

POLITICS AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

:AN ASSESSMENT.

A THESIS

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DEDICATION

To my parents:

The late Lesini Fugui who was unable to see his son matured into a man, and to my dear mother, Alice Mary Afuna, who has the patience and selflessly bears the pain of living without a son who, usually, is absent from home. Finally to the future generations of the Suraina people. With all my love!

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## INTRODUCTION.

After the second World War, two major forces dominated colonial politics in the third world. One was the rise of anti-colonialism and the other was the drive for and the pursuit of political independence. The Pacific islands experienced but a mild form of this since, by then, decolonisation was more than a decade old and the imperial powers had already granted political autonomy to some of their overseas colonies. Increasingly, these new states begin to experience the sweet-bitter realities of being sovereign and self-governing.

For the first time, the focus is on the need to develop a national political culture. This include the development and growth of political institutions such as political parties. These institutions were geared wholly to domestic needs.

Long after the emergence of the new states and concomitantly, the witnessing of the declining prominence of former imperial powers, the legacy of colonial experience continues. And often the impact of colonialism has proven problematic. Indeed, the scope, success and the very tenor of post-colonial politics have been unavoidably coloured by the very way the colonial powers left these countries.

The general argument.

It is herein argued that post-colonial politics in new states can be divided into two major categories. The first category consists of the states in which the colonial power was forcibly ousted by nationalist uprisings. Under such circumstances, mass-based political parties are likely to develop. On the other hand, where political independence had resulted from a peaceful hand-over of political control from the colonial powers to national leaders, elitist parties usually emerged.

The case of Solomon Islands.

Experience in the Solomon Islands falls quite neatly in the second category. For eighty-five years, the Solomon Islands was a British colony. In 1978, Britain, compelled by extraneous forces, especially the oil crisis of the early 1970s, granted political independence to the country (Judith Bennett 1987: 311). This was the trend for the remaining British colonies in the region. As it happened, political autonomy was often given in an agreeable manner. Except for Vanuatu where there was a semblance of nationalist uprising, there was, in general, a marked absence of any mass nationalistic uprisings. One of the consequences of such a situation was that elitist parties, often than not, emerged and became characteristic of the party system in the region.

Thus, the development of political parties and, of

course, the overall body politics in the Solomon Islands, renders the opportunity to explore simultaneously a focussed party system and the broad dynamics of other political institutions. This whole trajectory includes an attempt to forge the classic political mechanisms of legitimate authority, national leadership, representative bodies and at least, a symbolic response to the manifold needs of the people.

This project then pursues just this exploration -the study of politics and political parties in the Solomon Islands.

#### An overview.

An important caveat has to be added at this point. This project is a histo-political study of politics and political parties in the Solomon Islands. Most of the materials used here are culled from secondary sources. Where there are gaps, parallels from other countries are included.

Chapter 1 contains the theoretical arguments and discussions on the two major types of party models used in this thesis namely, the mass party model and the elitist party model. The argument goes that mass parties evolve from a background of national agitation through mass uprisings. Such uprisings involve the identification of common opponents (colonial powers), a set of national aims for the new nation, mass recruitment of supporters and choice of leaders who make

up the basis of such parties.

Conversely, the absence of nationalist movements is evidenced by a lack of clear goals, a narrow popular support and the rise of a few elite leaders who control political power. These are characteristics of elitist parties.

Chapter 2 outlines in detail the socio-political structures and institutions in the country. The arguments herein go to show that, given the country's experience with the British administration and the belated effort to institutionalise and develop mass participation, the rise of elitist parties is inevitable.

Chapter 3 encompasses comparisons between the traditional Solomon Island structures and institutions and the introduced Westminster system of government. Focus is on the absence of mass-based nationalism necessary to bridge the above different systems. Thus, the nation building process has been hindered, if not inhibited. Further discussions also attempt to highlight additional factors among which are: (i) the political parties in the country, (ii) certain political personalities and (iii) political campaigns. This is the main chapter of the thesis. In this chapter the major arguments are teased out in detail.

Chapter 4 concludes with some general findings and observations. Links and disjuncture between the different systems and the peoples are accented. There are also tentative recommendations and the need for future research.

## CHAPTER 1.

### THEORY AND OVERVIEW.

Their purpose is to capture the vanguard, to return the movement to the right and disarm the people: quick, quick, let's decolonise. Decolonise the Congo before it turns into another Algeria. Vote the constitutional framework for all Africa, create the communaute, renovate the same communaute, but for God's sake, let us decolonise quick.

Franz Fanon, in G. Wasserman, Politics of decolonisation.

The above quote encapsulates the drive for political autonomy and the need to create a new state machinery during decolonisation. But with the emergence of new states, there is usually a ready adoption of colonial institutions. This leads to certain incompatibility between foreign institutions and traditional institutions. In the end, traditional institutions would fade into an eventual decline either through general disuse or a complete incorporation into the new political system.

This chapter consists of a discussion on the following sub-headings: the aim of the study, the research problem, a theoretical discussion on party models and nationalism, a brief synopsis of the case for the Solomon Islands, and some further questions which presage subsequent discussions in the next chapters.

The aim of the study.

This study demonstrates with reference to models of mass and elite parties in relation to the emergence and the development of political parties in the Solomon Islands. The second aim of the study is to show the role of nationalism in the development of parties and how it's presence or absence affects politics.

The relevance of the study lies in its attempt to place political parties in the context of the overall political development in the country. Hopefully, this will add to the understanding and appreciation of politics by leaders and the people of the Solomon Islands. This is because, in the country, the continuing shifts in party allegiance, the frequent 'votes of no confidence' and the amorphous nature of political parties, even after almost a decade of political independence, go to show the need for and the relevance of such a study.

Despite adverse commentaries on the place and relevance of political parties in the Solomons (e.g.s, Joseph Waleanisia, Solomon Star, August, 8, 1986: 9 & 14; Tarscius Tara, Solomon Star, February, 15, 1991: 11), it is herein argued that political parties will remain as long as the Westminster system is retained. The present task is to study and take another look at politics and political parties in the country.

The research problem.

Hitherto, little has been written on politics and political parties in the Solomon Islands (Larmour and Tarua, 1983). As a consequence, little is read and understood by the Solomon Island public on these subjects. This gives rise to the research problem in this thesis. This is addressed in the context of two party models, the mass party model and the elite party model.

The major contention here is that the types of political parties vary according to the presence or the absence of nationalist uprisings against colonial power in any given country. Parties which evolve from a nationalist upheaval tend to assume mass party characteristics, while those which emerge out of a peaceful transition have elitist party attributes. The thesis explores this argument with reference to the case of the Solomon Islands.

It looks at the type of political parties, the links or the disjuncture between the various traditional systems and the introduced Westminster system, the impact of British colonialism and the attitude of the colonial administrators to development in the country.

Based on the above, the thesis also seeks to answer three broad questions: (1) What are the socio-political conditions in the country under which political parties have developed? The answer to this question involves a look at the overall political development in the country between annexation in



1893 and 1986; (2) What was the British administration's attitude and contribution to political development especially with the introduction of the Westminster system in the country? and; (3) What are the impact of (1) and (2) on political parties in particular and on politics, in general, in the Solomons.

The next sections tease out these issues within the context of the mass party model and the elite party model.

#### A theoretical approach.

Although there are a number of theories on the formation of mass and elite parties, their use here is problematic. This is because it is difficult to fit a small but complex island state in the existing theoretical perspectives. Myriam Dornoy (1984: x) encountered a similar problem in her work on New Caledonia (Kanakya). As she explains:

I believed at one time that Social Science model of New Caledonia could be created for political analysis but soon discovered that the complexities of New Caledonia prevented construction of any single model that could do justice for this fragmented society.

Hence, the approach here is eclectic in that an amalgamation of theories and examples, especially from Asia and Africa, are used. The aim is to establish a theoretical perspective that covers and augurs well for the case of the Solomon Islands. In the main, a comparative case study of India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) is used to show ex-colonies in which political independence was gained through a nationalistic agitation and

one in which a peaceful hand over occurred, respectively. It is under this frame of reference that the party models are studied.

#### The mass party model.

The mass party model covers political parties which emerge after a nationalist uprising. Such parties are called mass parties because they have popular leadership and mass support. Nationalist struggles enable such parties to devise and develop party ideologies based on the need to have unity in the new nation and to enlist majority support (Blondel 1978: 39).

Even during colonial administration, political independence has always been the foremost aim of such parties (ibid., 41). David Apter (1977: 210) refers to such parties as 'parties of solidarity' as they often begin in movements that have the ultimate aim of combating the colonial power and, finally, wresting political power.

The following characteristics are attributes of mass parties: they are found in popular and dominant party system, they have instantaneous legitimacy, their leaders are popular, they have mass/popular support and they have a high level of organisation.

#### Popular, dominant party system.

Mass parties tend to be found in political systems which

are popular. Emanating from nationalist movements, these parties assume a populist form (Blondel, *ibid.*). The intensity of such uprisings impact on and affect the whole political system. The longer such nationalist movements exist, the more support they gained from the people. The struggle could result in more than one political party rising to prominence, or the predominance of a single party (Blondel: 88). A prime example of such party is the Indian Congress party; often abbreviated as the Congress party (CP).

The Congress party had its origins in the late 1880s. But its heyday was in the 1920s after Mahatma Ghandi had led the non-cooperation movement which agitated for change (G.A. Heeger 1974: 33). Importantly, the Congress party began to organize the people on a country-wide scale. Local, regional and national political relations in India were tightened (*ibid*) and a common network established. In the end, the Congress party gained popularity and was able to sustain agitation until political independence was achieved in 1948. The non-cooperation movement was the major bandwagon with which the Congress party gained popularity and national dominance.

Thus, at the time immediate to and after independence in India, we witnessed a prime example of a political system and a party system which were popular in outlook and dominant in structure.

Instantaneous legitimacy.

Political legitimacy is important. It is used here to connote the popular acceptance and support of parties. As Blondel (1978) further elaborates, legitimacy is premised on support, and this support depends on how different groups perceive the aims and actions of the parties. In a nationalist movement, such a support inheres in the common aims and actions of the people in struggle. Effectively, legitimacy is brought about in the participation of the mass and the propagation of common ideologies in the pursuit of political independence (Samuel Huntington 1965: 424). Thus, when the ultimate aim to rid colonial government is achieved (D. Apter 1977: 214), legitimacy is then strongly cemented.

As aforementioned, for the Indian Congress party, most changes occurred during Ghandi's time. The party organised from the top down to the local villages and along linguistic lines (Heeger 1974: 34). In so doing, the majority of the people were incorporated in the national politics along these connections.

There were other changes that also had major influences. These include the 1935 Act which extended universal franchise to more than thirty million voters. Certainly, this had sealed the legitimate position of the Congress party (A. Seal 1969: 350). In the end, party leaders were respected and party popularity was enhanced (Apter 1977: 214).

### Popular leadership.

Leaders who emerged from nationalist movements are often popular. They have struggled together with the people. Together, they have witnessed victory. Thereafter, the people placed their trust in such leaders. However, as it often happens, most of the leaders are often members of the educated elites. Usually, they have advantages over the rest because of their traditional ties to their peoples, as well as having a western education which exposed them to new ideas. As Heeger (1974: 24) explains, in reference to the Indian elite:

An educated man continued to belong to a caste and a community, and hence he tended to belong to an organisation of both kind, one based on common kinship and religious persuasion and the other based on common education and political persuasion.

Among the Congress party leaders, Ghandi was the quintessential example. Beside being a lawyer -a peoples' lawyer, he was also a practising Hindu and a devoted member of his caste. And his national popularity was especially made possible by his leadership in the Congress Party.

### Mass support.

Not all nationalist movements have mass support. However, the basis of a successful movement or a party system, is premised on the support from the mass. And in third world countries, the significance of nationalist movements or any other mass, political consciousness effort, cannot be stressed enough. This is because nationalism draws the different

peoples together. Also, in the event of a mass consciousness, national sentiments and aims usually transcend ethnic concerns and traditional boundaries. Referring to Africa, Thomas Hodgkin (1978) expounds this further:

Mass parties enroll the mass of the population as members and supporters. Consequently, party membership is comprised different groups drawn together under the party label.

Nationalist uprising also aided outreach efforts to rural areas where majority of people live. Jawaharlal Nehru (1966: 420) affirmed this when he made reference to the Congress Party:

The number of members of its (Congress Party) roll, large as it was, was only a feeble reflection of its wide-spread representative character, for its membership depended not only on numbers, but on the capacity to reach the remote villages.

Beside Congress party's strong outreach capacity that reached into remote villages, the charisma of Ghandi greatly aided the canvassing and gathering of support. As Rushbrook Williams explains:

Mr. Ghandi's intensive movement during the years 1921 and 1922 has diffused far and wide among classes obviously oblivious to political considerations as strong negative patriotism born of race-hatred of foreigners. The less prosperous classes both in town and in the country-side have become aroused to certain aspects of the existing political system. On the whole this must be pronounced, up to the present, the most formidable achievement of the non-cooperation movement.

Thus, Ghandi's rise to prominence and the popularity of his leadership aided the Congress party in acquiring a large mass base. This also saw a spectacular growth of the party

organisation (Gopal Krishna 1966: 419).

Party organisation.

With mass membership, there exists the need for a high level of organisation. This is often necessitated by a large membership and the existence of various activities of the parties especially those which will bring money into the party coffers and support to the party ranks. In general, nationalism also affects the level of party organization especially in places where parties were previously, non-existent. Hodgkin (1961: 93-94) alludes to this when he argues that mass parties tend to have well-defined degree of participation and responsibilities and recognised the chain of authority leading down from the executive and the inner directorate to a wider inclusive category of party membership.

Equally valid is this argument as applied specifically to the organisation of parties. For instance, Ghandi's ascendance and the spread of the non-cooperation movement saw a dramatic change to the Congress organization. These changes include the formation of a day-to-day party executive, a working committee, executive committees at the provincial and local levels. Furthermore, the party's financial resources were expanded with full-time organisers. The overall result was a more formally organised Congress with better communication links between party centers and party branches (Heeger 1974: 74).

In summary, the central argument to the mass party model is that nationalism, especially when it takes the form of an overt, political uprising in the formative years of a new nation, determines and shapes the types of parties which subsequently evolved. This is because in the pursuit of political autonomy, indigenous leaders are often able to mobilise the populace in a manner that involves majority participation and the commitment to certain clear aims and goals. In the end, the parties which emerge from such a situation are likely to have characteristics of the mass party model.

In the Solomon Islands, the passage to political independence was, in the main, smooth and peaceful. There was no mass uprising. What transpired was a peaceful change from a British protectorate to an independent nation. Therefore, parties that emerged in the country do not have mass party characteristics. Instead, they resemble those of the elite party model. The discussion now turns to this.

#### The elite party model.

In this thesis, elite parties refer to parties which do not evolve from nationalist uprising. Rather, they originate from a smooth and a peaceful transition from colonial rule to indigenous control.

They are also elitist because they are controlled by a few, mostly educated individuals, at the helm of the power



echelon. Usually, these parties operate mostly in parliament. Seldom do they have party links to other parts of the country where the majority of the people lived.

Furthermore, the leaders and the majority of the people often do not have much in common. Hodgkin (1956: 69) refers to such parties as 'parties of personalities.' He argues that in such parties, personalities take precedence over party labels and party interests. For instance, in parliament, party elites are there first as individuals, and only second, as party members. Given these characteristics, the support base of such parties are usually narrow. They have low legitimacy, their leaders are not so popular, and the party organisation is centralised around the main party offices.

#### Transitory party system.

Generally, where elite parties exist, the party system is prone to changes. This is because party leaders are the mainstay of the parties. Once their positions are affected and they are out of politics, the parties are inevitably affected and often slowly fade into oblivion.

