

The ASOPA controversy

*By I C Campbell **

A Pivot of Australian Policy for Papua and New Guinea, 1945-49

AMONG THE MANY discontinuities brought to Papua and New Guinea by World War 2 was a hiatus in the training of field officers, leading to the redesign of training after the war. Because field staff were the necessary intermediary between policy and practice, the manner in which they were trained was itself a critical policy issue, but it became the principal arena in which policy for the territory was contested in the immediate post-war years. The protagonists were the personnel of Alfred Conlon's Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs (men not associated with either policy-making or administration in the pre-war years) on one side, and the Public Service officials who represented continuity with the pre-war administration, on the other.

The role of Conlon and his war-time associates in post-war planning has been the subject of conflicting interpretations, from the 'legend' to the more circumspect and often misrepresented opinion of Paul Hasluck. Brian Jinks, however, recognises correctly that Conlon's influence virtually ceased with the disbanding of the Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs (DORCA) at the end of the war. Conlon and his associates, John Kerr, J.K. Murray, and Professor R.D. Wright in particular, made a strenuous bid after the war ended to retain control of planning for Papua and New Guinea through the Australian Pacific Territories Research Council and the school which began as the School of Civil Affairs and became the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA). They believed that Papua and New Guinea needed a 'new deal' and that the prerequisite for this was heavy-duty intellectual input. Ultimately they were defeated by J.R. Halligan, Secretary of the Department of External Territories. Halligan is regularly condemned in the literature as unimaginative and obstructive, but his opposition in fact was impelled by the necessity to preserve the integrity of policy-making and administration. In this, Halligan was himself supported by some intellectual heavyweights within the Public Service, including Dr H.C. Coombs and Dr P. Curtin. The ambitions of the Conlon faction were unrealistic or at least premature, and Halligan insisted on the importance of having a functioning administration as a prerequisite to anything else.

Early proposals for training

Proposals to re-establish patrol officer training were initiated by Halligan in the middle of 1943. Halligan had worked in New Guinea in the 1920s and had been the public servant most responsible for managing the former cadet scheme in the 1930s, and for much else in relation to Australia's territories. He suggested four alternative approaches to the resumption of staff training: the Army Education Service might offer a course on Native Administration; the army might provide a special, intensive course of three months for service personnel and approved civilians; the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sydney might be used as formerly; and finally, a special course in Native Administration might be established at an Australian university. The first two options would be pragmatic application of the powers of the responsible war-time authority; the last two with the tentative reference to Sydney University and the possibility of an alternative university arrangement addressed long-term, peace-time needs, but also suggest that some doubts existed about the resumption of the pre-war, anthropology-focused programme. The doubts were political in origin, and were unrelated to the merits of the pre-war course. Training had ceased when the Japanese invaded New Guinea at the beginning of 1942, and as a result the financial viability of the Department of Anthropology at Sydney University was threatened because it relied on a Commonwealth subsidy in return for training the New Guinea cadets. Within a few months of the Japanese invasion, therefore, A.P. Elkin, the Professor of Anthropology, urged on the Commonwealth government the importance of continuing the subsidy with a view to post-war needs. These representations continued annually until at last in 1944 the subsidy was granted for five years in accordance with the original agreement.

Recognising Elkin's experience, Halligan recommended that he be included in any consultation about training. Elkin, meanwhile, gave cautious support to Halligan's proposals, while insisting that none of them could replace the pre-war cadet scheme the resumption of which he hoped would proceed soon. The outcome of these early suggestions and subsequent discussions was that the army authorities were instructed to confer with Halligan. The army authorities, however, in the form of Conlon's Directorate of Research, proceeded to make plans of their own without reference to either Halligan or Elkin.

The army school of civil affairs

The administration of civilian populations was a necessary military concern, and the army twice sent officers abroad to attend courses on the government of conquered territories. In February 1944, the army announced that it was establishing the Army School of Civil Affairs, modelled on both the British and American army schools, under the Director of Research at Land Headquarters. It was to involve the three academic anthropologists then working in New Guinea, Lieutenant Colonels W.E.H. Stanner, H. Ian Hogbin and Camilla Wedgwood. Serious course planning began at a meeting involving the army anthropologists (i.e. Hogbin and Wedgwood, and pointedly excluding Elkin who was the academic most experienced in cadet training), the army 'think-tank' (Conlon), the Department of External Affairs (Halligan), the former territorial administration (Robert Melrose, Director of District Services and Native Affairs) and the Australia New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU). Curriculum planning was referred to a different ad hoc committee.

