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MORE THAN RATES, ROADS AND RUBBISH:
A HISTORY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ACTION
IN THURINGOWA SHIRE 1879-1985.

Part II

Thesis submitted by

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CHAPTER 7

A Theoretical Perspective

It has been asserted that a general theory of political activity needs to be developed for Australian local government.¹ Massam argued that there is no ready-made theory of local government.² In addition, there is a bewildering array of theoretically diffuse paradigms³ for specific themes, such as voting behaviour, urban

1 M.A. Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties* (West Melbourne, 1981), p.259.

2 Bryan Massam, "Spatial Structure of the State: The Local State" in Peter Taylor and John House (Eds.) *Political Geography: Recent Advances and Future Directions* (London, 1984), p.51.

3 P.Dunleavy in *Urban Political Analysis* (London, 1980) identifies a number of different theoretical approaches that seem to find particular favour: the pluralist theory, the public goods theory, the managerialist theory, locational theory, ecological socio-economic theory, the political-involvement-as-a-behavioural-process model, and the neo-Marxist theory. See Alan Burnett, "The Application of Alternative Theories in Political Geography: The Case of Political Participation" in Peter Taylor and John House (Eds.), *Political Geography: Recent Advances and Future Directions* (London, 1984), pp.25-49 for a succinct examination of each.

Systems analysis is another well-used theoretical perspective adopted from the behavioural sciences and utilised in political geography to explore the patterns of decisions in politically-defined space. For a concise description see Donald Stetzer, *Special Districts in Cook County: Toward a Geography of Local Government* (Chicago, 1975), pp.19-22. More can be obtained from the works of David Easton who developed the systems perspective in political science in his book, *The Political System* (New York, 1953). He refined his thesis in *A Framework for Political Analysis* (New Jersey, 1965) and particularly in *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York, 1965).

The structural, procedural and cultural aspects of the design, functioning and innovations utilised in local governments are each shown to draw on specific areas of organisation theory in Robert Haynes, *Organisation Theory and Local Government* (London, 1980).

community participation,⁴ land-zoning conflicts, organisation, access to facilities, management, planning, interest groups, elites, boundary demarcation and so on.⁵ Thirdly, no theory appears to be uniformly appropriate. One reason is that, in their concentration on the very powerful link between urbanism and local government, theorists usually relegate rural local government to the sideline in their theory-making.⁶ That the theory might include rural local government in a hit-and-miss fashion is sometimes acknowledged.⁷ Another reason is the wide

4 There is a dearth of research in rural community participation, particularly within a theoretical framework. This thesis helps rectify this deficiency.

5 For instance, location theory has been utilised to study the conflicts engendered from local authority land zoning as well as the changes in the political balance of local politics through the maintenance, redrawing and removing of internal and external local authority boundaries. Thus, to explain the variations of residential resistance to commercial development, K. Cox and J. McCarthy have ensured that location theory includes a "politics of turf", which becomes the link between private and public restructuring of land-use, to examine the various stakes that families have in their locality and their mobilisation against a changing capitalist world economy; "Neighbourhood activism as a politics of turf: a critical analysis" in K.R. Cox and R.J. Johnston (Eds.) *Conflict, Politics and the Urban Scene* (Harlow, 1982). Peter Taylor, *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality* (London, 1985), describes a number of studies which utilise location theory to examine the numerous changes to local government boundaries within Eastern European states after the establishment of Communist regimes. The new authorities were usually named after "neutral" physical features to weaken local ethnic loyalties. The boundary redrawings were exercises in "spatial-social engineering" to break traditional rallying points for sectionalism and thus foster a unified nation state (pp.212,213). One reason for the establishment of local government in Queensland was to break secession movements in Northern and Central Queensland; see Chapter 8.

6 It is interesting to note the turn-a-round: prior to the large scale urbanisation of the nineteenth century, agrarian societies provided the philosophical legitimacy for local government.