In such a party system, people vote for party labels, not out of any deep sense of loyalty to the parties, but often because of the local leaders who represent the parties (Hodgkin 1956: 69). In such a case, party politics is highly personalised. Usually, there is no one dominant party or a group of dominant parties as competition between the parties

is constant. Such competition easily displaces party leaders and, often, this brings a negative image to the party system. This is exemplified in the case of parties in the formerly, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).

In the case of Ceylon, there was no one dominant party. Instead, there were many parties which were involved in a 'win or lose' game. W.H. Wriggins (1960: 8) highlights the situation as it existed then:

The party system is not closely knitted, nor are parties either well-disciplined or strong. Even now, persons are sometimes more important than policies. The opposition is not strong enough to make the government close its ranks, and personal rivalry has yet too much importance in Ceylon politics.

It is, therefore, conceivable that the lack of mass support gives rise to parties seeking support from small groups and individuals. In such a case, the level of legitimacy is lower than with the case of mass parties.

#### Leaders are less popular.

Since leaders in elite parties are not overtly or visibly instrumental in the struggle for political independence, they are usually less popular. They have not mobilised the people in such a way that there is popular involvement and political participation. Therefore, the leaders' popularity is limited only to close supporters and followers. For example, when Ceylon became independent in 1948, few believed that the country was really independent, or that they have contributed to its achievement. Independence was achieved through the

work of a small coterie of influential men who had engineered constitutional reforms and took earlier steps toward the devolution of power. In this way, there was a lack of popular identification with any country-wide struggle and national consciousness which transcended communal differences (ibid.: 81).

Due to the lack of popular support and recognition, the Ceylonese leaders who had carried the country to independence did not last long in politics. After the 1956 election, political power was shifted to other groups (ibid.: 6).

Thus, the low popularity of leaders can lead to political instability and renders but a narrow party support.

#### Narrow, party support.

Elite parties have narrow popular support. Party support is usually given to individual members, or to parties but via these individuals. Party support is given not because of what it stands for (such as party philosophies, beliefs and policies) but because of other factors such as the promise of material benefits. Also, support is based on other considerations such as ethnic, religious and even cultural ties (Wriggins 1960: 149).

In other instances, patron-client relationships are important. As it often happens, these ties come through habits of respect for traditional authority, wealth and reputation (Hodgkin 1956: 156-157). In the Solomon Islands,

traditional ties, similar to these, exist. But these are ties which are not strictly based on patron-client relationship. Rather, they are ties based on "wantoks" (those who speak the same language), friends and even church affiliations.

The above discussion goes to show that without a nationalistic uprising, party support, especially in plural societies, is merely based on narrow considerations such as who the people know rather on party labels, party philosophies or party policies.

#### Low level of party organisation.

In general, elite parties are also characterized by a low level of organization. This is because the centralised leadership, the relatively small party membership, the limited activities, only need a small, and centralized, party organisation.

In the main, elite parties are run from head offices. In some instances, these are private offices of the leaders. Nevertheless, the head offices are the central nerve-centers (Coleman and Rosenberg Jr. 1964: 587). These offices often consist of a core staff. Examples of the people working in such offices include a party leader, a chairperson, a secretary and typists. Most of the party work is carried out here. Such work is regarded more as a leisure-time occupation than as a paid job (Hodgkin 1956: 156-157).

The important task of fund-raising is done on an 'ad hoc'

basis and as voluntary work. Financial support generally comes from private sources such as gifts, and donations.

Even the party, itself, becomes important as an organisation only during election periods. There is active party organisation during this time. Given this the case, the party activities are often short-lived and designed merely to attract voters. Other than election times, such activities are restricted in nature and scope.

In Ceylon, the United National Party (UNP) became prominent during the first decade after independence. However the party did not have a proper organisation. It had no real structure or effective branches. It merely depended on members of the wealthy upper class who acted as intermediaries between the party and the voters (Wriggins 1960: 107). Essentially, UNP was controlled by a small working committee which comprised ten to fifteen men plus other active and influential people who were associated members. For instance, there were major improvements made to the organisation and structure of the party even six years after the founding of the party. But all these efforts were the work of a few influential individuals who used their own resources rather than organised party efforts (ibid: 114). At the same time, members of the party who were also MPs, feared and even resisted efforts by members of the central party who tried to organise the local branches. This is because most of the MPs preferred to depend on their own influence rather than develop

an organisation which they might not be able to control (ibid: 114). All these are mere indications of the low level of organisation of the party (UNP).

Thus far, two party models have been discussed namely, 'mass party' and the 'elite party.' We have seen their characteristics such as the type of party system they exist in, the party legitimacy, the popularity of the leaders, the kind of party support and party organisation. In the case of the elite party model, these characteristics tend to be rudimentary and low-keyed. The opposite applies in the mass party model.

At this point, the discussion turns to nationalism since it is a major determinant factor in the thesis.

#### Nationalism.

For nation building, and more specifically, for the development of political parties, nationalism is a paramount, determinant force. Underscoring this point, Wriggins (1960: 80) states that a fundamental element in the background of contemporary politics and political institutions is the nature of each country's independence struggle. This has been illustrated in the fore-going discussion in the examples of India and Ceylon. In India, the Congress party and its leaders owed much to the manner in which the independence struggle was organised and waged. With the rise of Ghandi and the advent of the non-cooperation movement, the Congress began

to assume a greater role and acquired wider recognition and acceptance. At the eve of political independence, the leaders were assured of majority support from the Indian people.

Conversely, Ceylon presents a classic case of a country which acquired political independence entirely by constitutional means (A.D. Smith 1983: 37). The leaders who emerged from and the parties which developed after political independence lacked a nation-wide recognition, acceptance and support.

Thus, the importance of nationalism cannot be emphasized more. But what is nationalism?

#### A definition.

There are numerous definitions of nationalism. Hodgkin (ibid: 3) refers to nationalism (as exemplified in a nationalistic movement) as any organisation or group that explicitly asserts the rights, claims and aspirations of a given society in opposition to European authority. On the other hand, J.H. Kausky (1983: 37) defines nationalism in economic terms as an opposition to colonialism and also those natives who benefit from colonial relationship in underdeveloped countries. A combination of these two definitions would serve our purpose.

Here, nationalism refers to a political assertion by indigenous people in pursuit of self-determination which eventually culminates in political independence. Often, this

political assertion takes the form of a mass consciousness which include mass uprising with the aim of ousting the colonial power.

The ultimate aim of nationalism is self-rule and political independence and the subsequent adoption of social programmes for the masses (Smith 1983: 38).

#### Nationalism in the third world.

In third world countries, nationalism assumes the role of a central, uniting force. The presence of many tribes, peoples and their different cultures do not form a unified community. Moreover, colonialism arbitrarily amalgamates different peoples and individuals without due respect to their diversities. Therefore, nationalism acts as the band-wagon with which the different peoples are brought together. It also attracts the diverse groups and provide the basis and rationale for setting up new political units and institutions (ibid: 53).

Within a nationalist movement, leaders are able to incorporate the support of the majority of the people (ibid). And by participating, the majority of the people become politically aware and develop contacts with leaders who would possibly be in future governments (Heeger 1974: 19). These associations may ultimately develop into political parties (ibid: 22).



Nationalism and political parties.

Nationalism is pivotal to the development of political parties especially mass based parties. As is often the case, political parties are frequently perceived as foreign introductions. Moreover, the diverse traditional systems do not allow for a healthy development of national institutions. Nationalism then becomes a unifying force.

Under the banner of nationalism, leaders draw together the diverse social and political groupings into one cause. Often, the central goal of the cause, at least in the initial stages, is to oust the colonial powers and to form a new government. After political independence is achieved, people are mobilised and conscientised enough to know the general direction the country is heading. Political leaders then take over the reins of power and it is during this period that political parties are formed with an indigenous base; this time, under local leadership. Political parties would then continue to incorporate more people and larger fractions of the populations (ibid: 53).

Thusly, nationalism plays a major role in shaping the structure and type of political parties. And although the nature and the structures of political parties may subsequently change, it is imperative to note that nationalism is instrumental in shaping them, at least, in the formative years.

The case for the Solomon Islands.

As articulated above, and placed within the framework of the two party models and nationalism, the Solomon Island case closely resembles the Ceylonese example.

In the country, there is an elite political party system at the National parliament level. Since the first parties formed in the early 1970s, most parties remain virtually parliamentary parties with leaders who are predominantly, Members of parliament (MPs). Only in fewer instances do traditional leaders joined as members of these parties.

Legitimacy, if not low, is narrowly confined to individuals. These individual leaders have small personal followings which consisted mainly of relatives, friends, church members and wantoks (those who speak the same language).

Parties are little known among the people and the concept of "government by parties" is even less understood and appreciated. Often, the few times people learn of the parties and the dynamics of party politics is during election periods.

Party organisation is generally at the level of the head offices. Unless the party is a member of a group in power (controlling government), often these offices are in private homes or situated on private premises. In the former case, offices in the government departments can be used as party offices and meeting places. Thus, parties in Solomon Islands resembles those in Ceylon.

However, there are distinct differences between Ceylon and the Solomon Islands. In geo-political terms, Solomon Islands is one of several South Pacific island states. It consists of several major and numerous small islands. The geographical fragmentation of the country affects its politics. For example, political groupings in parliament usually have a regional basis, with MPs from particular provinces often getting together for the purposes of mutual support.

Politics is also highly tribalised. This has been accentuated by the adoption of a provincial government system which adds to the already high level of decentralised politics. Consequently, there is also a high level of regional association, as opposed to a prevalent national consciousness and a sense of national identity.

Cultural norms and practices also differ from one island to another and, in some instances, this is true even on the same island. This is further exacerbated by the existence of more than eighty languages. And although Pidgin English (the 'lingua franca') facilitates communication, these different languages militate against the mutual feeling of being Solomon Islanders.

As previously mentioned, the political party system is a novel adoption. So far, the parties are poorly known and understood by the public. Alienated by colonial experience in which a two-pronged political system was established (one in

the towns and the other on the islands), political parties are often perceived as a foreign institution. All these, coupled with the absence of nationalism, mean that parties have not gained a strong foothold in the country.

Given the foregoing overview, the following questions are posed: What are the conditions that give rise to political parties? Are parties an unnecessary colonial legacy, or a necessary evil? What is the level of party popularity? What are the basis of party support? What party system exists? What are the policies of the parties? Are the parties supported by certain groups in the society? What are these groups? Is the Solomon Islands' experience different from other newly independent states which have had similar experiences?

These are some of the questions that the thesis attempts to answer in the subsequent sections. As previously mentioned, subsequent discussions are organised as follow: chapter two consists of an overview of the socio-political setting, an outline of the political and social structures and the effects of changes brought about by colonisation. Chapter three examines the political parties. It starts with a theoretical discussion on the relevance and role the roles of parties in political system, and a definition of parties and party system. It also looks at leaders, the basis of party support and legitimacy, and how parties contest elections. Finally, chapter four summarises the discussions in the

previous chapters and identifies some conclusions.

## CHAPTER 2.

### SOLOMON ISLANDS AND SOLOMON ISLANDERS.

...one of the most essential elements of the Melanesian society is its close relations. Closeness does not create tensions that erupt, but it is like waves that splash and subside. Giving and taking is an integral part of Melanesian society. Cooperation and mutual support, especially in times of need and crisis, are part of our living experience.

Bernard Narokobi, The Melanesian Way.

When the British Protectorate was established in the Solomon Islands in 1893, many changes have already taken place in the country. It was 328 years after Mendana made contact with some of the islands' inhabitants. Missionaries, especially members of the Anglican mission have, for some years, taken boys to Kohimarama, in New Zealand, in the hope to have them trained as both scholars and missionaries. In many ways, the society had been experiencing rapid changes. But what was the extent and the effects of these changes?

In this chapter, the political, social and cultural backgrounds of the Solomon Islands are outlined. This starts with the 1970s period when political parties began to be institutionalised. The other aspects of the society are then discussed together with the changes which led on into the

period.

1970s: A prelude to political parties.

The 1970s was a period of rapid changes in the country. In the international arena, Britain which was once a powerful colonial power, suddenly changed its position on its overseas colonies. It was patently expensive for Britain to hold on to its colonies, especially those which could prove expensive (Bennett 1987: 318). Also, by then, Britain was anxious to grant political independence to its colonies. Above all these, the oil crisis in the beginning of that decade, especially its impact on the British economy, forced it to relinquish its overseas colonies. This, in turn, affected the politics of the Solomons (ibid: 311).

But political independence has to mean greater participation by the people in politics. Around the country, there was a felt need to revamp local politics with a new decentralisation policy. Many of these changes would be effected through constitutional measures.

Decentralisation was instigated and implemented by a parliamentary committee. The result was the Kausimae report, chaired by Honourable David Kausimae. The committee toured the whole country to canvass public opinions and views (Premdas and Steeves 1985: 49).

At the national parliament level, the decade (the 1970s) saw the adoption of the 1970 constitution which brought about

a change from the Legislative Council to the Governing Council. The Governing Council effectively merged the functions of the executive and the legislative councils into one institution. And with the new Governing Council, a "Committee System" was first tried. Instead of a cabinet-type government, the various responsibilities of government were divided and placed under different committees.

For each committee there was a chairman who was responsible for overseeing departmental portfolios by subject areas. There were five committees namely, the Natural Resources committee, Communication and Finance committee, Works committee, Education and Social Welfare committee, and Health and Internal Affairs committee. Each committee was staffed by both elected members of parliament and public servants.

The reason for the adoption of the committee system was an attempt to introduce a Melanesian style of consensus decision-making at the parliamentary level.

Despite good intentions, the attempt was short-lived. There were various reasons for this. Some MPs complained that the government was run wholly by civil servants. Others said that the system was cumbersome, too slow and it did not allow budding aspirants to rise easily to political leadership (Bennett 1987: 320).

But despite its faults, the introduction of the Governing Council was an important step in the direction of a



ministerial system of government (ibid: 322). This was fully materialised in the next four years. And the adoption of the ministerial system gave rise to the need for political parties.

But, parliamentary changes through constitutional reforms aside, it was not clear whether the peoples were ready. More importantly, they did not fully participate in the governing process. These are important considerations which are discussed later.

Here, it is equally important that the discussion turns to some background information on the country such as the geographical, historical and demographical features of the society. This is to place the chapter in perspective.

#### Geographical Background.

After Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands is the second largest group of islands in Melanesia. It consists of a scattered archipelago of six, large mountainous islands and numerous low-lying atolls. The island group forms part of island chain which extends from Papua New Guinea to Vanuatu. The islands lie 5 and 12 degrees south latitude and 155 and 170 degrees longitude, east. It is parallel to Australia. It has a land mass of 28,800 km<sup>2</sup> and ocean area of 650,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The large islands are volcanic in origin, as are most of the smaller ones like Santa Cruz group.

Temperatures in the Solomon Islands varies from the high

islands to the low-lying ones. Temperatures seldom exceeds 32C during the day or fall below 22C at night. The prevailing winds dictate two main seasons. The rainy (wet) season extends from November to April. The rainfall is heavy especially near mountainous areas. Often there are long periods of calm punctuated by squalls, sometimes severe, and occasionally caused by the buildup of cyclones (Kent 1972: 17).

#### A brief historical background.

Solomon Islands entered the pages of European history in 1567 when the Spanish explorer, Alvaro de Mendana, saw them and named the country in honour of one of the Israelite kings, King Solomon (The Courier, April/March, 1987). Mendana thought it was the place where King Solomon found the gold used to build his temple. In 1575, Mendana unsuccessfully attempted to found a settlement in Santa Cruz, in the eastern side of the country. After this his pilot, Quiros, attempted to pursue the dream of a settled colony in 1605 but this too, failed. Henceforth, the country was not visited by explorers until 1791.