The starting point was a proposal, probably from Halligan, for a scheme that was essentially a restoration of the pre-war cadet scheme with its balance between practical requirements and academic stimulus. This would include competitive selection, six months training at territory headquarters, three months training at a district office, followed by an expanded programme of study at Sydney University in anthropology, practical geography, tropical agriculture and medicine, sanitation, law, economics, engineering and colonial administration. The curriculum advisory committee, however, added a new concept which was to have a lasting effect: a two-tiered course structure which reflected a dichotomy between the experienced administrators who gave priority to practical vocational training, and the others who favoured academic education. Whereas the Halligan plan represented a balance between conflicting training philosophies, the new suggestion was a compromise. Initially there should be a short course of 15 weeks with 30 hours of instruction per week, to prepare patrol officers for their daily work. That should be followed by a year and a half to two years' service in New Guinea after which the officers should return to Australia for a longer course to prepare them for higher responsibilities. This was in effect a military staff college model. This short course would include intensive instruction in both academic and practical subjects.

The sandwich approach was criticised by Melrose, the practical administrator who had for many years favoured a BA degree in colonial administration. He considered the intensive short course mere theoretical training, and useless without some foundation

experience. If it were to be adopted, it would be better not to disperse student energy across so many subjects and he recommended the deletion of everything that was not practical, including scientific method, history, geography and economics of the Pacific and comparative colonial administration.

The attempt by the pre-war administrators to keep the initial training practical failed, and the intellectuals of Conlon's Directorate of Research won this first round. The first course began in February 1945 with an initial enrolment of 40 chosen from 93 applicants. The staff of the school outnumbered the students, with one colonel, two lieutenant colonels, one major, three captains, four lieutenants and 36 other ranks. Halligan was unhappy with what he saw as an army usurpation of a civil service role brought about by Conlon, who, through his relationship with the commander-in-chief, General Thomas Blamey, could make things happen while cabinet took no notice of submissions from the Department of External Territories. Consequently, although the initiative for establishing the school had been Halligan's, and although his department would bear responsibility for the post-war administration of Papua and New Guinea, it was unable to influence the training of those who would be charged with implementing its policies. His misgivings were compounded by a proposal that when the time should come for the army to surrender its responsibility, the school should be placed under the control of a new body to be called the Australian Pacific Territories Research Council -- in effect, the Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs in civilian dress.

The transition to a civilian regime

Seeing in this proposal the ratification of his loss of influence over the training of staff for whom his department would be responsible, and also somewhat anxious lest there be a discontinuity in training, Halligan put forward some detailed proposals. These were that the present school should be closed, and the Department of External Territories should set up its own school to train all administrative staff (not just field staff) and should select the school's teaching staff. In the meantime, there should be a review by men not hitherto involved of the whole question of training for territorial officers. Halligan accompanied this sally with a formal proposal for the selection and training of field staff whom he classed separately from the administrative staff generally. It was essentially the pre-war scheme, but with an initial territorial service of two years, and no preliminary 'short course'. A subsequent year at university would be devoted to social anthropology, practical geography, tropical agriculture, tropical medicine, law, economics, field engineering and colonial administration -- in other words very much

the subjects that were presently being compressed into the 15 week short course at the School of Civil Affairs. Halligan recommended further the ultimate establishment of a separate and permanent school of Territorial Administration with the broader function of providing courses for civil servants from other Pacific territories and for missionaries. It should be under the general direction of Halligan's own department, and be located as an `adjunct' to the proposed National University. In the meantime, the old arrangement with Sydney University would do, or alternatively, a separate school could be established, later to become part of the proposed university. Halligan preferred the latter option for practical reasons. But whatever the details, there were two overriding needs: staff were needed immediately, and training had to be put on a permanent footing.