7 For instance see L.J. Sharpe, "Theories and Values of Local Government". *Political Studies*, 18 (1970), p.151.

diversity in local affairs internationally. Fourthly, no one theory incorporates the totality of local government - why it exists, its functions and actions, its distinctive values, its historical and spatial aspects and its relationships with other local authorities and levels of government, with statutory authorities, with influential interest groups and with constituents. As a result, theorists have usually adopted a careful eclecticism by combining a modification of the most suitable theory with certain concepts and approaches from other relevant paradigms to develop their theory of the local government.⁸ This, too, is what is demanded of a theory appropriate to an historical study of a Queensland

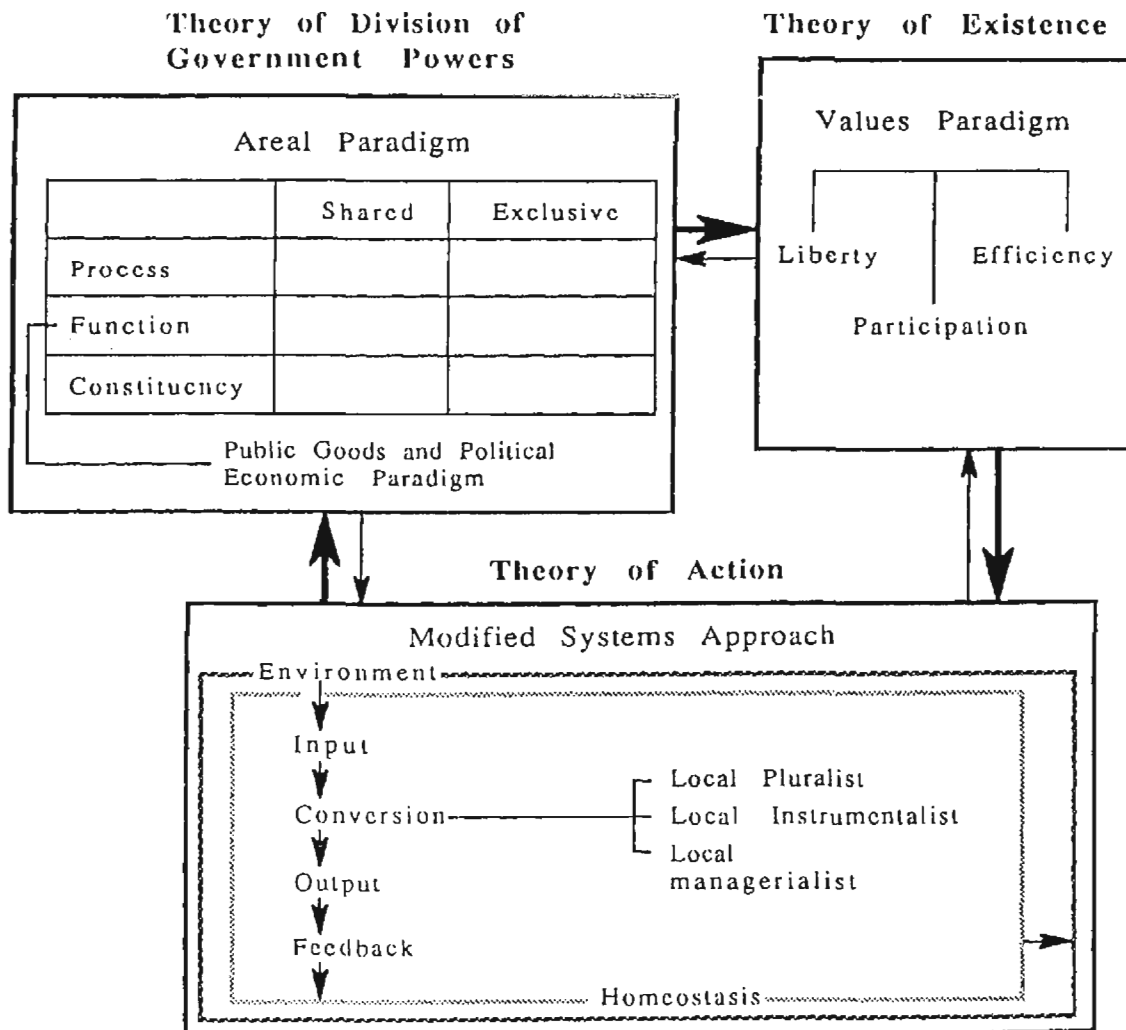
8 Most theories have been of the *local state*, a term first coined by C. Cockburn, *The Local State* (London, 1977). There can be no local state within a sovereign state, except under federal arrangements. Local government is not a "state" but a branch of the state. However, as S. Duncan and M. Goodwin point out in "The Local State: Functionalism, Autonomy and Class Relations in Cockburn and Saunders", *Political Geography Quarterly*, 1 (1982), pp.77-96, *local government* can easily replace *local state* without affecting the argument unduly. They suggest that the term *local state* might be usefully employed but, because it has more relevance to the British scene and much less to Australian circumstances, this thesis will continue to use *local government* but will utilise the theories of the local state.