But by the early 1800s, the main details of the islands were known to the outside world. This was the period of whaling and trading and the islands were used for purposes of replenishing food supplies and to careen ships which needed repair. As interests in raw materials increased and as

Solomon Islanders began to react to unsavoury behaviour of outsiders, imperial designs were soon laid. Suspicion of other imperial powers (especially of Germany and France), the need to quell animosity between the indigenous peoples and outsiders in order to advance imperial interests, necessitated Britain to proclaim a protectorate over the islands in 1893 (J. Kent 1972: 101-102). Thereafter, Solomon Islands came under the control of Britain.

#### The people.

The population of the Solomon Islands is less than 300,000 (1988 estimates). By world standards, the Solomon Islands has a high rate of natural increase of 3.5 per cent annually. Although the population is more than ninety percent Melanesians, there is an admixture of Polynesians and Micronesians and with a smattering of Chinese, Europeans and other races. The breakdown of the population (1986 Population Census: 13) estimates are as follows:

Table 1. Population by ethnic origin (1986).

Ethnic type.	Numbers.	% of the total.
Melanesian	268,536	94.2
Polynesian	10,661	3.7
Kiribati	3,929	1.4

European	1,107	0.4
Chinese	379	0.1
other Pacific Is.	183	0.1
Other Asian	324	0.1
All other	57	0.0
<hr/>		
Total	285,176	100
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Most of the people (who are Melanesians) live on the big islands while the Polynesians occupied the small, outlying islands. The Micronesians are recent migrants (circa, mid-1950s to mid-1960s), mostly from the then Gilbert and Ellice islands (now Kiribati and Tuvalu, respectively).

Solomon Islands is a heterogenous country. Thusly, most of the island peoples have their own cultures, leaders and tend to associate with their own groupings even in Honiara. There are an increasing number of inter-marriages now a days but in some parts of the country where marriages are arranged, people marry among their own tribes or with members of contiguous groups.

Many people have multiple identities. Thus, among the different island peoples, there are various layers of identities. Primarily, people identify with their own villages. On other islands, they identify with people from their islands of origin. A Malaita man, for example, who

works or lives on Guadalcanal would identify himself as from Malaita. Outside the country, and in particular, when they travel abroad, people tend to see themselves as Solomon Islanders. Thus people vacillate between these identities, accordingly.

Writing in the early 1970s, Kent (1972: 26-35) shows how people from different islands see themselves. She contends that the darker skinned occupants of the Western Islands have come close to adopting a European way of life. For them, European standards represent opportunities for both employment and advancement. There are also frequent cases of inter-marriages between male expatriates and Western Solomon women. Western males and expatriate women marriages are rare.

Malaitans, on the other hand, are both disliked and feared. As a prominent Savo man observes, the Malaitans are like elephants; they never forget an injury (ibid: 28). This can be explained. In many respects, Malaitans still tenaciously hold onto many of their customs which dictate certain attitudes and define their different changes in and kinds of behaviours. Further, Malaitans seldom recognise European superiority and they insisted to be treated like grown-ups. This has not endeared them to more colonial-minded officials (ibid: 29).

The Central Province peoples (Guadalcanal, Savo and Gella), according to Kent, are undemonstrative (ibid: 30). Given the large land areas, especially on Guadalcanal, many

villages on the latter have remained isolated.

The Santa Isabel people occupied the South-east corner of the country. Isabel men are less aggressive and more tolerant. They persevere in what they do and many have assumed important posts in both the government and the private sector.

Eastern Solomons (Makira and the Santa Cruz group and the Reefs) people have less contact with expatriates than other Solomon Islanders. The distance between them and other islands acts as a barrier. Consequently, they rarely regard themselves as part of the Solomon Islands.

The minority groups include Europeans, Kiribatians, Fijians, and Chinese. Europeans are the most detached of these groups. Chinese are mostly business people and Solomon Islanders tend to treat them with caution and suspicion. The Kiribatians are an enterprising group and they have inter-married extensively with Solomon Islanders as well as with other ethnic minorities. The Fijians are fewer in number than the rest of the other groups.

The above descriptions are an attempt to capture the diversity and the differences of the various island peoples and groups. But such an attempt could only serve as a general gloss. Moreover, such generalisations have inherent biases and prejudices which have somewhat changed over time. Nonetheless, some stereotypes have persisted and thus could affect the way people interact with and perceive each other.

### Political organisation and villages.

In the Solomons, Melanesian cultures predominate. As above mentioned, Melanesians are in the majority and they occupy the large islands. These factors are important because, in a democratic system, the 'majority will' often prevails. And the big islands are significant because many of the countries' resources, including manpower, come from these islands.

Equally important is the fact that when the colonial administration was established, it was the big islands and their peoples that received most attention. Inevitably, the politics of that time was determined along these relationships. Subsequently, post-independence politics was controlled by peoples from the big islands.

Therefore, it is the large islands and the predominant cultures and patterns that this part of the discussion will focus on.

### The villages.

Most Solomon Islanders can identify with a village. Eighty five percent of the people live their formative, productive and retirement years, in these villages. The villages and the village life are a major reality in the peoples' lives, including those who live in the urban centers (John Roughan 1986: 73). Indeed, sixty percent of the people live in villages with less than 100 people, while the average

village has 39 people. This kind of life is self-sufficient because the markets are near and most foods are produced by families, usually for household consumption (Cyril Belshaw 1954: 9-10).

Village life rests on four pillars. These are land-ownership, extended family, language and customs and religious beliefs. Let us elaborate on these.

Almost ninety percent of the land in the Solomons is owned by villagers (also called 'resource owners'). Land is held in customary land tenure. This means the tribal rules and clan genealogies and practices determine how land is held and used. Land is the main source of the village livelihood. Decisions pertaining to land are often group decisions. Rights to land are determined by the kinship and differs from one island to the other or from one cultural group to the next.

Extended family is the second pillar of the village life. The extended family unites all the village members who are related by blood or through marriage. These bonds are extensive, deep and often permanent. Membership of the extended family carries with it certain rights, duties, privileges and obligations. The whole institution is a form of social security and one of mutual help and care for each other. For example, socialisation in the villages among family members involves the imparting of family and tribal knowledge and the learning of one's different family members



and the different relations between each individual. The knowledge of one's relation to another enables one to relate to one's kin and kith. In essence, this determines how decisions are made in the villages.

The third pillar of the village life is language. People who speak the same language often come from the same village, or area. They are related, one way or another, to the next person. In places where there are different peoples living together, the label for those who speak one language, or those who are related, even remotely, but come from the same place and speak and understand each other is, "wantok." Now a days, the word is used loosely as a gloss for people who speak the same language as well as work-mates, friends or people from the same island.

The fourth pillar of the village comprises the customs and religious beliefs of the villagers. Customs and beliefs often include the rules and norms which dictate the conduct of individual members. Since most of the villagers in the Solomons are christians, there has been an uneasy merge between traditional beliefs and practices and the Christian faith. There is often a duality in the practice of these two systems of beliefs. Sometimes the merge of these two beliefs gives rise to a new synthesis. As one writer (The Courier 1987: 47) describes the operation of such beliefs in the village:

The social habits of the people, their organisations, and habits and beliefs and way of life, all make for a way of

life that is secure, based on traditions and the rhythms of nature, that is a compound of duties and rights and is within the comprehension of all.

To put more emphasis on the above discussion, it is still true today to say that Solomon Islands is a nation of villages with more than 85 percent of the people living in more than 5,000 small, scattered but culturally-alive centers (Roughan 1986: 199). These villages are the hub of rural life and being distant from the towns and the capital, Honiara, seldom does national (modern) politics impinge on the way of life in any great measure.

#### Social organisation.

Like most third world countries, the family (both nuclear and extended) is the most important form of social organization (Kent 1972: 38). Family structure differs from one island to another and in particular, with regards to rights of inheritance and claims to property (particularly land).

On the island of Isabel, Bouganville and on parts of Guadalcanal, family inheritance is matrilineal. Inheritance is traced through the mother's line and the mother's brothers (uncles) are the most important members of the family. Sometimes they are more important than the father, especially for the inheritance of property. The children inherit from the uncles and they often reside with their avuncular relatives after marriage.

On other islands such as Malaita, the patrilineal system holds sway. Family groups, especially those related to the father, have to know the details of tribal lores and geneologies since these are important in order to relate to one's inheritance. Other groups that practise the patrilineal family life are the Polynesians who live on the outlying islands, although of a less rigid nature (Kent 1972: 38).

Families live in a group as clans. The oldest members, especially the men-folk, make the decisions which affect the clan although such decisions are reached after informal consensual deliberations. Often, members of a clans can trace their origins (through geneological records, epics and legends) to a common descendant.

#### Political organisation.

Bennett (1987: 14) says that political organisations, like social formations, are clannish, typically revolving around small and localised net-works and carried out among relatives or close friends. The big man system is the predominant system of political organisation although there are pockets of chiefly system, mainly among the Polynesians. But on some of the bigger islands, there can be an admixture, too. For example, there is an admixture of the two systems co-existing among the Sa'a people and the Are Are people of Malaita.

Compared to the chiefly system, the big man system

operates in small and localised areas. Membership of such groups varies from seventy (even less) to three hundred persons in a group (Harding and Wallace 1970: 204). Rarely does the number exceeds the latter figure. And often, the organisation is based on patrilineal descent groups.

Unlike Westminster politics and the chiefly system, the rise of a big man is different. The big man neither comes to office nor is he installed. Rather, the attainment of a big man status is the outcome of a series of acts which, in the end, elevates him above the common people and attracts about him a coterie of loyal but subordinate persons (ibid.: 210). To get to this status, the big man manipulates his resources and those of his clan in such a way so as to produce a surplus of pigs, vegetables and other valuables (Bennett 1987: 14). Then he demonstrates his wealth and generosity and invests in his people and followers by feast-giving, dance entertainments and assistance with the financing of young men's bride payments and funeral offerings. This is a form of reciprocity because in so doing, he solidifies his ties and ensures that he has the loyalty of his people. This is also an act of mutual help.

However, he is regarded as a big man as long as he is wealthy and he continues to distribute his wealth among his supporters.

In pre-christian times, the big man is also attributed with having supernatural power, similar to mana, which is

derived in part from his connection with supernatural powers through the worship of ancestral spirits. Another important quality is that big men have to have a thorough knowledge of local histories, clan genealogies especially those regarding clan connections and the inheritance and distribution of land (ibid.: 15). This is important because such knowledge would enable him to act as a conciliator and arbitrator if conflicts between the clan members and, even among other people, do occur.

The decline of the big man happens once he can not sustain the level of reciprocity between himself and his followers. Also, a big man can be brought down when conflicts between him and his followers happen and are not reconcilable. If this happens, although in theory any one could rise to the status of a big man, in practice, there are certain families, clans or groups from which the rest of the people would expect the next big man to emanate.

With regard to the chiefly system, and as above mentioned, this system is only practised among a minority of the people in the Solomons. Unlike the big man system, the chiefly system is based on inheritance. Chiefs are installed in positions of leadership. The qualities needed for such a position are socially assigned. Chiefs are regarded as masters of their people and "owners" in a titular sense of the group resources. For example, chiefs have the right to call upon the labour of their peoples and even the agricultural

produce of households are within the chiefs' domain. Thus, the economic leverage that a chief has over his group is an inherent chiefly right (Harding and Wallace 1970: 211).

Like the big men, chiefs still re-distribute resources in order to hold the allegiance of their followers. But unlike the big men, chiefs rule over greater domain and therefore their power base permits greater influence on a larger scale (ibid.: 210).

Of the two forms of leadership, power and influence can be relatively easily manipulated in a chiefly domain. In the Solomons, the influence of the chiefs is limited because their domains of influence are limited and the number of followers are smaller. Related to this, from the beginning, the colonial government did not take a deliberate move to recruit leaders as recognised and respected by the people, as was the case in Fiji. Instead, the colonial interest was a non-chalant one and in most cases, the traditional structures were ignored and less tampered with during that period. Hence, there was open competition for influence once a rudimentary Westminster system of government was implanted. This began with the established colonial administration.

#### The colonial administration.

The establishment of the British protectorate in 1893 was neither to protect nor to promote the interests of the indigenous people. On the contrary, it was a systematic

attempt to harness local resources for British interests (Premdas and Steeves 1985: 32) and to protect British citizens who were involved in these ventures. This protection was also extended to Christian missionaries. In essence, the administrative structure was designed to organise the colony's resources according to imperial direction. This was implemented through the dictates of "Indirect Rule" policy.

#### Indirect rule.

The British colonizers adopted an administration following the Indirect Rule system which was previously introduced and operational, among other places, in Africa and Fiji. In the Solomons, this was operated through a system of native administration, first established in 1922.

The administrators appointed local big men as 'link persons' between them and the people. A large number of these appointees lacked local backing and support because many of the appointees were not men of renown. Therefore, these men lacked the necessary standing in the communities. This was a fundamental omission.

But the reason why this happened was that, at that time, some of the administrators were hard-pressed to find the right persons from the villages to take up such a job. As Premdas and Steeves (ibid.: 34) explained:

In the early days the use of local agents was pivotal to the promotion of government and exploration of the islands. Faced with a plethora of local dialects, the British, unable to communicate directly with the people,

appointed as headmen those with whom they could communicate regardless of their standing in the local community.

As it was often the case, the District Officers were responsible to select and supervise the district and the village headmen. In this sense, the Native Administrative structure not only brought the demands of the government to the villages but, importantly, this system facilitated the collecting of taxes. This was essential for the running of the fledgling administration.

Beside the collecting of taxes, headmen's duties also involved census taking and reporting to the District Officer any movements of the people in and out of their areas of supervision. In this way, the taxable population could be enumerated and recorded as well as an accounting made of the disappearance of tax defaulters or runaways from the plantations as well as from the villages. The headmen were also responsible for the implementation of government regulations which governed, for example, road-making, house-building and clearing of village compounds. Other duties of the headmen included the overseeing of laws relating to criminal and civil litigations and the safe-keeping of records of offences as they were required to bring the offenders before the District Officers whenever the latter visited the districts.

For remuneration, the district headmen were paid f12 annually and village headmen were paid f1. 10s.



### Native Courts.

Related to the above was the establishment of native courts. This was effected by the promulgation of the 1942 Native Court regulations. An earlier court system was established in 1921 but this was restricted to some islands only since the administrative staff and available finance were limited. In the first court system, proceedings included trials and, if the offenders were found guilty, they were fined. In more serious cases, the District Officer would preside and the different district headmen would sit as assessors.

However, under the new Native Court regulations, another system of native courts was established. This time, the court system was applied all over the country. The court hierarchy included a government appointed district headmen, a president of the court and a council which included a certain number of justices, councillors and delegates. All these officers would also group to form a local council.

The local council was responsible for various functions. These include the codification of native customs, the representation of the peoples' views, the administration of small undertakings such as dispensaries, farms and the collection and the administration of local revenue. In this way, the administrative and judicial functions of the council were carried out concurrently. For example, a council officer could be called to form a panel from which members of the

court were drawn, as the occasion required, to hear and try cases of offences against certain regulations and transgressions against native customs (Cyril Belshaw 1954: 113).

The 1942 court system survived until 1960. After 1960, its jurisdictions were extended to cover criminal matters with the District Commissioner or the District Officer hearing the most serious cases.

#### The Colonial administration and the Second World War.

The whole of the Solomons, including the colonial administration, were jostled with the on-set of the Second World War. In a major way, the advent of the Second World War was the end of one era and the beginning of another. The war puts the Solomons, if not Guadalcanal, as an important location on the world map. This was not the case before.

Except for expatriates who worked there, the country was little known to outsiders before the war. As Kent (1972: 124) relates, the expatriate population consisted of colonial administrators, some missionaries, planters and traders and a few miners. But when the Japanese began their militaristic, island-hopping southward, the Solomons became strategically important.

During the war period, the colonial administration halted all its activities. Any development initiative tended to come as a result the war efforts. These included roads, airfields,

bridges and hospitals. Even the Resident Commissioner played but a minor role although he had urged Solomon Islanders to remain loyal to the British and her allies. But the war experience left indelible impressions and exposed Solomon Islanders to realities of the outside world. Things would not remain the same.