A committee was duly established, its membership a compromise between the status quo and Halligan's recommendation. The members were Sir George Knowles (Commonwealth Solicitor General), F.G. Thorpe (Head of the Commonwealth Public Service Board), Professor R.C. Mills and John Kerr, the two last having been associated with the School of Civil Affairs. The influence of the last two prevailed, and Halligan's suggestions about control and curriculum came to nothing. From then on, the ex-DORCA intellectuals very much had their own way on all issues connected with training. The committee agreed on the following: staff training was essential; a short course should precede territorial assignment; and training should be taken over by the proposed National University as soon as practicable. In the meantime, the School of Civil Affairs should continue on a site to be found in Sydney, the present committee should continue to advise it, with academic aspects under the supervision of the Director of the Commonwealth Office of Education, which position had recently been assumed by Mills. The Minister for Territories, E.J. Ward, approved these conclusions in principle. Elkin and the University of Sydney were completely sidelined, and Halligan had to fight tenaciously to retrieve a training programme appropriate to what he regarded as administrative needs.

ASOPA's first interim period

Early in the new year, 1946, cabinet approved the establishment of the new school on an interim basis, and it continued to provide the three-month courses which it had conducted in 1945 as the School of Civil Affairs. In May the formation of the Australian Pacific Territories Research Council was announced, having as its role the initiation and control of scientific research in the territories, and the additional responsibility of advising the `School of Colonial Studies'

on academic matters. Long-term plans were announced for a two-year diploma course to be offered in association with the new National University in Canberra, to be subsequently developed into a full degree course. Hopes were voiced that a centre for colonial studies for the south and southwest Pacific and southeast Asia would develop, and that it could cater for trainees for New Zealand's Pacific territories as well as Australia's.

In addition to having been defeated on all the structural issues, Halligan was also outmanoeuvred on school staff which overwhelmingly comprised ex-DORCA personnel of Conlon's choosing. The staff, in Halligan's view, should be appointed by his department. Leo Austen, a man who matched Halligan's ideal as an instructor for the school, inquired about a possible role in March 1946, and was passed over. Austen was a former Papuan officer with a distinguished record as a Resident Magistrate, one of the first to gain a Diploma in Anthropology from the University of Sydney, with anthropological publications to his credit, and a good record with ANGAU during the war. When Mills made his staffing recommendations a few weeks later, Austen and men of his type were missing. Instead there were the names of the academic anthropologists, Hogbin and Wedgwood, and the poet James McAuley to lecture on colonial administration (he had attended Dr Lucy Mair's lectures on that subject the previous year). John Kerr, a lawyer by profession, was appointed school principal, having succeeded as Chief Instructor at the Army School of Civil Affairs Colonel J.K. Murray, who had been appointed Administrator of Papua-New Guinea during 1945. Ida Leeson (former Mitchell Librarian at the State Library of New South Wales), who during the war was a major in military intelligence, was appointed school librarian. In addition, there were several tutors unknown to New Guinea 'old hands'. In the event, the University of Sydney declined to release Hogbin because of large enrolments. In a tacit admission about the credentials of his staff, Kerr immediately recommended that his tutors have an orientation and familiarisation visit to New Guinea because he thought it desirable that they have firsthand experience. That the anthropologists already had, and McAuley had spent 90 days in New Guinea before the war ended. Although there were some appointments of men experienced in territorial needs and conditions -- including John J. Murphy, a pre-war officer and author of a textbook on Pidgin English who was offered a position in linguistics, G. [Gus] O'Donnell who was named lecturer in practical administration in the field, and D.M. [David] Fienberg (later Anglicised to Fenbury), a pre-war officer with a distinguished New Guinea war record -- these were all employed on lower salaries than the ex-DORCA lecturers whose qualifications were solely academic. There was some justification therefore for Halligan's apparently

bitter comment in 1949 that the staff was unqualified, that all they knew of Papua and New Guinea was what they had read in books or learnt from association with territory officers. It was, he wrote, 'not understandable how so many experts in teaching Territorial Administration were produced in such a short time with no background. In the event, it proved necessary to bring in some 'old hands' (Austen, G.W.L. Townsend, and E. Taylor) to lecture on a casual basis on languages and practical administration. Kerr considered the first course under the civilian regime satisfactory. Such inadequacies as there were, he claimed, demonstrated the dangers of departing from normal academic standards. He was more critical of the candidates selected as being below the pre-war standard than of his staff's ability to provide suitable instruction.

