level, and the impuissance of the local councils, left border development for five years to public servants who on the whole were professionally and locationally inexperienced, and ill-equipped to tackle developmental problems of such magnitude. At the 1977 elections representative turnover was 100 per cent.\(^\text{18}\) The three largest electorates voted Pangu and the two border representatives crossed the floor to Pangu in the Opposition reshuffle of early 1978 (Post-Courier 21 March 1978). Party loyalties and even personal preferences were less important to the West Sepik electorates, however, than the potential access to government resources represented by staying with the strength. The purse-string vote was again demonstrated, but in the opposite direction, when the Somare government was voted out in 1980 and several West Sepik parliamentarians swung overtly or covertly towards the new government benches.

The defeat of the second Somare government half-way through its term focused political activity earlier than might otherwise have been the case on the 1982 elections. By 1981 the border development programme had become caught up in the politicking for the next election. Deputy prime minister Iambakey Okuk took up the West Papua cause and adopted a quasi-confrontationist stance towards Indonesia, while Paul Langro in the West Sepik led public service and provincial government complaints over the lack of communication between the national government and the province over border development.

\(^{18}\) This refers to the members who represented the West Sepik in the 1972-77 House. The extent of actual change in electoral support is difficult to assess, as electoral boundaries in the border area have been redrawn between every election until 1982.
Through 1982 the programme was largely subordinated to party campaigning, and one member of Foreign Affairs staff on the border development programme resigned to contest the West Sepik regional seat. Despite vigorous and often extravagant campaigning by other candidates, the results of the election were overwhelmingly Pangu and the West Sepik was with the new government.

The border development problem

By 1983, despite the continuation of the border development programme and improved communications with Indonesia through the Joint Border Committee, the benefits were mainly administrative. Kilimeri villagers gained a road connecting Ossima to Bewani and thus to Vanimo, but little improvement to their overall situation from it. In some areas conditions had deteriorated so much that development was an even more difficult task than it had been in the colonial era. The decline in employment opportunities and cash incomes, especially marked after 1974/75, brought a reduction in modern supplements to subsistence. Most Kilimeri households in 1976 were using worn utensils which had been brought back in the 1950s and 1960s by returned labourers, and were unable to replace worn-out items such as axes and saucepans which previously had been regarded as bone (essential). Unwilling or unable to return to arduous traditional techniques for the manufacture of such items as salt, many villagers simply discontinued their use.

The range of foodstuffs consumed regularly also appears, for various reasons, to have diminished. In Kilimeri the most common morning and evening meal consisted of boiled sago and *tulip* (the flavour-some and nutritious *Gnetum gnemon* tips). One village, which used to consume the surplus from market garden produce that it cultivated for sale to a nearby boarding school, ceased consumption of introduced crops entirely when the boarding school became a day school and its market collapsed. Another group joined the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to obtain a school. By the time the mission withdrew, a few years later, the group had acquired a new range of food *tabus* which included most of its hunter-gatherer protein sources, and refused to assist with communal pig hunts. In the absence of cultivated dietary alternatives, this marginalized their own diet and to some extent also affected the balance for the rest of the community. With the decline in other cash-earning opportunities, many villagers retained a greater
proportion of saleable bush products such as game, wildfowl eggs and sago grubs for market or for the gift exchanges with town contacts whereby they obtained cloth and a few other coveted trade goods.

Educational and employment potential declined concurrently. As the costs of education and the standard required for regular employment rose, village interest in pursuing primary or vocational education fell, and schools reported a drop in attendance. In 1976 31 per cent of Kilimeri adults interviewed had received some basic education, but only 27 per cent of their children. Seventy-seven per cent of school-age children at the time of the survey were not attending school, and only three villagers in the sample area had completed primary education. Of those children who had some schooling, most, like their parents, had dropped out by Grade 3 despite the improvements which had taken place in primary facilities in the area. Informal acquisition of skills and work experience also declined with the marked reduction in the range and duration of outside experience after the mid 1960s. This was matched by a general decline in the number of outside contacts which villagers had and, as a result, in their informal access to information and modern opportunities.

Conclusion

The recurrent dilemma for government in development of the border area, as its past attempts have demonstrated, is that programmes which have been considered administratively feasible have been handicapped by situational constraints, while full-scale attack on border underdevelopment would be a high cost, low return and long term operation. To upgrade government services and village standards of living on the border, merely to a standard comparable with the average in other parts of the country, would in itself be expensive in terms of monetary resources, staff quantity and calibre, and in the possible political repercussions from other areas. To continue to divert resources indefinitely to the maintenance of such standards, when the per capita costs of doing so are inflated vis-a-vis other areas by distance, low population densities and difficult terrain, is not likely to be economically or politically practicable. The provincial government experiment has already indicated that the more advanced regions are not prepared to subsidize the less developed areas to the extent that would be required, and neither the Western nor the Sandaun province has the capacity to mount a campaign of such magnitude without assis-
tance. Moreover the uneasy relationship which currently exists between the national and provincial governments, and the conflict of political interest involved, indicates that such assistance from the central government may not be welcomed. Nor is it by any means certain that the national government's present concern for border development is a lasting one. Ironically, the success of the new Joint Border Committee in easing tensions between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia over their mutual border could well bear an inverse correlation to border development.