It was not only the war largesse which impressed Solomon Islanders. But for the first time, the once awesome British administrators and their fellow traders and planters who previously treated Solomon Islanders as people of a lower class, seemed vulnerable and helpless (ibid: 142). This revealed the weakness of the so-called, "colonial masters," whose inability to protect themselves, let alone their subjects, provided the basis for Solomon Islanders to later, questioned the whole colonial structure (Bennett 1987: 309).

In a major way, the war also evoked a watershed in race relations in the country. It further allowed Solomon Islanders to learn from American G.I.s some organisational skills and strategies of reasserting themselves.

One of the major outcome of this 'war contacts' was the formation of the Maasina Rule movement. Amongst other things, the movement was the result of some liberated Melanesians who had manage to unshackle themselves from the grip of cultural imperialism and racism, long imposed by colonialists. The need then was to reassert themselves and to work towards freedom and self-determination.

The Maasina Rule movement.

Much have been written about the movement but little has been said about the source of Solomon Islander discontent. The latter is important to show the realities that existed then and to measure the capabilities of Solomon Islanders to rule themselves; had they been given the chance.

However, it should be remembered that the sources of discontent preceded the Second World War. People did not suddenly disliked others. That would be truly vacuous or spurious. Rather, from the beginning, the British colonial administration was never welcomed in the country. Indigenous resistance began to be exerted, even from the beginning, against colonization especially in response to the heavy-handedness fashion in which Pax Britannica was enforced. This was imposed with the occasional "show of power."

But, for Solomon Islanders, by the outbreak of the First World War, it was clear that the British rule would remain indefinitely.

To many Solomon Islanders, the colonial government did little but imposed taxes and put them in prisons by the imposition of British laws which were little known and least appreciated. For many years, they were forced to pay taxes from which they saw little in return. Often the government officials who visited the villages were not only disrespectful of the traditional way of life but their local representatives, many of whom were new political aspirants who

benefitted from this new source of power and influence, were not any different. Many a time, disrespectfulness of customs and the general heavy-handedness, were carried out without any good reason but merely as a show of power and "we (the British) are the boss," attitude.

This continued unabated so that in time, the dislike for the white men included not only government officials but also missionaries; many of whom had condemned the age-old customs, and traders who did little but cheated the indigenous people. Worse still, introduced diseases were sweeping the islands and their effects on the communities were devastating.

Also, there was a intense discontent over the incompatibility of English laws to traditional Melanesian customs. Serious offences such as adultery which carried mandatory death in custom, if not adequately compensated and resolved, only carried a short sentence with an inconsequential fine under the British laws. On top of this, the non-reciprocal nature of the head-tax and other new levies only served to fuel the general discontent in and disagreement with the colonial administration (Kent 1972: 118).

Given these negative sentiments and resistance to British colonial treatment and, encouraged by American tutelage to fight for political autonomy, it was not surprising that the Maasina Rule leaders were fired with enthusiasm from the start. The movement began on Malaita right after the war.

The central aim of the movement can be summed up as

efforts to have a political future determined by Solomon Islanders themselves and to pursue economic development which was organised and based on communal efforts (Roughan 1986: 76). The movement spread so that, at its height, it covered Malaita as well as Ngella, Santa Isabel, Eastern and Southern Guadalcanal, Ulawa and San Cristobal (Bennett 1987: 298). It was a non-cooperation movement which was not violent at all.

At first the colonial administration treated the movement cautiously. On the other hand, to show their seriousness, the leaders of the movement requested technical assistance and financial cooperation from the administration. But these were refused. And it was only after this refusal, which merely confirmed what Solomon Islanders had long feared and suspected -that the British were in the country not to assist them but rather to serve their own interests, that the latter were invited to leave the country (Roughan 1986: 55). For two years the colonial administrators watched the movement grow. But when they come to realise that one of the aims of the movement was to replace them, they began to oppose it.

First, the administration claimed that the movement was a cargo cult. There was also fear that other Solomon Island loyalists might join the movement because important persons like the well-known war hero, Sergeant-Major Vouza, had joined. The government finally clamped down on the movement, charging the leaders with "effecting a public mischief." Later this charge was changed and the leaders were convicted

for violation of the "1790 Unlawful Societies Act" and the "1817 Seditious Meeting Act" (ibid). Armed patrols were sent and the nine chiefs, the major leaders of the movement, and their followers were arrested and later convicted under the 1817 Act. They were interned for six years of hard labour.

Although the movement was suppressed, the demands of the people for control of political autonomy and economic self-sufficiency were not met. Later, on a similar platform but after the original leaders were released from prison, subsequent leaders requested the administration to give them a new structure that would allow the island councils more political autonomy and the responsibility of looking after their own affairs. This time, the administration responded positively.

A new native court system was established. A secondary school (the first government high school in the country) was built near Auki at Aligegeo. Most importantly, a Malaita Council, the first of its kind in the Solomons, was set up (ibid: 56).

In a way, the Maasina Rule movement ushered in an opportunity for a rise of a nationalist movement under which political and economic initiatives, based on Melanesian experiences and understanding, could have thrived. Indigenous leaders were eager to see this happen but colonial myopism and racism of the British administrators, who thought that Melanesians 'had a long way to go,' did not allow the

development with such grass-root efforts. The alternative compromise was the establishment of island councils, beginning with the Malaita Council.

#### The councils.

The colonial administrators had learned a lesson from the Maasina Rule. The indigenes must have a measure of self-rule. Thus, in 1953, a new "Native Administration Regulation" was passed. From this, a direct administration was set up. The country was divide into districts, each with its own council.

The 1950 decade saw, with the establishment of these councils, a watershed in the evolution of local and national governments. It was also a period which saw consolidation of district administrations, local councils, native courts and a central administration. These were incorporated under one government umbrella.

From these initial stages, a small number of Solomon Islanders began to make their way into national politics. At the national level the first national forum, the Advisory Council, was formed in 1950. In this council, the Resident Commissioner made a selection of a small number of indigenous members to advise him on 'native matters.'

Overall, the membership of and the participation in the Advisory Council and the transfer of the High Commission Secretariat from Fiji to Honiara in 1953, meant that the Solomon Island government was in a better position to be more



receptive and responsive to local opinions (Bennett 1987: 305).

The 1960 changes.

In 1960, constitutional changes saw the Advisory Council replaced by the Legislative and Executive Councils. But these new councils were still nominated bodies. The Legislative Council consisted of three ex-officio members, eight official members and ten nominated unofficial members, of whom six were Solomon Islanders. The composition of the Executive Council was similar but smaller. Its membership was drawn from the Legislative Council. However, in both bodies the official members dominated the proceedings and the nominated members had no power (ibid: 317). Although the councillors were elected from each district, the representation at the national level was still by nomination by the High Commissioner.

In 1963, a Local Council Ordinance provided for wider powers which included the levying of rates by the eighteen Island councils and also the election of members by universal suffrage in the place of official nomination. In 1964 a new constitution was promulgated. A year later, the first general election was held. Electoral colleges from the local governments elected seven members to the Legislative Council. However, there was unequal representation between the local governments and Honiara. For Honiara alone, eight members were elected by direct ballot.

In 1967 another general election was held in which fourteen Solomon Islanders were elected. This was an increase from the previous eight. In 1968, further efforts were made to construct a legislative and administrative structure which would best enable the elected members to express themselves. This resulted in the formulation of the idea of a "Committee System." The Committee system would include a single council supported by executive committees. However, it would take another two years before these proposals were implemented.

Specific to political parties, an important change also occurred in 1968. The Democratic Party (DP) was formed by the veteran politician, Mariano Kelesi and his colleague, Eric V. Lawson. This was the first attempt at forming a political party with a platform which had one of its major aims as the attainment of self-government for the country (ibid: 318). Although this party was short-lived and vigorously resisted by the colonial administrators, it had set a precedence and its formation had encouraged Solomon Islanders to organise and get involved in politics. Shortly after this, history was made when the first Solomon Island woman, Lili Oгатini, was voted into national politics.

All these changes were merely a precursor to things to come. This is because, by the 1970s, as related in the beginning of this chapter, further constitutional reforms saw more rapid political changes in the government despite the general lack of readiness and awareness of the people.

### Conclusion.

On the whole, Solomon Island societies remained little affected by the waves of changes since the protectorate status was established in 1893. The colonial administration seemed to have ruled the country by 'remote control,' based on the policy of indirect rule. The only visible link to the villages was the presence of the headmen. The administration managed to thrive on the tax system and depended on the court structure and the little assistance afforded by the few overseas companies operating in the country.

By and large, in the villages, life goes on as before based on subsistence agriculture, fishing and the observation of the Christian faith for spiritual sustenance. The village leaders and the whole traditional leadership structure have not been incorporated into the central government. Little was done to recognise genuine village leaders or to incorporate them, in a systematic way, into the national politics. This trend continued until the country was given independence in 1978.

Beside the above, even when Solomon Islanders tried to initiate changes, such as the well-supported Maasina Rule movement, the colonial government was unable to harness this potential. Instead, this was perceived as a threat to them. The arrogance and the sense of superiority of the British colonialists could not be better revealed in such actions.

In subsequent periods, all the changes, which occurred in

the 1960s and the early 1970s, were constitutional in nature. They followed the British perception of the English legal constitutional changes. These had little to do with the political preparedness of Solomon Island villagers, most of whom remained ignorant of such changes. Moreover, the suppression of any nationalistic initiatives and the general lack of involvement and participation of the people in national politics, meant that most of the changes were piecemeal and elitist as only the few leaders at the national level knew and understood what was going on.

Placed in the elite and mass party models, parties have a lot of work to do in trying to incorporate and educate the people in politics, if the majority of the people are to partake in the processes which affect their lives. Further, leaders have to involve both the rural people and village leadership in ways they could understand and participate meaningfully. In addition to this, an understanding of the different cultures and island groups is a key factor in order to effect successful party policies and bring the people close to the government. Here, the discussion turns to the political actors - the political parties.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### POLITICAL ACTORS: THE PARTIES.

....politics in modern Melanesia, even at the national level, is essentially personal and group politics...the basis for political support in Melanesia are typically local and personal... the Melanesian culture has not proven to be a fertile ground for the growth of political parties.

R.J. May, "Political style in modern Melanesia," in Melanesia: Beyond diversity.

The above statement gives a resounding verdict. It avers that the introduction and the development of political parties in Melanesia have been carried out in environments which are not politically conducive. The quote does not only carries with it implications for the future of political parties but also casts doubts on government by parties in the region. A similar finding has been affirmed by Loveday and Wolfer (1976: 103), pioneers in the study of Melanesian politics, who concluded that traditional social structures were not easily adopted for modern political purposes.

Traditional Melanesian politics generally thrived in clannish units which are small, localised and bound together by familial, tribal and territorial ties. Chiefs and big men are leaders and such leaders hold power and remain as long as

they could maintain control and wield influence. Traditional political structures do not allow for the radicalisation of politics which is necessary to mobilise the mass in such particularistic societies (ibid). In the Solomons, this unfavourable situation was accentuated by the general neglect of colonialists to allow indigenes to organise themselves politically and the lack of any nationalist movement.

Also, Britain's abrupt decision to give the country political autonomy meant that little time was available to train the leaders to have the necessary political knowledge and skills needed to take over. Moreover, there was a lack of a viable national political culture which would be necessary for the long-term survival of a new nation. Political parties then became the 'necessary evil' in the government of the country.

The first serious attempt to introduce political parties came with the introduction of the ministerial system (Bart Ulufalu 1983: 101-102). Even then parties were merely loose groupings, led by certain influential leaders, with the chief aim of winning parliamentary seats. It was only in the 1980 election that it became clear that party competition had affected the election campaigns, in a major way. Premdas and Steeves (1984: 85) estimated that half of the 241 candidates in the 1980 elections, had party affiliations or claimed party affiliations.

Given the above, several questions can be posed at this

juncture. What is the place of parties in the political system? What is the nature of parties in the Solomons? How are party members chosen? Does the politics of personalism takes precedence over that of political parties? How successful are the parties in linking the people to the government? What is the future of political parties in the country? These are questions which direct the subsequent parts of this chapter.

Parties in a the political system:A brief theoretical overview.

The purpose of this section is to contextualise and show the place of parties in a political system. Another aim is to place parties in political systems where parties were previously non-existent.

A political system denotes "all the government institutions and all the structures in the political aspect" (G.A. Almond and G.B. Powell Jr. 1966: 18). The term is used in an all-embracing manner to include the entire political set-up. Placed in this context, political parties are a subset of the political system.

Although political parties represent a subset within the political system, they assume central importance in the overall politics. Underscoring this point, David Apter (1977: 157) asserts that political parties are the most important single instrumentality of politics. This include the

competitiveness, bargaining and negotiation which go with them.

The functions of parties differ according to the type of political system and the political environment in which they operate. In western systems, political parties play an active role as "watch dog" to what is happening in the political sphere. This include scrutinising, analysing and preparing of party policies to challenge others in the elections. Specialisation is high in this type of party system. In developing countries, the party structure is often less developed and there is less specialisation. Party functions vary and according to Klaus Von Beyme (1975: 13), four of these functions include identification of goals, articulation and aggregation of social interests, mobilisation and socialisation of the general public and finally, elite recruitment and the formation of government.

Identification of goals depends on the party ideology. The party ideology determines the kind of programmes and the manner in which they are implemented. If a party succeeds, the party programme would then serve as the formal national aims and goals. People often put forward their demands to parties which, in turn, put these demands in their policies. Mobilisation and socialisation of the public come in the form of public rallies, party meetings, newspapers and other party functions. One of the purpose of such activities is to inculcate in the public, party policies, beliefs and even



attitudes (Almond and Powell 1966: 121). Political recruitment comes when parties support potential candidates and campaign on their behalf. Essentially, the parties act as agents for such recruitment.

These are four of the many functions of parties.. Given that parties are quite a recent political phenomenon, one thing is certain from their performance so far: they have assumed an extensive role in organising politics in modern states (R. Hamel and K. Janda 1982: 1).

#### The importance of political parties.

As seen from above, the importance of political parties cannot be emphasised more. To Schattschneider, political parties necessitate democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties (ibid: 2). Harmel agrees and says that a good number of political writers have put emphasis on parties and their place in modern political system. Pennock argues along a similar line when he says that universally, democracies are characterised by the institution of political parties. Agreeing with Pennock, Merkel says that the functions of mobilisation of the people and the articulation of their interests are salient features of political parties, especially in popular governments. For Mayo, parties are the touch-stone of democratic systems and they differentiate these systems from others. Related to the idea of democracy, Robert Dahl refers to parties as the litmus

paper test for the presence or the absence of democracy (ibid). What then is a possible scenario for political parties and political systems in the developing countries?

#### Political parties in developing countries.

In developing countries, the transition from traditional societies to a westernised one often see a lot of changes in the political system. Here, the political parties often play the role of bridging the traditional sectors to the modern elites. And despite the particularistic and stratified nature of some traditional societies, parties act as a melting pot in which only the dictates of the party prevail. Parties also act as an equaliser as well as an integrating factor. As David Apter (1965: 188) says:

..no matter how reluctantly he may be, the civil servant with the overseas degree may be forced to communicate with the rural party officials or with the taxi driver who may have an important position in the party.

The parties also open up channels of communication between otherwise hostile groups and, in third world countries where the number of elites are limited, parties serve to circulate the educated people around to assist in political education and political socialisation (ibid: 189). In doing so, the traditional system is replaced by a new political system.

#### Replacing the old system.

In newly independent countries, the traditional systems

may lack the capacity to successfully adapt to the needs of a modern state (Huntington 1968: 398). Furthermore, the advent of rapid political development could completely displace the old systems. In this case, political parties become important. Huntington again (1965: 424) explains:

In the absence of traditional institutions the only modern organisation which can become a source of authority and which can be effectively institutionalised is the political party.