The difference over staffing reflected contrasting aspirations for the role and identity of the school. Kerr, as head of the school, vigorously denied that its purpose was the training of patrol officers. He insisted that it was merely bridging a gap between the disbandment of the military school and the establishment of the National University. The Research School of Pacific Studies within the latter would provide the substance for relevant courses in colonial studies with particular reference to problems of New Guinea. Kerr wanted Australia to become the intellectual centre for colonial studies in the region, and rightly stressed that a well-trained staff was the crux of successful policies for New Guinea, the highest priority being native welfare. His assumption was clearly that future administrative staff for Papua and New Guinea would be recruited from graduates of the colonial studies programme at the Australian National University (ANU). These plans were certainly ambitious, and justified the arguments for a specialised school, but as both Halligan and Kerr pointed out in their separate and otherwise conflicting criticisms, a good deal of research needed to be done simply in order to have something to teach. The 'research question', however, was to be the pivot of the contentiousness of the next two years. In the meantime, a decision was made to extend the provision of the short course to all recruits for territorial service, not just patrol staff. The two-year 'Long Course' was scheduled to begin in 1947, and there was an intention to offer refresher courses as well.

Publicly, Kerr emphasised objectives rather than difficulties and it was clear that his idea of the role of the school conflicted radically with Halligan's. Notwithstanding his publicity and public optimism, Kerr's aspirations for the academic standing of the school were strenuously challenged. The differences of outlook soon developed into a serious schism between the advocates of two dichotomous models: departmental training school, and research-oriented

university. The 'staff college model' was superseded by both. Since 1944, Halligan, Kerr and others had been speaking hopefully about some sort of affiliation with a proposed university in Canberra. Halligan adopted this view because he had the non-graduate's respect for the intellectual quality which he associated with elite places of learning and because of his respect for Elkin. Kerr's position was one of academic elitism that supported a grand vision of a research institute feeding into national affairs. However, notwithstanding the aspiration for some sort of university relationship, no-one had brought the matter before the planners of the Australian National University. Thus, in October 1946, the interim council of the inchoate university objected to public statements associating the two institutions when it had no official knowledge of ASOPA or its purpose, and demanded an official denial.

Kerr accordingly produced a formal proposal for the absorption of ASOPA into the Australian National University at the beginning of the 1947 academic year, recommending that the university establish a Board of Colonial Studies, and initiate a degree course and postgraduate work both in 1948. In response, the university council declared itself willing to help in every way possible but without meeting the specific request. The council chairman, Professor Mills (who was also the chairman of the ASOPA council), went further in a letter to the minister, recommending that cabinet appoint a governing body to ASOPA and pass legislation properly constituting the school so that it might develop to university standards in both teaching and research. The provisional arrangement under which ASOPA was constituted was due to expire in March 1947, and with the ANU not taking up the offer, the matter was urgent.

The failure to make a link with the proposed university was the result of a lack of coordination despite the small number of people involved in planning. Notwithstanding Halligan's urging that long-term plans and permanent institutions needed to be provided, the school had been given only a temporary existence because of the aspiration that it should become part of the National University. As the Army School of Civil Affairs, the institution had been established simply on the authority of a resolution of cabinet. When it was transferred to civilian status, a cabinet resolution (Agendum 1105 for 1 March 1946) was again the instrument. That resolution was quite explicit that the school be established on a temporary basis pending the establishment of the Australian National University, but without providing for any action by the university. Now that the university council found itself unable to digest a school of the type envisaged, the school's interim status was both cause and effect of

the failure to resolve the fundamental difference between the public servants and the ex-DORCA intellectuals.

