

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

A recent seminar in Goroka on "National Goals and Law Reform" has come out with recommendations of fundamental importance to the law, the legal system and the legal professions in Papua New Guinea and perhaps to any developing country. The seminar was organized by the Law Reform Commission and the Dag Hammerskjöld Foundation in Sweden. It was attended by Papua New Guinea lawyers, magistrates of District, Local and Village Courts, Academics, Students, Politicians, Policemen and Community Development workers.

The seminar concluded that a radical change of the legal system is needed in post-colonial Papua New Guinea. That is, the task of the Law Reform Commission should be transformationist rather than merely 'reformist'. This approach is in accord with the expressed policy of the present government. Mr. Somare has stated -

"We want to build a framework of laws and procedures that the people of Papua New Guinea can recognise as their own - not something imposed on them from outside."

- "Law and the Needs of Papua New Guinea's People in J. Zorn and P. Bayne (eds.) "Lo Bilong Ol Manmeri" (1975) 14.

However, the seminar participants were aware that this transformation is not an easy task. While changes in the legal system can help in the process of radical transformation of society, such changes by themselves will not be effective as long as the structures of society remain those inherited from the colonial era. These structures protect and create vested interests which obstruct change. Therefore, the message of Goroka was that transformation of law must be only one part of wider processes working towards radical social change.