Moreover, in the absence of traditional political institutions, the party performs more than the conventional roles. Such roles include the formulation of new ideas, a form of social prestige, support and linkage for the public to the party leadership (Apter 1965: 186). Thus, in developing countries, where the traditional political system is less capable of dealing with new changes, the political parties fill that vacuum.

#### Towards a definition.

There are difficulties in trying to define the scope of political parties in developing countries. One of the reasons for such a predicament is that the genesis of parties is closely tied to the evolution of modern states and the roles of the parties change according to the political milieu in those countries. On the other hand, political theorists have given various definitions to parties. Usually the definition given to a party system commensurates with the perceived functions which parties perform at a given time.

Among the first theorists to give a definition to parties, Burke defines a party as, a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours the interests, upon some particular principles of which they all agreed. Some have considered such definition too idealistic because it does not stress the desire to gain control of the government machinery and the largesse of office. Kenneth Janda (1970: 83) defines parties as organisations that pursued a goal of placing their avowed representatives in government positions. This is much closer to real situations which exist today.

But definitions depends not only on parties as organizations, but also on the political conditions and the level of development that exist. Therefore, in the Solomons, the distinction between parties and other interest groups is still not that clear. In this case, the best possible option is to look for a definition which is closest to the Solomon Island situation. The description given by Thomas Hodgkin (1961: 15-16) is closest to the case in the Solomons. Referring to Africa he states:

In general, one might say, political parties possess some discernible structure, basic units of some kind, however loosely, with a central directorate (an office); they advocate certain policies and make public from time to time some form of party programme; they are interested in using the mechanisms of representative institutions to achieve political power, or at least an extension of their political influence; and to this end they compete with other parties and appeal to an electorate for allegiance of votes.

Hodgkin even concedes that such a loose definition raises

various problems (ibid) and therefore he gives an unusual but useful ultimatum that:

For the moment, it is convenient to consider as parties all political organisations which regard themselves as parties and which are generally so regarded.

The above definition, though inadequate, is used for the Solomon Island case-study because it captures the different aspects of both parties and it relates to the level of political development and the realities that exist in the country. This being the case, parties, in this thesis, would be referred to as "the groupings which have some members in the national parliament, have programmes and policies to contest elections." In the Solomons, parties are essentially parliamentary organisations. This is because parties are products of institutional evolution, from the parliamentary level, which existed mainly by constitutional provisions and changes.

#### Constitutional evolution of parties.

Parties are the inevitable product of the British policy of 'gradualism.' The emergence and development of parties come in different phases through constitutional changes. This is the formula used in all British colonies. Explaining the process, and referring to Africa, Coleman and Roseberg (1964: 3) stated that:

Formal parties in the narrow sense of the word did not appear until constitutional reforms were introduced for: (1) the devolution by imperial

government of a sufficiently meaningful and attractive measure of power to induce or provoke nationalist leaders to convert their movements into political parties, (2) the introduction or refinement of institutions and procedures such as electoral system, which would make it technically possible for parties to seek power constitutionally.

Under the British model, parties, whether in Africa or in the Solomons, are the products of constitutional changes.

Along such constitutional progression, the granting of self-government is the last stage before political independence. This is usually marked by the introduction of a legislative assembly, a cabinet government with some ministerial powers such as those vested in the posts of Justice, Finance and Defence still reserved for colonial administrators until independence is gained (K.A. Busia 1967: 50). In the Solomons, such changes began with the introduction of the 1960 constitution until internal self-government was granted in January, 1976 (J.F. Saemala 1978: 4).

Two years before self-government, the 1974 constitution was promulgated which brought about the need for political parties. Changes saw the switch from a Governing Council, with its committee system, to the introduction of the Ministerial System. The introduction of the latter necessitated the election of a Chief Minister who was a indigene. In the election of the Chief Minister the need to form groupings arose. This was the beginning of an institutionalised party system.

Four years later, the 1978 Independence Act granted not only constitutional endorsement for government by parties but section 66 (7) constituted provision for an 'Opposition group' as well as an 'Independent group' in parliament. This institutionalised a tripartite system of government (J.M. Herlihy 1982: 576).

#### The parties and the party system.

Although there were various attempts to form parties in previous years, the party system in the Solomons emanates in a more permanent manner in 1974 with the election of the first Chief Minister, Solomon Mamaloni (Ulufalu 1983: 101). This year clearly dates a real beginning for political parties. A year later, a Constitutional Committee was established to decide on the system of government appropriate for the country. The committee endorsed a government premised on a party system. The Committee agreed on the adoption of a unitary system instead of a federal system (Ghai 1983: 25).

To elect the chief minister in 1974, parliament had to be divided into groups. These groupings formed the basis of the parties. It was clear that two parties were formed: the Peoples' Progressive Party (PPP) which belonged to Solomon Mamaloni and the United Solomon Island Party (USIP) led by Philip Funifaka (ibid: 102). The rest of the parliamentarians who were non-affiliates to any of these two parties joined the Independent Party; a loosely held group led by the late Willie

Betu.

In the 1976 election two other new parties were formed. These parties were formed by two University of Papua New Guinea graduates. Bartholomew Ulufalu formed the Nationalist Party (NP), later changed to the Nationalist Democratic Party (NADEPA), and Warren Paia formed the Melanesian Action Party (MAP).

NADEPA was the closest the Solomon Islands come to having a mass-based party. It had the trade union at its base. It, therefore, appeared more multi-regional, multi-ethnic and multi-racial (ibid). However, its membership was limited mostly to employees, the majority of whom were Honiara residents. Furthermore, the employees comprised but a small proportion of the country's population, most of whom lived in the villages. On the other hand, MAP started out vigorously but soon faded from the political scene since none of its members, especially the leader, succeeded to secure a parliamentary seat.

A year later (1977), David Kausimae and Faneta Sira formed the Rural Alliance Party (RAP). RAP was later merged with Solomon Mamaloni's Peoples' Progressive Party to form the new, Peoples' Alliance Party (PAP). The merge came because the party leaders professed to focus the party's policies on the rural people. For instance, it advocated 'decentralisation policy' which purported to allow more decision-making initiatives to be given to the island councils



in a form of a provincial government set-up.

During the same period, Peter Kenilorea who was the Chief Minister, managed to get his party, the Solomon Islands' United Party (SIUP) to control cabinet. But as he insightfully explained, he did not call his group a 'party' despite attempts by his colleagues to do so. Instead, he opted to be futuristic and drew up a new manifesto to fight the 1980 election (Peter Kenilorea 1983: 54). This was the election year when the prominence of and the need for parties was most conspicuous.

Just before the onset of the 1980s, parties were mostly parliamentary groupings with a leader who had prepared some policy guidelines which often formed the basis of a possible manifesto. In general, the parties lacked strong party structures and they also lacked mass support on a national level. What was of critical importance was individual parliamentarians and their accountability to their electorates. Life of the parties was, in the main, hedged on how successful the party leaders and the party candidates contested the elections.

By the time the 1980 election rolled by, there were four parties vying for parliamentary supremacy. These were the National Democratic Party, the Peoples' Alliance Party, the Solomon Island United Party and the Independent Party. Competition in this election was more serious and party affiliations had more significance. Referring to that period,

Joan Herlihy (1982: 585) elucidated that by that stage, over half of the members were cognisant of the inevitability and the power of party politics and, therefore, they joined one of the existing parties. She called the 1980 election, one of 'get with the strength' (ibid). In a similar vein, the prime minister at that time, Sir Peter Kenilorea, explained that the prior lack of a strong party necessitated the need to organise on a more serious basis for the 1980 election (Kenilorea 1983: 53).

From the 1980 election, parties not only became a permanent features of Solomon Island politics but their importance was imperative for winning national parliamentary seats. The political system became much more developed as parties became a permanent avenue to acquire power. This does not mean that individualism was not important. Rather, it explains the fact that parties became an important vehicle with which aspiring politicians would have to use to gain political power and influence. At this juncture, the discussion now turns to party leadership and to who the party leaders are.

#### Party leadership: The Leaders.

Since parties are elitist in nature, leadership is perceived in terms of individual leader and their performance. Often, these leaders are members of the parliamentary wing of the parties. That is, they are members who have won

parliamentary seats. Party leaders who are outside parliament are often not visible and not too vocal on political matters. Moreover, parties are most active within the precincts of parliament. Outside of parliament, it is rare to hear parties addressing issues of common concern or attempt to challenge government on policy matters.

In the Solomons, many of the party founders are still the party leaders. Unlike countries such as Fiji or Tonga, few traditional leaders are party leaders. So far, only David Kausimae, one of the founders of the Peoples' Alliance Party, is a traditional chief ('araha') from Are Are, on Malaita. Increasingly, party leaders have been characterized by those who have had formal education either in the country or overseas. Many of them have had work experience either with the government (predominantly in the Public Service) or in the private sectors before they entered politics. A good number of them are church leaders or those who have had higher education in church institutions or theological colleges. This section gives sketches of the following: the leaders, their background, party leadership and certain leadership qualities.

#### Some of the leaders.

Party leadership tends to revolve around four individuals in the Solomons. These individuals are Solomon Mamaloni, Peter Kenilorea, David Kausimae and Bartholomew Ulufalu.

Although in recent years other personalities have emerged as new party leaders, these four individuals have dominated party leadership inside and outside of parliament and in one capacity or the other. For example, since the introduction of the ministerial system in 1974, the first two leaders namely, Solomon Mamaloni and Peter Kenilorea, have either been the Chief Minister or the Prime Minister. This political see-sawing of leadership continued until Kenilorea was forced to resign in 1986, amongst allegations of his mis-appropriation of disaster relief funds. It was only then that Ezekiel Alebua (Kenilorea's deputy) took over the leadership (see the table below) after a parliamentary election for a succeeding prime minister.

Table 2.

Elections and the Chief/Prime Ministers.

General elections	<u>'73</u>	<u>'76</u>	<u>'78</u>	<u>'80</u>	<u>'84</u>	<u>'88</u>
Chief/Prime Minister	<u>SSM</u>	<u>PK</u>	<u>PK</u>	<u>PK SSM</u>	<u>PK</u>	<u>EA</u>

SSM -Solomon Sunaone Mamaloni.  
PK -Peter Kenilorea.  
EA -Ezekiel Alebua.

Beside being leaders of the parties, the party personalities mentioned above also have had the greatest influence and support. At the time of writing (1987), the United Party had Ezekiel Alebua as the Prime Minister and the leader and Sir Peter Kenilorea the deputy. The leader of the Alliance Party was Solomon Mamaloni who was also the Leader of the Opposition. David Kausimae was then a private businessman but he was still regarded as the doyen of that party (PAP). The National Democratic Party had Adrian Bataiofesi in parliament instead of Bart Ulufalu but the latter was still the main force behind the party. The Independent Group continued to be an odd ball with the most fluid leadership. Formed by the late Willie Betu (died in 1988), in 1976, he assumed leadership until he was defeated in the 1980 election (Premdas and Steeves 1985: 85). Billy Hilly then succeeded him until the latter was defeated in the 1984 election. Dennis Lulei then led the party until he opted to join the Alliance party in early 1988 (Island Reporter, 1988: 1).

Mention should be made of two new party leaders who had made impression on the national political scene. These leaders belonged to the Solomon Ano Sagufenua (SAS) and the National Front for Democracy (NFD). These parties were led by Sethuel Kelly and Andrew Nori, respectively. The leader of SAS had caused an uproar in parliament as well in the country over a case of sale of government houses. The leader of NFD

was known for his sharp wits although there were times when his politics appeared too ambitious and even unMelanesian because of his tendency to indulged in political manoeuvring and political kite-flying.

#### Selected profiles of leaders.

In this section, focus is on a few of the party leaders. The number is limited to the information available. The personal profiles of the leaders included here are those of Solomon Mamaloni, Peter Kenilorea, Bart Ulufalu and David Kausimae.

Solomon Mamaloni is from Arosi in the West Makira Province. He was 44 years in 1987. He had his primary education in various Church of Melanesia schools. He attended King George VI Secondary School and later, Te Aute, in New Zealand (Solomon Nius, 20 March, 1989: 6). Later, he trained as a teacher (Bennett 1987: 322), returned and joined the Public Service in 1966 (D. Hegarty 1983: 243). Two years later he was made a clerk to the Legislative Council. In 1970, the Legislative Council was changed to the Governing Council. He opposed this change since he saw it as being rushed without adequate preparation for Solomon Islanders. He continued to oppose the committee system in the Governing Council so that by 1974, this was changed to a Legislative Assembly together with the adoption of a ministerial system.

As he was one of the outspoken leaders, he was easily

noticed. He was stood and was successfully elected as the first Chief Minister of the country in that year. Soon after, he formed the Peoples' Progressive Party (Ulufalu 1983: 102).

Surprisingly, in the following year, Mamaloni resigned over an embarrassment involving an illegal agreement with an American company which proposed to mint commemorative coins to mark self-government. Even more surprising was his return as Chief Minister after he was ousted only a month earlier. But as Saemala (1979: 5) explained, the reason for this unexpected return was the common consensus among parliamentarians that the best person to clear up the mess was Mamaloni himself.

After the 1976 elections, Mamaloni was unexpectedly defeated by Peter Kenilorea, a new comer to parliament. Even more unexpected, some months later, Mamaloni resigned from parliament for personal reasons (Hegarty 1983: 243). As if this kind of unexpectedness was not enough, Mamaloni returned to politics after he won the West Makira seat in 1980.

He contested the election for the Prime Ministership but his old opponent Peter Kenilorea defeated him by 25 to 5 votes (ibid: 239). But a year later, Mamaloni was elected the prime minister after Peter Kenilorea had resigned for lack of support from the Independent Group which made up the coalition that he had led. This time, Mamaloni's victory was a close race which ended in a 20 votes to 17 votes margin (ibid). Mamaloni remained as the prime minister until he was, once again, defeated by Peter Kenilorea after the 1984 general

elections by 20 to 13 votes (Solomon Star, November, 1984: 4).

Like Solomon Mamaloni, Peter Kenilorea went for tertiary education in New Zealand. At an early age, he had shown leadership qualities. At Waganui Boys' High school, he was elected a prefect and a house captain. After high school at Waganui, he went to Admore Teachers' College where he obtained his teaching diploma. Upon returning to the Solomons, he had a teaching stint at his former school, King George VI School. Then he joined the public service as an Assistant Secretary of Finance (Saemala 1979: 11). He was later made a District Commissioner and in 1976, he stood for parliament as an independent candidate. He won the East Are Are seat and surprisingly, he was voted in as the chief minister (Bennett 1987: 522) to replace Solomon Mamaloni. By then he was a leader of a new parliamentary group, the Solomon Island United Party, which he formed that year (Kenilorea 1983: 54). He remained in parliament and became the new prime minister when the country became independent in July, 1978 and remained thus until he resigned in 1981. In 1984, he became prime minister again but he later, quite inadvertently, resigned from the post in 1986 over a disaster funds controversy. Since then he remained the deputy prime minister.

The last two party leaders have never been either a chief minister or a prime minister. Nonetheless, they were important party and national leaders. Bartholomew (Bart) Ulufalu was an economics graduate from the University of Papua



New Guinea. Ulufalu's political aspirations and capabilities were most noticeable in university politics at the University of Papua New Guinea. That was the beginning of his radical politics so that when he returned to the Solomons, he affiliated himself with the employees' union. He later became the leader. He re-organised the union and called it the Solomon Island General Workers' Union (SIGWU). It was later renamed, the Solomon Islands National Union of Workers (SINUW) (J. Tuhanuku 1983: 120). In 1976, realising the need to have parliamentary representation, especially with the intention to change the pro-employer Labour laws, Ulufalu formed the Nationalist Party (ibid: 126). He secured a seat in parliament that year and remained until he was defeated in 1984.