The second interim period

Although a more permanent arrangement was now needed, Mills's recommendation of legislation was set aside, and a new Cabinet Agendum (No.1332, 9 May 1947) re-established the school. The preamble specifically advocated university standards and comparability with other colonial administrations. To this end it was recommended that the school provide courses for administration trainees generally, refresher courses for existing staff, and a long (two-year) course which would eventually evolve into a degree course. This was a return to the 'military staff college' model. The school was to be governed by a council responsible to the Minister for External Territories. The council's role was to provide teaching facilities, to provide research 'appropriate to the courses' and 'according to the needs of the territories as approved by the minister', and to appoint its own academic staff. The Minister for External Territories, E.J. Ward, put the case, drawing attention in particular to the need to secure the loyalty and continued service of academic staff who might otherwise be lost to other institutions. The need for the best possible intellectual input into colonial development, for a sounder theoretical basis for policy, and a reference to the scrutiny of the United Nations completed the argument. Ward's department would still provide funding. The subordination of the council to the minister reflected the Public Service opinion that the school was an intradepartmental training facility, but the rest of the document encouraged the intellectuals to think that their wishes had been acceded to. The brevity and imprecision of the formula in the agendum, however, was to be the root of acrimony for the next two years, and the crux of the debate was the question of research to which the personnel of the former Directorate of Research were all strongly committed. Halligan, however, saw in the emphasis on pure research not only the loss of control but also the loss of relevance to administrative need. Planning was proceeding again without reference to his department except as a source of funds, and this worried him deeply. However, the proposal passed through cabinet unchallenged, and a new committee was established to undertake implementation.

Discussions began in April 1947 between representatives of the Department of External Territories, the Commonwealth Office of Education, ASOPA itself and the Director-General of Post-war Reconstruction. Some of the members wore two hats: Mills was both Chairman of the ANU interim council and Director of the Commonwealth Office of Education; Murray was the Administrator

of Papua New Guinea, but also a former professor and the former head of the old School of Civil Affairs. Conlon was also involved, presumably because as the former Army Director of Research he had established the Army School of Civil Affairs. The intellectuals (Mills, Murray, Kerr and Conlon) dominated the proceedings, emphasising a wider educational and research role for the school than merely training patrol officers. This implied the usual academic principles of tenure, academic freedom and degree courses. The 'staff college' model was thus explicitly rejected in favour of a university model. All this indicated permanence, but Conlon and Kerr were opposed to structures which made the present school permanent because they wanted to keep the door open for it to become part of a university; on the other hand they wanted it in the meantime to have all the status and functions of a regular university. In attempting to impress their plans on the cabinet decision of March 1947, the arguments for research and its necessarily close relationship with teaching were put to the minister. The 'long' course was now referred to as a diploma, pending the establishment of a degree for district services staff, and the university model was even more evident in the suggestion that courses be open to any interested persons.

A school council was appointed in May, and the school thereupon embarked on a second period of provisional existence. With the reconstitution of the school council, council meetings became the forum for debate about the school's role. It was still taken for granted by most people involved that its destiny was to become part of the Australian National University and the intellectual ambitions of the academic faction predominated from the beginning. At its first meeting, on 4 July 1947, the council adopted a departmental model for its academic structure, and subsequently approved a proposal for the establishment of the long course, comprising 11 subjects. Halligan reported to the minister after the first council meeting that 'all the old points of difference' had come up. These were the relationship of the council to the Department of External Territories, the procedure for making academic appointments, whether the council was merely advisory or executive, and if it was the former, then where did executive authority lie? He discerned in the academic position a wish to be quite independent of his department.

By the third meeting, in September 1947, the schism between the academics and the representatives of the Public Service on the council was profound. Dominated by the former, the council decided to establish five research institutes within the school: biological and medical sciences, law and government, economics and agriculture, social sciences, and physical and geological sciences. A major bone

of contention was the selection of students. Everyone was agreed that the candidates offering themselves for territory cadetships were below the desired standard, and below that of the pre-war scheme, but whereas the academics blamed the Public Service procedures, the public servants insisted that the procedures were sound, but that the applicants were poor. The library was contentious also: the academics wanted wide powers of discretion in buying books, but the public servants wanted adherence to bureaucratic procedures with ordering strictly through the Department of External Territories. The library issue was one that rankled on both sides, and was to come up on later occasions when tempers became frayed.

Halligan in particular was worried about the ever-increasing scope of the academic plans. He had supported the idea of university standards, and even affiliation; he approved of research; but he saw in the academic-driven resolutions the establishment of another university with the costs all being charged to his departmental budget. `Research' was the crux of the growing differences. Halligan put his position in writing to propose a distinction between different types of research and recommended that research in the school be confined to that `normally inherent' in a teaching institution, and not expanded by the appointment of specialist research staff or taking on major research projects for the territorial administration. He based these suggestions on the Colonial Office structure which had its own research branches. Among research activity that he regarded as unsuitable for the school were the proposed physical resources survey, the soil survey, and research into territory law, which were all, he considered, more properly the scope of his department.

