

Fiji, Samoa and the Maoris are only examples of problems arising from high natural growth rates, which must remain the major concern of the "European" countries in Oceania. To these must be added the Aborigines in Australia and the problems of population growth and economic development in New Guinea.

The demographic history of the Aborigine in Australia resembles in some respects that of the Maori in New Zealand—a period of decline with a prognosis of extinction, followed by recent demographic revival. Precise figures about the past will never be possible; but the main features of the present and the prospects of the future are becoming much clearer. A major study<sup>15</sup> based upon the Aborigines of the Northern Territory and covering a population of some 17,200, gives a picture of birth rates which may well exceed 35 per 1,000, a life expectation which may be close to or even in excess of 50 years, and a growth rate around 2.0 per cent. Whether these demographic patterns are true of Aborigines elsewhere remains to be tested, but there is no reason to believe that this is not the case. It is also clear from the movement of Aborigines, not only into fringe settlements in country towns, but also into the low income inner suburbs of the major cities, that growth is exceeding economic opportunity in rural and tribal areas, and while the problems of employment and assimilation thus raised are quantitatively smaller than those faced in Auckland with the Maoris, they are qualitatively and sociologically much the same.

As for Australian New Guinea, this remains essentially uncharted, demographically speaking. A recent estimate is that the indigenous population increased from 1.832 millions in 1959 to 2.032 millions in 1963, a growth rate of 2.2 per cent a year, and that with falling mortality resulting from the planned eradication of malaria and the extension of infant and child welfare services this rate might grow to 3.75 per cent in 1976 "with a gradual decline to a stable 2.7 per cent about the turn of the century"<sup>16</sup>. If the assumed trend occurs, the total population would be 2.688 millions in 1973, with an estimated increase in "high level" manpower from the 6,197 employed in 1963 to 19,902 in 1973, and with the 148,400 children in primary and technical schools increasing over the same period by 325,000 assuming that participation rates of the relevant age groups were only raised from 30 to 50 per cent<sup>17</sup>.

In the absence of reliable demographic and social statistics<sup>18</sup>, these figures must remain speculative, but regional surveys which have found rates ranging from 38 to 53 births per 1,000 of population<sup>19</sup> at least strengthen the view that the overall growth rate may now exceed 2 per cent and that the expansion of growth rates to 3 per cent or more is quite likely if the proposed health measures can be carried through.

Whether the New Guinea situation be viewed from the angle of education, labour force, expanding rural production, industrial diversification of the economy, or urbanisation, the problems are similar in many respects to those of the smaller islands of Oceania. But unlike those small islands, New Guinea is a very large

---

15. Jones, F. L., 1963.

16. Currie, Sir George, 1954, 18.

17. *Ibid.*, pages 28 and 31.

18. A breakthrough is hoped for in the proposed census to be taken in June, 1966, and in anticipation of this a Research Fellow has been appointed in the Department of Demography of the Australian National University to work on New Guinea.

19. McArthur, Norma, 1966.