The fourth leader was David Kausimae. Most of his formal education and training was with the South Seas Evangelical Church. And although, strictly speaking, he did not get a tertiary education as other leaders, the veteran politician's education and political experience, as a party leader, as a custom chief (D. Kausimae 1983: 114-116) and as a church leader were considerable.

His first attempt in forming a political group resulted in the Solomon United National Party (SUN). This party formed the basis of the next party, the Peoples' Progressive Party. (PPP) (ibid). In 1977, he assisted to form another party the Rural Alliance Party (RAP). This was the year that this party

merged with Solomon Mamaloni's party and the amalgamation resulted in the formation of the Peoples' Alliance Party (PAP). The PAP was in the opposition in 1987.

From the above profiles, it can be deduced that party leaders are most likely to be members of the educated elite. Successful leaders are persons who have had acquired tertiary education, combined with individual popularity among constituents and as members of the national parliament.

Popularity in parliament is also important as this is where leaders can be made prime ministers. All these said, it is imperative to mention that such popularity, especially in parliament, is ephemeral as there is often challenges to such leadership. A consequence of such shifts are the frequent changes in leadership.

#### Shifts in leadership and the parties.

Writing in 1987, Peter Larmour (1987) was convinced that after the events of the previous years, there appeared likely to be another possible shift in leadership, particularly from Solomon Mamaloni and Peter Kenilorea to a third person who happened to be Ezekiel Alebua. Inevitably, this shift also meant that there was a change in the government leadership.

The shift in Prime Ministership in 1986 occurred because it was alleged that the then incumbent, Peter Kenilorea, had intentionally re-directed disaster relief funds, given by the French government, to his own village. He resigned after

protracted heated debates in parliament. As a result of the vacuum in government leadership, there was an election for a new prime minister since by then, Peter Kenilorea had tendered his resignation to the Governor General. In the ensuing election, Ezekiel Alebua defeated Dennis Lulei by two votes and the former took over the government leadership. The race was a close contestation (see table below).

Table 3.

<u>Prime Minister election. December, 1986.</u>	
<u>Candidates.</u>	<u>Votes.</u>
Ezekiel Alebua (United Party)	19
Dennis Lulei (Independent Group)	17
Absentee votes	1
	<hr/>
	<u>37</u>

Early in 1988, Peter Salaka, another veteran politician and a long-time member of the Alliance Party, decided to leave

the party. Prior to that, there were other shifts which included those in the two relatively new parties. In one, Sethuel Kelly assisted to form and became leader of the Solomon Ano Sagufenua party (SAS). The former secretary of the Alliance Party, Andrew Nori, formed the other, the National Front for Democracy Party (NFP).

To be sure, these shifts not only changed the intra-party contests in parliament but they offered alternative choices of leaders. Leadership challenges would thereby increased as the number of potential contestants increased.

But ultimately, any permanent changes of leaders and ordinary MPs depend on the electoral success which in turn depends on the peoples' perception of the performance of the different parliamentarians during their terms of office. In a party system where personalities often take precedence over party philosophies and policies, it is appropriate to take stock of the possible qualities attributable to leaders. This is important because such attributes often coloured the thinking and the perceptions of the people on what kind of leaders they are most likely to choose.

#### Some qualities attributable to leaders.

After independence, Solomon Island leaders, in search of commonalities that would assist in the nation building process, decided to institutionalise their Christian beliefs and have them immortalised in the highest law of the land, the

constitution. As Saemala (1979: 34) explained, Solomon Islanders have claimed themselves to be Christians and have, all along, asserted these beliefs. This is not surprising for a country in which 90% of the people are christians (Premdas and Steeves 1985: 16). Thusly, the peoples' views are shaped by Christian values and, in turn, they have judged their leaders within the context of these beliefs and value systems. But how is this done?

There is no distinct formula but certain trends are discernible. To be successful, a leader must have an acceptable personal record. In many instances, this means that such persons ought to show that they can lead and set examples for the country by first, managing their own lives and families. In the country, Peter Kenilorea was one of the leaders who was seen as having exemplary qualities. He was dubbed as a man with 'personal stability' and 'honest leadership' (ibid: 95-96). Kenilorea was not only an active lay preacher (Saemala 1979: 10) but he had a strong support from his church, the South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC). Moreover, this was confirmed in his inaugural speech as the first Prime Minister (in 1978), when he made it explicitly clear that he would like to be regarded first and foremost as a christian instead of being called a Malaitan only (ibid).

Another quality that would be an advantage to leaders is to be regarded as 'man of the people.' Indeed, this also reflects an attribute of the traditional big man. In this

sense, a leader should not only have certain leadership qualities but he ought to continually put them into practice. He must be 'seen' to be trying to help his people as often as possible. In the Solomon Islands, this is pertinent because it is difficult to meet the needs and the demands of the different peoples from the different islands. But however small an assistance may be, it must be given regardless of the value. And such assistance can take different forms. Again, Kenilorea had successfully met the test of this leadership requirement. For instance, just before the 1978 independence, a national commotion erupted as a result of an inflammatory poem written against the people of the Western Province. There were tense sentiments expressed by the leaders of the Western Province people who had wanted to secede from the rest of the Solomons because of that poem and in connection with other long-time grievances and claims. Kenilorea went about trying to resolve this conflict in a most diplomatic manner.

He requested the assistance of some prominent leaders of the Western Province who were in Honiara. He placed some of these leaders in prominent government positions. Maepaza Gina (from the Western Province) was elected the first Speaker of the National Parliament (ibid: 25). Moffat Bonuga (Eastern Outer Islands) was elected to the position of deputy-Speaker (ibid: 28). Baddley Devesi (Central Province) was elected the first Governor General (ibid: 27). Outside parliament, Issac Qoloni (Western Province) was appointed the Secretary to the

Prime Minister and Milton Sipisopere (Western Province) became the Clerk to the Western Province government. At the same time, Zoloveke and Ghemu (both from the Western Province) were made ministers in Kenilorea government (ibid). Kenilorea employed the principle of 'regional representation' which worked successfully. It accommodated the diverse sentiments and presented an appearance of unity to the people and their leaders. Thus, a conflict which had a potential to exacerbate, was successfully diffused.

Little wonder Kenilorea was a popular leader. With this acumen and foresight, relational prudence and public relation skills, he maintained leadership both as government leader and party leader from 1976 until he resigned in 1986. Given a youthful period of political development in the country and the general lack of party stability, ten years of political life and leadership, was the envy of many but the achievement of a few.

However, in the end, a fateful turn of events caused Peter to resign the national leadership. Kenilorea had to give in to partisan sentiments and political pressures after the unfortunate incident of alleged mis-allocation of disaster funds in the post-Namu cyclone period. It was not so clear how the majority of the village people would have perceived the whole affair. In the end, the funds were sent to Kenilorea's own village but it was one of the many villages which had been devastated by Namu. At this juncture, the

discussion turns toward the organisational structure of the parties.

#### Party organisation.

In the Solomons, the organisation of parties is the prerogative and within the interest of the central party officials and party members, especially those who are in parliament. The latter has political interest in keeping the party active. Often they have the resources. Rarely do members of the public know of such matters except when party information is shared through the media or in the newspapers. Ostensibly, if party information is given, this would be mostly before elections and during the campaigning periods. Thus, party organisation is low and, more often than not, exclusively of party officials and MPs' interests.

In general, party organisation is concentrated at the parliamentary level. This is where the political stakes are highest and where party members try to maintain influence and power especially with those who run the government. The following sections address party organisation at the parliament level as well as outside of parliament.

#### Party organization in parliament.

Since political stakes are highest at the parliamentary level, it is also where party organisation is most active. This continues to be the case because parties in the Solomons



are still, overwhelmingly, parliamentary groupings. They are formed and organised with the primary aim of getting their members in parliament. Indeed, ministerial portfolios, other parliamentary positions, privileges and perks are attractions which are enthusiastically sought after. Therefore, organisation at the parliamentary level is closely correlated to the purpose of securing government leadership and remaining in power as long as possible.

In parliament, party leaders especially those who form the government, are the principal party organisers. And since government in the Solomons have been generally characterised by coalitions, there is much jostling for ministerial positions and political horse-trading between the parties. Thus, party organisation during and after the general elections must necessarily be efficient and reflects the needs of those times. For instance, in a coalition, ministerial portfolios are often given to the different party leaders and then to MPs who are representatives from the different provinces especially those from important and influential islands such as Malaita (with the highest population), Western Province (with most resources and sources of government revenue) and Guadalcanal (where Honiara the capital, is situated).

In 1986, for instance, the government consisted of a coalition of four parties namely, the United Party, the Independent Party and The National Front for Democracy Party

and the Solomon Ano Sagufenua. The United Party was the majority party and therefore, the prime ministership went to Peter Kenilorea. The leaders of the other parties were given the following portfolios, George Kejoa, the Minister of Finance; Andrew Nori, the Minister of Home Affairs; and Danny Philip, the Minister of Education and Training, respectively (Solomon Nius, March, 1986: 4-5). The leader of Solomon Ano Sagufenua Party was given the Agriculture and lands portfolio but later, he was sacked from the government for insurbodination.

In short, in the distribution of portfolios, the majority party leader has to take cognisance of factors such as other party leaders who are most likely to join him, regional representation, church representation and the need to get the other parties' support in order to form a coalition. Beside the distribution and sharing of parliamentary positions, leaders who form government could find themselves having more than the fair share of parliamentary responsibilities. For instance, it was reported in the Solomon Star (November, 1984: 1) that the Prime Minister had to organize the parties that formed the government and then he had to tutor the newly elected MPs, a good number of whom were political novices, on their parliamentary responsibilities and duties. The Prime Minister, Mr. Solomon Mamaloni, had to brief the MPs on wide-ranging subjects such as the role of an MP, the roles and duties of ministers, the need to have a clear overview of the

government's programme of activities in order to facilitate MP-electoral relations and the need to read widely on both national and international issues. In essence, these are some of the major activities involved in organising parties at the parliamentary level. Organizing of parties, as exemplified from the discussion above, can be an unenviable task especially since most governments in the Solomons have been coalitions.

Since the introduction of the Ministerial System in 1974, governments have been characterised by coalitions. A detailed discussion is needed here.

Coalition governments reflect both the youthful nature and the recency of the party system in the country and the low level of party organisation, especially with regards to party linkages to the peoples, in the electorates, who are predominantly rural dwellers. The tables below show the different coalitions in the 1980 and the 1986 governments.

Table 4.

The 1980 cabinet.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Ministry</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Party</u>
P. Kenilorea	Prime Minister	East Are Are	SIUP
	Foreign Affair		
	Police and Justice.		

B. Kinika	Finance	East Makira	SIUP
P. Tovua	Natural Resources	Central Guadalcanal	SIUP
M. Bonuga	Transport & communication	Temotu Pele	SIUP
E. Harihiru	Works & Utilities	Small Malaita	SIUP
G. Ghemu	Trade, Industry & Labour	Maravo	SIUP
F.B. Hilly	Deputy Prime Minister		
	Health & Medical services	Ranogga and Simbo	Indp.
G. Beti	Education & Training	Roviana & North	
		New Georgia	Indp.
P. Kapini	Home Affairs	North Guadalcanal	Indp.
D. Lulei	Youth & Cultural Affairs	East Isabel	Indp.
L. Wickham	Law & Information	Gizo & Kolombangara	Indp.
W. Ben	Agriculture & Lands	North-East Guadalcanal	Indp.

Table 5.The 1986 Cabinet.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Ministry</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Party</u> .
Kenilorea	Prime Minister	East Are Are	SIUP
E. Alebua	Deputy Prime Minister	East Guadalcanal	SIUP
P. Tovua	Foreign Affairs	Central Guadalcanal	SIUP
T. Harihiru	Economic Planning	Small Malaita	SIUP
J. Maetia	Post & Telecommunication	East Honiara	SIUP
S. Konofilia	Police & Justice	North-West Malaita	SIUP
J. Dorovolomo	Immigration & Labour	South Choiseul	SIUP
A. Maetia	Health & Medical services	East Malaita	SIUP
D. Philip	Education & Training	Rendova, Vona Vona & Tetepari	SAS
S. Lekelau	Public Service	Vella Lavella	SAS

G. Kejoa	Finance	West Guadalcanal	Indp.
R. Bera	Trade, Commerce & Industry	Ngella	Indp.
S. Sande	Natural Resources	Nort-East Guadalcanal	Indp.
A. Nori	Home Affairs & Provincial Government	West Are Are	NFP
J. Tapaika	Transport, Works & Utilities	Rennel & Bellona	NFP

Coalitions, as seen above with the inclusion of the different party leaders and party members who formed the governments led by Peter Kenilorea in the 1980 and 1986 cabinets respectively, are a significant feature of government in the Solomons. Even the formation of a coalition government is a real drama in itself, as the different party leaders jostle among themselves in horse-trading, bargaining and lobbying. And since party rules are rarely followed, particularly in the period immediately after each election and, given that individual choices are paramount in deciding the success of one group over the other, secrecy, even collusion and political intrigue can be intense and cut-throat

during that period.

Intense negotiations and lobbying between individual MPs and parties are usually evident during the first few weeks of a parliament's life. Most importantly, the party leaders are the prime target. Reporting on their observations on the 1980 elections, Premdas and Steeves (ibid: 96) noted that lobbying are influenced by considerations such as (1) allocation of cabinet positions (2) leadership in parliament and (3) regional balance.

The allocation of cabinet positions appears a central factor. Why is this? In a country where resources are scarce but where social mobility has taken on a new dimension, especially within the context of the rise of the new modern big men, being a minister is a fast road to political glory. And the perks in the form of a free house, minister's car, overseas trips and spotlight in the news and features in the newspapers altogether, contribute to the attractiveness of a cabinet position.

But in this intense competition for portfolio positions, the weakness and the flux state of political party affiliations and the almost absence of party discipline, become starkly obvious. As one writer adduced, this would be the reason members of the Independent Party remained unattached and wished not to be associated with other parties, especially in the period immediate to the election of a prime minister. By doing this, they would stand to have more

options to join strong and promising parties and thus enhance their opportunities and those of their members to be candidates for ministerial portfolios (Solomon Star, September, 1984: 3-4). Conversely, these independent MPs are less committed to the coalition they may join and this can be a menace to the permanence of such a coalition. As John Chick clarifies, such coalitions are loose and difficult to manage, let alone, to control. Often, these coalitions are "alliance of convenience" (John Chick 1983: 64). So as long as the parties remain weak (no strong party rules and party organization), there is nothing much to be done to remedy this. One of the reasons why this is the case is because in the elections, the majority of the candidates pay their own fees and run at their own expense (Premdas and Steeves 1983: 96).

Another feature that can be insidious to the party system in the country and politically destabilising and costly to the whole government system are motions of no confidence. In some instances, this can be the consequence of an MP not being given a cabinet position. In other instances, this can be a sheer display of personal grudge of those in power. A classic example of the latter was an instance reported in the Solomon Star (June, 1986: 1). In that case, the leader of the SAS decided to move a motion of no confidence against the Kenilorea government which was in power. However, this was contrary to the wish of former's party members as SAS was one



of the parties in the coalition government. But the sentiments of his party perturbed the leader in the least. As he related:

I will move the motion whether I have the support or not. I know that plenty of MPs are not happy with Sir Peter's (Peter Kenilorea) leadership (ibid).

Not surprisingly, the motion failed as it lacked both adequate merit and substance in order to attract support from other MPs. As the MP for Rennell and Bellona metaphorically puts it:

I come to 'bury' Sir Peter, but seeing that there is nothing wrong with him, I praise him instead (ibid).

In the end, this kind of politicking and in-fighting can have a big toll on party organization in parliament. Strong party discipline based on decisive application of party rules would be a possible remedy for this kind of personal intractability and coalition shifts. This is needed for party organisation both inside and outside of parliament.

#### Party organization outside parliament.

Outside parliament, one is hard-pressed to find parties which are organised and are visible. Most parties are centered in Honiara. Outside of Honiara there are no party offices.