The minister was abroad for much of 1947, and when he returned in October he was of much the same opinion as Halligan that the ASOPA council was exceeding its intended role. Nevertheless, in a long council meeting in which Wright, Conlon and Murray impressed the nature and requirements of academic research upon him, he was brought around to their position. Behind the research issue, however, was the question of divided authority, a problem everyone recognised. Moreover, there was the question as to whether the school should be open to anyone, or closed to those not undergoing training for territory service. Halligan insisted that training for territorial service was the school's *raison d'être*; his antagonists insisted that it could not perform that function if it did not have a solid research base, and that implied a wider educational role. Ward, the minister, observed that Treasury was of the same opinion as Halligan: a basic difficulty was that education as such was a state function not a commonwealth one under the Federal Constitution.

The argument was acrimonious and wide ranging, but the issues came down to the management of research. On the one hand, the Department of External Territories was responsible for policy and execution, and should commission such research as was necessary, with the assistance of the school. On the other hand, the department was considered incompetent in research matters, and these therefore should be left to the experts who should define the questions and priorities.

The question of authority

Although the research function was the major point of contention, there was a more general issue at stake, and that was the conflict between the intellectuals' desire for council autonomy, and the officials' notions of ministerial responsibility and oversight. The departmental position was put mainly by Halligan, but it was supported by some whose education might have been thought to favour the opposite point of view: these included Mills (the chairman) who seems to have been persuaded by the public servants' arguments, Curtin, and Mr A Brown (representing Coombs). In the end, Ward said he would refer the matter to cabinet for clarification.

Brown subsequently addressed his misgivings to the minister in terms of the competition for scarce resources (including expertise) in a time of serious shortage: the school's ambitions could not be met without starving both the Territorial Administration and the department. Research into particular practical problems was more urgently needed than the pure or fundamental research favoured by the academic members. 'If research of this character is not undertaken by the administration rather than a body with a considerable degree of autonomy', he warned, 'we may well establish a situation where there is an ignorant administration with heavy responsibility, and a well-informed critic with no obligations.' This stated the issue in a nutshell.

The argument was at an impasse: the two positions were irreconcilable. One would have to prevail over the other, probably by the imposition of external authority. It had already been necessary for Ward to attend one council meeting, but now another issue arose which helped to bring matters to a head. The role of the institution and the status and conditions of employment of its staff proved to be inseparable issues. From the first meeting of the council of ASOPA, there was concern at the lack of security of tenure for the academic staff, which was a consequence of the school's interim status. Under the cabinet resolution that established the school, its council had no legal personality for entering into contracts. Indeed, it had virtually no authority at all:

everything it decided to do, including staff appointments, had to be done as recommendations to the minister. The council therefore recommended that it be incorporated under an Act of parliament, similar to Acts establishing the universities, the Institute of Anatomy, and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. But legislation could not proceed until the argument about the school's status and function was settled, the fundamental tension being between the concept of a departmental training school and a broad-based educational institution. The minister, probably advised by Halligan, had swung back to the former. Murray, his background as well as his present position showing, was for the latter, and he now took the lead in putting the academic case. Australia's mission in New Guinea, he argued, was explicitly developmental. The challenge, though, was not economic or technological so much as cultural and educational -- and the limitations here applied equally to the indigenous people and to the Australians who governed them. He was particularly scathing of the quality of staff ('un-read clerks') that he had to make do with. He wanted educated staff, not merely trained clerks or patrolmen, so that the Department of External Territories would have the sophistication and class of the Colonial Office. An absolute prerequisite was a first-class research institute because research was fundamental to both policy formation and administration.

