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ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA : A REPLY

G. O. GUTMAN

Department of Territories, Canberra

In commenting on my paper, Dr. Crocombe gives his views on a number of matters and makes four points, one of them of substance.

Dr. Crocombe rightly criticizes my statement that 99 per cent of the total area is under native ownership and points out the correct figure which is 97 per cent. It would, however, be misleading to think that the remaining three per cent has passed into non-native ownership. In fact, most of it (2·5 per cent) is held by the Papua and New Guinea Administration in various forms, including term leases to expatriates and indigenous persons. Less than one per cent of the land is owned by expatriates.

Another point raised by Dr. Crocombe concerns the predominant form of native land tenure. In my paper I said that "many exceptions no doubt exist but joint or communal ownership of land is a predominant feature in a native society". Dr. Crocombe disputes this but says "certain land rights are communally held by clans, sub-clans and other descent group . . .". This seems to be so much the same way of stating what I said that I am not clear in what way Dr. Crocombe's view of the situation differs from that expressed in my paper.

Dr. Crocombe's next point appears to be that disputes over land are more common between different descent groups than within the same descent group. He considers that this refutes the familiar point (made in my paper) that the lack of clear individual titles is a disincentive to the planting of perennial tree crops. I should have thought his view (if correct) would only confirm that point.

Dr. Crocombe's remaining point seems to be based on misreading. I made the point that conversion to individual title could be stepped up if decisions to convert were taken by majority agreement rather than by unanimous consent. My argument was that within any group of 100 people it is easier to obtain the agreement of 51 to a proposal than to obtain the agreement of the full 100. Dr. Crocombe appears to dispute the logic of this proposition and asserts mistakenly that what I said relates to something other people said in 1962.