If they are, only the parties which have members in the government or in the opposition have offices. But often these are in the form of government offices. The best examples of

these are the Prime Minister's Office and the Opposition Office. But beside parties in government and those in opposition, other parties do not have offices even on government premises.

As for party activities, only some of the parties have constitutions in which the functions and the activities of these parties are clearly spelled out. The major party functions include daily office duties, organising of meetings especially when there are urgent matters to attend to, and planning of strategies, especially the organising of the annual conventions. An example of such a party which organizes party activities is the Peoples' Alliance Party.

Within in its 1980 constitution, there is set out, the party structure which include provisions such as rule 35 which caters for a national party organisation. This determines the national officers who include a President, four Vice-Presidents, and a National Secretary. Rule 44 stipulates that there be a National Council which include all the representatives of the party within and outside parliament including the previous out-going President. A similiar set-up is provided for Regional Councils in the provinces (Rules 24-34). The party constitution also provides for affiliated organisations such as Women Auxiliaries (Rules 82-83) and a Youth Section (Rules 84-85) (The constitution of the Peoples' Alliance Party 1980: 1-15).

But although the constitution is elaborate on the

structure of the party and the possible linkages to its members, the records showed that little had been done to 'take' the party to the rural people. The challenge for the party is just to do this; get the rural people involved by linking the party to them in a tangible way.

The other party which has a semblance of being organised in this way is the National Democratic Party (NADEPA). But this is the case because it has a trade union base. The party was formed with the primary purpose of representing employees' interests in parliament and thus, it was most active and effective during the early years, in the mid-1970s. From the beginning, it attracted strong support and employee enthusiasm. This was the case because since the colonial days, there was no concerted, organised approach to the representation of employees' interests to both the colonial administration and the employers.

As the records show, the party had organised strikes for higher pay for the employees, negotiated on their behalf and even sent party and union representatives to other urban areas where there were employees in order to hear their grievances. In this connection, one of the party's major aim was to agitate and negotiate with the different employers to have the rights of their employees recognized (Tuhanuku 1983: 120-126).

But like the Alliance Party, the influence of NADEPA was confined mostly to Honiara. Outside the capital, the party's influence was almost negligible because only a small percent

of the population was engaged in paid work. Even in the late 1970s, this percent amounted only to 19% of the country's population (Migration, urbanisation and development in the South Pacific, 1982: 72). Moreover, NADEPA lost its parliamentary voice when its leader, Bartolomew Ulufalu, was defeated in the 1984 elections (Solomon Star, October, 1984: 1).

The alternative then was for the employees to support the newly formed Labour Party which was started by the General Secretary of the unions, Joses Tuhanuku who used to work closely with the former leader of NADEPA, Bart Ulufalu.

#### Party membership.

Party membership is generally small and fluid. In the main, party officials and MPs who are members of a particular party are the obvious ones. But even MPs who are members of a party could change their party affiliations, while in parliament, if they see that their chances are better if they do. This is further complicated with individuals who claim to be a member of more than one party. To complicate things, these individuals usually do not fulfill the party requirements as lay down by the party rules or stipulated by the respective party constitutions. For instance, the 1980 Alliance Party constitution stipulates that members are 'due paying individuals.' Furthermore, the party officials have the right to admit or reject admission of any individual.

However, should an individual has a cause to complain, recourse is available through an appeal which should be lodged with the party's national councils (Constitution of the Peoples' Alliance Party, 1980: 6-16).

Despite the existence of such rules, rarely do the Alliance Party officials refuse individual requests. There are two reasons for this. First, there are very few branches which are active and functioning. Most of the party branches are in Honiara. Therefore, individuals who show interest are enthusiastically received even without scrutinising their level of commitment. Secondly, and related to the first reason, only a relatively small number of people join the parties. Therefore, many of the parties have an open-hand policy of taking in new members.

The general trend is that most people are inclined to join their own groups, whether they are elites, union members, church members or members of a particular ethnic or linguistic group. For example, in the 1976 election, John Chick (1983: 64) states that membership followed similiar affiliations such as the church which one belonged to and not along party interests. Church members voted their own member candidates rather than voting for party candidates. And it would be difficult, in the Solomons where most people are members of different churches, to compete against church-endorsed candidates (ibid).

As party history and experience show, in the Solomons,

there are few parties which can boast of having any resemblance of being mass parties. Most of the parties have members who have yet to appreciate the party rules and who would easily opt for membership of another party which has the best opportunity to succeed. This is clearly exemplified in the selection of possible party candidates before each election.

#### Parties and candidates.

Experience in the Solomons shows thus far that it is not so much the selection of the candidates that is important as the scrutiny of who is the most able and stands the best chance to win. This is because, as it often happens, there is usually a surfeit of potential candidates who would wish to stand for the parties. Often they insist on party endorsement even after the official candidates have been selected (Larmour 1987). As it often happens, when they are refused, these political aspirants run in the elections even without the official party endorsement and frequently, against official candidates (ibid). Given the high unpredictability of election outcomes, the parties often 'take note' of such unofficial candidates lest they win, in which case the parties will then claim them (ibid: 4).

The actual selection of party candidates often differ from one party to the other. In general (as above-mentioned), the parties will select the candidates who stand the best

chance of winning. Indeed, this depends on a number of factors such as the background of and the support that the candidates appear to have. Thus, a carpet-bagger stands virtually no chance of winning (Chick 1983: 68) except in exceptional cases where family reputation or tribal affiliations preceded a candidate and supporters of that candidate are numerous enough to give the him or her the winning edge.

Usually, parties confirm as candidates all the incumbents in parliament except for those who officially express their wish to retire from politics. As it often turns out, incumbents would wish to lose in the elections than to voluntarily relinquish their chances of winning. Despite the high turn-over of parliamentarians in each election (Premdas and Steeves 1983: 81), the trend shows that MPs would wish to contest the elections as the political benefits associated with being a MP are a big stake to easily give up. Associated with this is an observation that the selection of candidates is quite oligarchical. Incumbents who have known track records are often supported by colleagues with whom they have served either in the party or in parliament. Seen in this light, although parties such as the Alliance Party have constitutions that state, among other things, that the selection of the candidates is made by 'secret ballot' and the selection has to be endorsed by the regional councils and the national council or the national executive, putting this in

practice is something else.

During elections, parties are most particular and active with the selection of candidates. Full-time election managers are chosen and given a working budget to run the party campaigns. Often prospective candidates are invited to apply for party affiliation and support. Central executive councils would screen the candidates and endorsed those they have chosen. Most of these are done at Honiara before endorsed candidates go to their respective constituencies to campaign and contest the election.

#### Elections:Manifestos,campaigns and results.

The election period is the high point in the political drama in the Solomons. Given the low party support and the small party membership, it is inevitable and, thus expected, that parties will either win or lose according to how effectively they campaign during the election periods. Success and failure also depend on how the party policies are sold to the public. These policies are embedded in the various manifestos. It is pertinent to discuss some of the party manifestos to see what exactly are some of their policies.

In general, it has been the case that party manifestos are no more than a list of propositions (a shopping list) that party officials would tell the bureaucrats (public Servants) to implement once the parties form the government (Chick 1983:



65-66). They are not fully articulated. Also, they do not have other attachments to them that could serve as detailed blue-prints. Often the manifestos are the work of a small group of officials without any wide consultation especially with the rural people. Essentially, these manifestos are political tracts whose length, language (English is often used) and short-print runs and high prices usually inhibit any wide distribution. This is further complicated by the low literacy rate which also limits a wider range of readership. Even the contents are nothing more than broad, bland statements of beliefs and ideas of the architects of the manifestos. Often time, the different manifestos state the same things with different emphasis on areas of special interests.

The 1980 United Party manifesto, for instance, subscribes to making 'practical, realistic, sensible and sound policies for the people' (Premdas and Steeves 1983: 87). The party leaders called this the 'solomonisation of development' (ibid). However, the manifesto does not explain or articulate what this broad statement means or even implies. In a similiar vein, the Alliance Party puts out a manifesto which advocates the need to carry out 'rural development and decentralisation of powers to the provinces' (ibid). Again, there was no explanations of what this approach would practically entail.

As aforementioned, the manifestos advocate similiar

policies. For both the United Party and the Alliance Party, emphasis was placed on education and training, balanced development with importance also placed on the rural areas, local industries and sufficiency in food production and an aim for more food processing. Both manifestos again placed emphasis on the need to have a strong, sovereign government. In general, the manifestos are idealistic and needed further clarification in the guidelines so as to be easily operational once the parties get into power. Equally importantly, the manifestos have to address the needs and concerns of the rural dwellers who are the majority.

As for campaigns, though important, they are generally individual efforts. They are individual efforts in so far as the parties are not strong since they are organisationally weak. Equally significant is the fact most candidates do individually decide to contest in the elections. Therefore, they have to pay their own fees and contest at their own expense.

Usually, candidates travel around the electorates with the help of relatives or other villagers who are hired or in numerous instances, offer their services voluntarily. At each village, the candidate would consult the leader or leaders; either the chief, church pastor or elders. At a convenient time (usually in the evenings when most people could gather), a meeting is convened in which the candidate would explain his intentions for running, and his plans. He then consults the

villagers for what they would like him to do if he ever wins. If he is a party candidate, the party policies are then explained.

Market days are some of the ideal times for candidates to campaign. Here, an important person (provincial member or a council delegate) would make the announcement that candidates are available to talk after the people have completed their buying and selling. Sometimes, the candidates are allowed to speak before such transactions begin. After the talks, there would be a question and answer time. During this period a political drama is often unfold. Many of the people would ask all sorts of questions, relevant or not relevant to the talks. Some of these questions are meant to test the ability of the candidates. Others are asked for sheer ridicule especially if the people find out that one of the candidates is unprepared for such an important undertaking -as a possible national leader (personal experience).

The candidates would often aim to cover the whole constituency twice over, before the polling day. This is not only to sell the ideas and party policies but this is also done with the intention to rectify any damages done by the other contestants.

In the rural areas, there is not much pomp or any other extraordinary events accompanying the campaigns. For those who are financially able, T-shirts are given and posters are distributed or placed on prominent buildings or at other

places, advertising the party candidates. In the towns, especially in the capital, Honiara, campaigns are usually accompanied by fanfare and blaring of electric-speakers and megaphones. It is common for the party campaign teams to speak on behalf of their candidates.

Unless the individual is a party candidate, he or she has to individually finance the campaign. In the urban areas, this can be quite a substantial undertaking as the costs could include paying for supporters, placards, trucks, food and drinks for the campaign team and merely to sustain the campaign during the duration of the election period. In the rural areas, the financial costs can be kept to the minimum to essentials such as hiring of trucks or out-boards and canoes and food for the campaign team. Paying for assistants can merely involved a token sum or there could be no payments where the such services are freely rendered.

Parties which have strong campaign platforms in the sense that their policies are attractive, have effective campaign teams and strong candidates who have supporters by way of relatives, friends, church members and acquaintances in the rural areas. Members of these parties would stand a better chance of winning. Also, in cases where party members have been MPs and have good political track-records in that he or she has given assistance to villages, churches, youth groups and to other influential leaders, they also stand a better chance of winning.

The examples below show which parties are successful and have strength in the 1980 and 1984 parliaments, respectively.

The results of the 1980 and the 1984 elections.

The following results (in tables 6 & 7) of the 1980 and the 1984 elections show the relative strength of parties in parliament. They also show the strength of two parties, the Peoples' Alliance Party and the United Party which have dominated party politics since the latter stages of the 1970s.

Table 6.

Parties and their strength in the 1980 parliament.

<u>Parties.</u>	<u>Number of seats.</u>
United Party	16
Peoples' Alliance Party	10
Independent Group	10
National Democratic Party	2
	<hr/>
	<u>38</u>

Table 7.

Parties and their strength in 1984 parliament.

<u>Parties.</u>	<u>Number of seats.</u>
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United Party	13
Peoples' Alliance Party	11
Independent Group	9
National Democratic Party	1
Solomone Ano Sagufenua	4
	<hr/>
	<u>38</u>

In table 6, there was a little swing among the four parties in 1980. Four years later (in 1984), a similiar picture ensued although the new party, Solomone Ano Sagufenua, managed to secure four seats in parliament. This can be explained. The leader of Solomone Ano Sagufenua was a former minister in the United Party. By the time of the latter election in 1984, the National Democratic Front for Democracy had begun and its leader managed to secure a seat in the parliament. He was a former member of the Alliance Party.

Although the two parties, the United Party and the Alliance Party had, hitherto, dominated parliamentary leadership, it cannot be assumed that they have virtual monopoly. Even if they did, this monopoly did not last indefinitely. More importantly, much depends on the individual members and their relation with their constituents and performance during their terms of office. Ultimately, their success depends on how the people perceive them in

regard to their performance and the parties which they represent. Therefore, it is apposite to garner what the views of the people of these individuals, the parties and the whole political system.

#### Voters' view of parties and politics.

So far, the discussions have dwelt on many themes, two of which are the predominance of personalisation of politics and the elitist nature of parties. But the views of the people have not been checked. This section is purported to address just this. Many of the excerpts in this section are from newspapers.

Though few, Solomon Islanders who have written on the subject have unequivocally stated that political parties are colonial contrivances. They have claimed that parties have been imposed by the former colonialists without the peoples' consent. And the process was inadvertently rushed. The people were not consulted or informed. Inevitably, parties have been treated with suspicion and regarded as alien to the traditional political style of decision-making.

Joseph Waleanisia (1986: 9) writing in the Solomon Star, not only highlights this point but goes on to show why this was the case:

...the political groups (parties) that emerged did so in total isolation of the people who were to become subjects to the government system.

He then goes on to explain why:

Parties were adopted to impress on the colonial officials the existence of potential capable groups that could take over the reigns of government quite ably and hold the diverse nation together (ibid).

In a similiar way, DPP (1984:7) writes to explain that in the Solomons, there was no such thing as parties. Parties were started by a few elites. Since then, some of these parties have faded away from the political scene while a good number of them existed but in name. DPP then explains further that one of the reason why the public finds it hard to understand, let alone accept parties is because the parties are not home-grown and party politics is adversarial in nature. Therefore, it is difficult to root the idea in the minds of the people who are used to communal and consensual politics (ibid). The latter involves different rules and take a longer time. Moreover, party politics gets complicated and confusing as different political actors get involved. Often, political aspirants try to indigenise politics but in doing so, they often veered from the common and accepted rules of legitimate politics and end up confusing every one. DPP highlights this by posing a question:

If candidates would not carry out the campaigns by themselves, how can we trust them ..to lead us..once they are elected.

Interestingly, it is not uncommon to find political aspirants who are ignorant of what they have placed themselves in. Again, DPP gives an example of such candidates:

One candidate when asked what a certain word meant, simply replied, "I will take note" (ibid).



In the course of their campaigns, some other candidates even tried to convince voters by preaching from the Bible (ibid).

Beside the general ignorance and often incomplete understanding of party politics, the campaign can prove quite inhibiting because of the general lack of clarity of what party politics entails. This was exemplified by an old man who was asked what he understood about parties. As his reply (Solomon Star, September, 1984: 3) showed:

Those people have a lot of money to spend on parties. They seem to talk about parties every day.

At times the voter's ignorance of party politics is made worse by the non-chalance and ridicule of the candidates and even government officials who are responsible for conducting the elections. Asked by a villager what a party meant, a government officer relies:

Get you plate, spoon and fork and join the party, eating and drinking (ibid).

Though the reply was amusing as much as infuriating, it gives an indication of such a lackadaisical attitude of a government officer. It also indicates how much more work is there to get the knowledge and the experience of party politics right to the rural people. This lacunae -the need to fully understand party politics -was highlighted in Waleanisia's article (1986: 9) when he elucidates that:

We have advanced under the system for almost a decade now. What has emerged during that period points to an entirely different situation, a reality characterised by political uncertainty and instability which served no better purpose than to isolate the people from the political and economic realms.