For the council meeting of September 1947, Kerr produced a draft of a proposed bill to be called 'The Australian School of Pacific Administration Act, 1947' which was transparently modelled on the Australian National University Act. After the acrimonious October council meeting, Kerr met with the minister, who had consulted meanwhile with the prime minister, and it was the prime minister who recommended that legislation establishing the school be included in the proposed Papua New Guinea Administration Bill. Under this proposal, which came before the January 1948 council meeting, the legislative provision could be extremely sparing, and the details left to regulations under the Act. Kerr, Wright and Conlon were extremely dissatisfied with this compromise (for which they blamed Halligan), which effectively left all important decisions with the minister and his Public Service advisers. This gave the intellectual faction no guarantees whatever, but equally, it did not close off any future possibilities, including development towards university status or absorption into a university.

The ASOPA council counter-attacked with strongly worded motions of disapproval. Negotiations and correspondence continued for the first half of 1948, the intellectuals persistently proposing amendments which would preserve a broad definition in the Act itself, and therefore an open-ended research commitment. The

matter was referred to a committee that was considering legislation providing for the administrative union of Papua and New Guinea. Ward continued to be of the opinion that the school should have a limited role, conceding, however, that major research exercises might be undertaken with ministerial approval. The ambiguity of this concession matched that of the offending cabinet agenda, but it satisfied both Kerr and Ward, each carrying his own distinct understanding of what had been agreed. Similarly, there was a vague acceptance that the Australian National University should either absorb or supersede ASOPA, a vagueness that similarly masked wide differences of opinion. Accordingly, the committee recommended minimalist legislation, having in mind that it was, once again, an interim measure. Subsequently the council of the Australian National University objected to the assumption that it should absorb ASOPA, and insisted that all such references be removed from the draft. Because of these other details, the matter dragged on for so long that it missed the 1948 parliamentary session. Redrafting had followed redrafting, changes had been made without general consultation let alone agreement. The officials were as aggrieved as the academics at the process and the results.

While the legislative uncertainty continued, the school went on offering short courses, and introduced its long course. Kerr, however, decided in February 1948 to return to legal practice and offered his resignation as school principal. He had never intended to commit himself permanently to the school, and it is likely that he smelt defeat over the legislation issue. In any case, he had no wish to be a public servant running departmental training courses. He was persuaded by the council to stay on for a further six months part time, after which Conlon was appointed acting principal for 12 months from September 1948. Unlike Kerr, Conlon was interested in a permanent position, and this was one which he hoped would enable him to have a continuing influence over policy. Therefore, as if expecting his new position -- his first official one since leaving the army at the end of 1945 -- to give him additional leverage, he wrote angrily to Coombs in October of the proposed legislation, that it had been altered so much as to enable only the 'barest working minimum'. He indignantly protested that while he was trying to build the school to a standard that would allow it to be incorporated into a university, 'the colonial leathernecks who try to tell us that the School is no good at any rate ... do everything in their power to prevent us from getting the necessary authorities to take such reasonable steps as would make the School into something we would all want to see'. He tried once more to insert a clause preserving a research role for the school.

Conlon's reference to 'colonial leathernecks' was probably directed exclusively at Halligan who by this time was asserting his control of the planning process as the minister's principal adviser. Early in 1949, Halligan drafted a document reviewing the school, labouring its lack of real contact with New Guinea and the generally underqualified (in terms of territorial and administrative knowledge) staff. He criticised its research aspirations, its ambitious educational goals, its cost and its pretensions. He concluded that it was a self-serving institution, its staff seeking permanence through the creation of a special university for a segment of the Public Service while staff for the regular Commonwealth Public Service had to seek education and training at their own expense. Overshadowing these specific criticisms was his greatest fear: that the research role would expand to such an extent that it would become in practice the policy-forming body for all territorial affairs. Halligan, however, was not the only opponent; even Coombs, whom Conlon consulted, opposed giving the school a role which would place it in competition with the Australian National University and the South Pacific Commission. Eventually, the secretary of the Public Service Board objected both to the research function proposals, and to the notion that the minister should be advised directly by the ASOPA council (rather than through the Secretary for External Affairs), and expressed a preference for training to be provided by the University of Sydney. This opinion threatened to undo the work of five years by returning to the pre-war status quo.

With these last submissions the discussions about legislation became circular and inconclusive. The minister lost patience, and dismissing all arguments and all the qualifications and compromises with their unsatisfactory ambiguities from his mind, he cut the Gordian knot. On a draft which came before him in February 1949, he put a bold X in ink against Conlon's clause reading 'To undertake, encourage and provide facilities for instruction, study and research in matters concerning the Australian External Territories ...', and at the end of the document scrawled, 'I believe that this School should not be anything but a School, & I do not agree to the [inclusion?] of Draft Amendment [sic]'.