He then goes on to cite examples of how the lack of understanding and the adversarial nature of electoral politics had ushered in new social problems:

...look at the number of the brothers, fathers, sons and uncles running against each other in the national elections under the banner of the different parties (ibid).

He continues:

A son challenged his father in the last (1984) national election. Is this a pre-requisite for unity? (ibid).

Another writer, John Toketa (Solomon Star, January, 1984: 2), argues in a similiar fashion. He says that political involvement, especially for the purpose of securing a seat in parliament, not only allows power struggle even among relatives but it also gives a tarnished reputation to both the politicians and the parties:

Making promises to do what people want is the game of all politicians. You vote for me and I will fight for funds to seal the roads from dirt...

Another person, under the pseudonym 'Concerned citizen' (Solomon Star, February, 1984: 10) also emphasises the same concern:

The strings of promises are nothing but sweet talks coming from a bunch of sugar mouths who do not know that 60 % of the money used in the Solomons is in the hands of foreign powers.

Concerned Citizen goes on to show the prevalent apathy that was common among most voters:

Whether we select a new group of politicians, or get back the old boys, nothing much will change the development growth of the Solomon Islands (ibid).

Again, this sentiment is echoed by John Toketa (Solomon Star,

January, 1984: 2):

Politicians come and go, both as members of the National Parliament and Honiara Town Council but there was no change in their Programmes of Action which they promised to the people who put them in power.

Voters' perception of both the parties and the politicians is not uniform either. Many voters still vote for those who they know, on the basis of whether they are relatives, friends, church members or wantoks. The success of the parties and the politicians depend not only on who you know but it also differs from one province to the other. Thus, the strategies of the parties should change accordingly. This approach was revealed by Eric Namalie (Solomon Star, September, 1984: 4), when he tried to make projections of how people would vote, with reference to the 1984 election:

The people of Temotu and Ulawa would vote for individuals who had shown mature relationship with the people on the basis of what they had done. The Rennell and Bellona people would like someone who would do more. Denominational competition would be stiff as church members seek to put their candidates in parliament. On Malaita, the chiefs and the old people would be most influential. Those who secure their support stand a better chance to win. On Guadalcanal, the people would like MPs who would fight to stop further land sales and resources from being exploited by companies. An interesting situation exists in Isabel. The West Isabel people are content with their MP. However, in the East Isabel constituency, a reverse situation exists. The people like a new person to represent them. Finally, in the Western Province; except for Choiseul, most voters would like to see new politicians in the new parliament.

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that what voters know is not necessarily the same as, or do not resonate with, what politicians understand. In the absence of such a mutual understanding, voters would tend to vote in the most safest

way -to vote those whom they know and trust. Inevitably, they would vote their relatives, friends, church members, and wantoks. In the end, cultural ties and practices still dictate the way people vote and perceive politics.

The flip-side of such a case is that parties would suffer and only individual contestants would gain. Parties need to be strong and influential in the politics of the country and therefore, there is a need for improvement in their style of organisation, level of mass support, linkages to the rural peoples and to function as permanent parts of the political system and not as intermittent organizations that "come alive" only during election times.

### Conclusion.

Parties in the Solomons resemble the elitist party model. They can be characterised as purely parliamentary groupings. They are predominantly controlled by westernised elites especially those who have had training abroad. These elites took partial control of politics in the mid-1970s and full control after political independence in 1978.

Even years after the introduction of the party system, party politics had yet to find a 'proper fit' in the country. Much more can be done to improve and institutionalise the political parties. Importantly, linkages between the parties and the people, especially the majority who are rural dwellers, need to be improved. For people to participate

effectively, they have to be educated in the politics of party system. And in a country where most of the eligible voters (the adult population) can not read and write, this is a urgent need.

To complicate matters, the absence of traditional, centralised governments, as found in African countries and in some Polynesian islands, does not allow for a smooth accommodation vis-a-vis, the Westminster system of government and the diverse Melanesian polities, once party system was introduced. But the need is still there, if not, an urgent one. As Premdas and Steeves (1985: 25) aptly pointed out:

No system of political institutions can develop without the appropriate set of social values and cultural traditions to uphold it. Political culture must be congruent with the political structure to ensure a minimal level of legitimacy and stability to the polity.

In the Solomons, the period of preparation for political independence was short. Decolonisation was rushed. Little time was spared for adequate preparation. Instead, there was a push, mostly by colonial leaders, for political independence even against the wishes of some national leaders who foresaw problems that the people and the country would encounter because of the general state of unpreparedness. Significantly, the absence of any marked semblance of nationalism, which could have render national unity in the country, meant that the people and the leaders were and still are, living in quite different worlds. Because of all these, party politics is the poorer.

#### Chapter 4.

#### Conclusions.

It was the best of times it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom it was the age of foolishness;...

Charles Dickens, A tale of two cities.

All things are in a state of flux.

Heraclitus, The aphorisms of Heraclitus.

Reminiscent to the above quotes, politics in the Solomons is ever-changing. There is a lot of uncertainties. The direction party politics has taken can be quite unclear at times. The whole political scene in the country is typical of third world country politics in which the 'fit' between the introduced political system and the indigeneous polities is still being negotiated. At best, it is in a constant state of flux.

From the discussions so far, one point stands out: since politics is still highly personalised and elections are generally decided on the basis of peoples' voting habits such as voting for relatives, friends, church members and other wantoks, any progressive changes and development in the

country would also have to depend on the actions (or in their absence, inactions) of those leaders who hold power.

### The absence of nationalism.

As the discussions in the preceding chapters showed, the absence of a nationalistic uprising in the country, particularly during the eve of political independence (mid and late '70s), which would have determined the nature of the party system and set the tone for party politics for posterity, meant that the parties which have subsequently emerged are elitist. In the Solomon Island context, the parties are elitist insofar as they are, more than anything else, parliamentary groupings and controlled predominantly by the educated elites in the country. In particular, these elites are those who have managed to secure seats in the National Parliament.

Parties are the making of the British colonial administration in collaboration with the national elites in parliament then. The adoption of parties was done mainly through constitutional developments which began in 1960 and culminated with the 1978 Independence Act. The latter Act, although it was an legislation of the British parliament, formed the basis of the independent nation's constitution. Thusly, constitutional development and the rise and development of political parties have taken a complimentary trajectory, particularly from 1974 beginning, in a major way,

with the introduction of the ministerial system.

So far, as experience has shown, parties lack the necessary qualities typically found in mass party systems. First, there is little support from the people, the majority of whom are rural dwellers. Also absent is the necessary legitimacy and acceptance of the parties' policies and goals due to the poor linkages between parties and the voters. This meant that individual appeals, personal links and relational affiliations count when it matters most -during the elections. Coupled with these is the third characteristic which is the low level of party organisation. Without the necessary party organisation, parties have found it difficult not only to plan strategies and implement party policies but also to enforce the party rules. As previously mentioned, since they lacked the necessary linkages to the people, individual characteristics and qualities are what most parties would count on for possible election victory. The low level of party organisation also renders the whole system its transitory nature as the turnover after each election is quite high. The politics of personality, the individualisation of important issues, the fluid state of party life and the rise of one leader after the other are, all an amalgam of the type of political development which has its roots in the colonial period (1893-1978).

Accentuating the already fluid party politics is the general non-participation of the majority of the people in



national politics. Again, the root of the problem lies in the historical development of the country during the colonial period. For example, of paramount importance was the miscalculation of colonial administrators in their choice of who the leaders and other government representatives would be for the different districts and villages. Most of the headmen chosen were not men of standing in their respective communities. Rather, the choice of headmen was often based on foreign perception and factors such as the ability of individuals to communicate in Pidgin English, the availability of potential candidates at any one time and the experiences that the individuals had in previous dealings with expatriates. All of these had been exacerbated by the racist 'superior mentality' and the attitude of the British colonialists who would not take the necessary time, as some missionaries had done, to learn the island languages (at least the major ones) in order to facilitate their communication with the indigenes. If they had done this, this would have enabled them to be properly informed about, amongst other things, the structure and the social organisations in the societies.

Thus, it is apparent that from the beginning of colonialism in 1893, a new order (a British one) was established. With this, new political structures and institutions had been imposed which had alienated the people from the decision-makers by the action of the British

administrators and the inaction of indigeneous leaders; the latter, for not improving or helping to change the system to suit local conditions. This results in political alienation which is still apparent especially in the way the people view political parties.

#### The elitist parties.

In the main, parties are parliamentary groupings which have their beginnings during the period the Governing Council was abolished and its inherent "Committee System" in 1974 and the subsequent introduction of the Ministerial System which came with the promulgation of a new constitution in the same year. However, the crowning act and the culmination of the whole series of constitutional developments came with the 1978 Constitution which not only gave the country its political independence but also legitimized the establishment of a new party system.

The parties have been involved in different roles in the government, the Opposition and the Independent group; the latter acting, though inadequately, as a third party.

Except for the two dominant parties -the Peoples' Alliance Party and the United Party which had dominated politics since the mid-1970s, the rest of the parties not only have to merge with other parties as coalition groups but often faded from the political scene, once the founders or the party leaders lost their seats in ensuing elections. And given the

absence of a mass party basis and popular support, especially in the rural areas, the reality of losing in the elections can be high. So far, political parties still remain elitist in orientation and out-look.

### The importance and the place of parties.

As long as the Westminster system remains in operation in the country, political parties will also exist as an essential feature of the whole political system. Beside, the Westminster system has been embedded in the supreme law of the country -the 1978 constitution. Unless a new type of government is introduced which necessarily mean, the promulgation of a new constitution, political parties and a multi-party system (based mainly on coalitions) will remain a permanent features of the present political system.

In a newly independent state like the Solomon Islands, and given the absence of a centralized traditional political structure which could have been readily adopted to a modern government set-up, parties play an important role not only in the legislative process but also in mobilising of the populace, however minimal this role appears. As Rupert Emerson (1960: 185) rightly underscores:

In a new state, parties do not only substitute for the colonial power but it can be the instrument to organise power from below where the government might have neither validity nor vitality of its own.

In a similar fashion, Sigmund Neumann (1963: 367) went on to aver that the development of a responsible party system could

be the secret of a successful transition from colonisation to self-rule. He said that the history of new states have shown that wherever the party system had not worked, the democratic system also failed (ibid).

The above observations can be easily applied to the Solomon Island situation. Even after the rise of an elitist party system, the role of advancing popular participation cannot be taken for granted. Democracy requires a meaningful participation by the people. This does not only mean the granting of universal suffrage but it also entails the full participation of the people in ways that will keep the government representatives responsible and accountable. Parties would do well to mobilise the people and educate them through public awareness campaigns, political education and eventually, by linking the people to the decision-makers.

In recent times, an increasing number of Solomon Islanders have come to acknowledge the reality that political parties are the most viable institutions with which governments are run. The editorial of the Solomon Star (Nov., 1984: 2) puts it this way:

What has become clear of the outcome of the elections is that more people have come to realise the value of political parties.

The editorial continued with a prediction that the next government (1988) would be most likely be ruled by a coalition of two political parties, together with the Independent Group (ibid).

It is evident that parties will certainly remain, for some time to come, an important feature of the political system in the country. What also remains to be done is an overall improvement in the organisation, support and legitimacy and the rooting of the parties in the rural areas. If such improvement are made, political parties will become more dynamic. After all, they are the very institutions through which power comes. The next section includes changes which can be regarded as possible reforms and recommendations.

#### Reforms and recommendations.

In view of the need for change in order to improve the overall party system, these reforms are suggested.

Firstly, it would be beneficial for the country to have a strong leadership. Having a batch of leaders from whom parties could choose from is important insofar as to maintain political continuity and to assist in a smooth transfer of power from one group of leaders to another group of leaders. Done this way, the latter group of leaders would be equally capable of succeeding and governing effectively as the experience would also be easily shared. From the foregoing discussions, the example of Sir Peter Kenilorea, is a case in point. He was a leader who had charisma, traditional knowledge (commonly referred to as customs or 'kastoms,' whatever the rendition may be) as well as political acumen and ability and Christian integrity. All these are regarded as

desirable qualities of a leader. Leaders, are needed, who would lead selflessly by putting the country's interests above their own and who have impartiality in the decision-making process. Impartiality is paramount because in a country where one could have a multiplicity of connections and allegiance, leaders have to remain independent (or at least "appear independent") from the influence of relatives, hanger-ons and wantoks. Like India, with the case of Mahatma Ghandi, the Solomon Islands would benefit if it has leaders who have visions and are like-minded. However, what would be more of an urgency is the need to deliberately groom a group of younger leaders who would be ready to take over from the old ones when the time comes.

Secondly, there exists a need for parties to improve their level of organisation. Here, structural transformation ought to be considered. Such changes should occur on all fronts. Party philosophies and ideologies should be updated to closely reflect the realities in a changing Solomon Island society. Party extensions to the rural areas and out-reach programmes for the rural peoples would remedy the gap that had existed between urban people and villagers. The ultimate aim should be to keep the party organisations, the elite leaders and the voters in a mutually dependable relation.

The third reform would be to probe into the possibility of parties being funded from the national coffer. In the Solomons, it is true to assert that parties are inadequately

funded and the government has not assisted in this instance. With financial assistance from the government, parties would be able support themselves and even raise extra funds through their own fund-raising activities. Financially stable, parties would be in a stronger position to influence the selection of candidates, give them support during elections and hold them accountable for their actions or inactions while they are in the parliament or when they control government.

Fourthly, mass political education is another priority area which ought be included in party programmes. Since independence (1978), little had been done to propagate and promote public, political education. Given the low level of literacy (only 15%), the need is urgent. Public education would be ideal for people who have never been to school and for whom learning is not institutionalised (as seen in school classrooms) but rather socialised through informal dialogues and discussions. The markets, meeting houses, village squares and even the churches are possible venues for the propagation of such public political education. This is important because party propaganda and influence would still have limited impact if the mass of the people are unable to understand, appreciate and participate meaningfully in politics. The importance of mobilising the mass to the extent that they are politically aware and actively involved was underscored by Rupert Emerson (1960: 291) thusly:

...the soul of the new nation may reside in the simple peasants and the workers who constitute the democratic

majority, but their ignorance and lack of experience render them unable to give it true expression.

Finally, it would be timely if the government summons a Royal Commission or set up a Parliamentary Committee to study the whole political system. Such a body would look into issues such as the election laws, the number of constituencies, the number of parties in parliament, and the qualification and eligibility requirements of candidates in order to stand in the elections. These are but a few reforms that could possibly be considered in the hope of strengthening the party system and politics in the Solomon Islands.

#### Further research.

There is a need for further investigation in the subject or in related areas. Specific to this research, circumstances surrounding the writing of the thesis prevented me from carrying out an indepth study. Fieldwork money was not available. Consequently, most of the materials used are from secondary sources.

Further research is needed to gather primary evidence on matters such as how the people view and feel about parties and politics and how these affect their involvement or non-involvement. First hand observation, through carrying out of field-work, and archival research would allow comparisons on other issues such as what people say and what they actually do, a phenomenon not unfamiliar in island communities (Cf. L.G. Hamilton 1974: 149). For instance, what is the



significance of party membership, per se, if people are engaged in collective membership insofar as individuals affiliate with parties not because of personal convictions, but often, as a result of pressure from social groups which they belong to such as, families, ethnic groups, island groups or church membership. Furthermore, field-work by way of interviews and questionnaires would enable us to see the voters' ability to understand issues and to make independent decisions rather than to be swayed by political patronage and material rewards often made possible by the network of the wantok system which is prevalent in most Melanesian societies.

In the Solomons, fewer original researches have been done on political institutions, political parties and the overall political system. The hope in carrying out this research is that it will serve as a spring-board for a fuller and fruitful research in the future. And if Solomon Islanders finally benefit from this kind of research, the mission of such an intellectual labour would be considered accomplished.

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