Significance

With the debate over function thus summarily terminated, the academic lobby was routed. Kerr had already left, Conlon lost interest altogether and scarcely took any part in the affairs of the school for the remainder of his term as acting principal, and thus ended any influence that Conlon exercised in New Guinea affairs. The defeat may have been a factor in Murray's dispiritedness as described by Hasluck. (Another committee was established in June

1949 to review the role and future of the school. After reviewing the history and syllabus of the school, it recommended scrapping the existing 'short' course, and replacing it with a less academic induction course of six weeks, leaving the assessment of the suitability of students to the staff of District Services in the territory. The work of the school was to be confined to training administration officers. The long course would be retained as a two-year course, to be undertaken by officers after 46 weeks' service in the territory. This was certainly not the university model envisaged in 1947, nor was it the 'staff college' model envisaged in 1946. But there remained an evolutionary link with the pre-war cadet scheme, although the two-year course was more comprehensive and more vocational than the pre-war university courses. The result would not have pleased Elkin who, despite Halligan's wishes, was kept off the council of the school as finally constituted.

Halligan's victory in the constitution of the school seems unexpected, given that from 1945 until the end of 1947 the running was being made by the intellectuals who had been part of Conlon's Army Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs. Halligan was always on the defensive and always outnumbered by the academic experts, who included the man who had become Administrator of Papua-New Guinea and was in a position to insist on the sort of men he wanted for his staff. But Halligan's opinion prevailed in the thinking of E.J. Ward, his minister, who in many of the discussions seems to have been inclined to adopt the opinion of the person he spoke with last.

The decision regarding ASOPA seems to run counter to the trend of thinking about colonial issues in the late 1940s. However, the shortage of resources in the late 1940s favoured the limitation of objectives, and the final decision must be understood in the context of the renewal of the subsidy for Elkin's department in 1949 and the establishment of the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University. Both of these moves undercut the ground for a research and academic function at ASOPA, while the exclusively postgraduate role of the School of Pacific Studies terminated all hopes of research and teaching being complementary functions as both Murray and Kerr had hoped.

Moreover, the Australian government's purpose during the period that ASOPA was being established was confused. The 'new deal' associated with the names Murray and Ward did not spring into life fully formed. For all that is written about a new policy and a new deal for the people of Papua and New Guinea, the late 1940s was a transitional period in which broad objectives were agreed but policy remained unformed, as Brian Jinks has argued. As Murray said at the first meeting of the Inter-Departmental Committee for the Co-

ordination of Plans for the Development of the Territories of Papua and New Guinea in 1947, there was no plan at the end of the war and there remained no plan, merely broad trusteeship objectives and statements of intention. It was this context of unformed good intentions that gave ASOPA such a confused and uncertain start, and also gave the debates about its role both vigour and venom.

The final shape of ASOPA was not the result of indifference, or strictly speaking of bureaucratic, anti-intellectual obstructionism defeating academic idealism. Just as in the early 1920s when the creation of a cadet scheme and the provision of courses in anthropology was delayed by long consultation occasioned by a sense of inadequacy and anxiety to find the perfect solution, so also in the 1940s a definitive policy on training was delayed while interested parties debated not ends but means. In the 1920s the issues were somewhat clearer: the main role of government at that time was pacification, with the regulation of labour perhaps running second. The question then was between training and no training, between 'character' as a criterion of appointment and educational accomplishment. At the same time, the argument for academic education could be subsumed in a single infant discipline, anthropology, the 'science of understanding natives'. By the 1940s, the idea of development as requiring deliberate policies of change and modernisation had become much more complicated. The transformation changed the question of education from 'whether' into 'what kind' and it broadened the need to cover all staff, not just those few men who were responsible for pacification and law and order on the tropical frontier. Finally, the complexity of the new development perceptions in the 1940s raised the question that Halligan regarded as so fraught with danger: whether responsibility for research and training should be entrusted to individuals and organisations not ultimately responsible for the consequences in policy.

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