Alan Burnett argues that "at the risk of academic indigestion it may be desirable...to choose eclectically from the different modes or levels of analysis and explanation"; "The Distribution of Local Political Outputs and Outcomes in British and North American Cities: A Review and Research Agenda" in A.D. Burnett and P.J. Taylor (Eds.) *Political Studies from Spatial Perspectives: Anglo-American Essays on Political Geography* (Chichester, 1981), p.204. Two examples will suffice to convey the eclecticism of the theory builders. Kevin Cox and David Reynolds combined systems analysis and location theory to develop their theoretical model of the local state in "Locational Approaches to Power and Conflict" in Kevin Cox, David Reynolds and Stein Rokkan, *Locational Approaches to Power and Conflict* (New York, 1974), pp.19-42. For his theory of the local state, Massam utilises the public goods and collective decision-making theories within a systems analysis paradigm; "Spatial Structures of the State: The Local State", pp.50-64.

rural-urban shire. Even so, it is intended that the configuration of theories encapsulated in the "Thuringowa theoretical model" will have applicability to local government generally in Australia.

DIAGRAM 1

Thuringowa Model of Local Government



The Thuringowa model will be a tripartite theory (see Diagram 1). It will encompass a modification of the areal division of government powers theory (how and why government power is divided) so that it includes a theory of existence (why have local government?) and a theory of actions (why and how local governments choose to act in particular ways).

Thirty years ago Maass and Ylvisaker developed the theory of an areal division of powers as it applied to local government.⁹ Hoffman¹⁰ and Huntington¹¹ demonstrated the value of the theory by re-examining the classical literature of French and American political science in terms of the areal division of powers as it pertained to local and central government. Stefan Dupre utilised the theory to examine local government in Canada whose situation has political similarities to Australia.¹² He asserts that areal analysis offers an ideal framework for detailed studies of rural local government. In 1976 Sharpe insisted that Maass and Ylvisaker's work remained the most exhaustive systematic study of the division of power by area.¹³ Tucker, one

9 Arthur Maass "Division of Powers: An Areal Analysis" in Arthur Maass (Ed.) *Area and Power: A Theory of Local Government* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1959), Chapter 1; P. Ylvisaker, "Some Criteria for a 'Proper' Areal Division of Governmental Powers" in Maass, *op.cit.*, Chapter 2.

10 S. Hoffmann, "The Areal Division of Powers in the Writings of French Political Thinkers" in Maass (Ed.) *Area and Power: A Theory of Local Government*, pp.113-150.

11 S. Huntington, "The Founding Fathers and the Division of Powers" in Maass (Ed.) *Area and Power: A Theory of Local Government*, pp.150-205.

12 J. Stefan Dupre, "Applied Areal Analysis: The Case of Canada" in Maass (Ed.) *Area and Power: A Theory of Local Government*, pp.89-112.

13 L.J. Sharpe, "The role and functions of local government in modern Britain" in Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Local Government Finance, Layfield Committee, Appendix 6, HMSO (London, 1976), pp.203-220.

of the foremost writers on local government in Australia, asserts that the theory is still applicable, and the major reasons for its neglect in current Australian literature are that the theory is taken for granted and the focus is then on theoretical concepts¹⁴ as well as an unwillingness to critique one's work within a broader theory.¹⁵

Even so, the theory as propounded by Maass *et.al.* contains weaknesses and omissions. It does not distinguish between a theory of how and why government power is divided and a theory of existence. Nor does it possess a theory of action. These will be addressed in the formulation of the Thuringowa theory. Indeed, because the areal division of powers theory obviously possesses adequate historical and contemporary relevance, it will be adapted to provide a working model in which to study a single local authority in Australia over its first 100 years.

Governmental power, that is, the total capacity to govern, which is or can be exercised by a given political community, can be divided in a number of ways. The "areal division of powers" divides governmental power territorially among areas or regions which exist or can be created within the political community. The importance of territory as an organising principle for governing has been the central tenet for the existence of local government in Australia.

14 J.D. Tucker, himself, does this; see "The Case for Local Government" in J.D. Tucker in collaboration with A.S. Fogg, R.C. Gates, J.H. Holmes, R.C. Jensen and J.R. Laverty, *Local Government in Queensland: A Report for the Queensland Division of the Australian Institute of Urban Studies*, Vol.1 (Canberra, 1981), pp.9-56; hereafter Tucker *et.al.*, *Local Government in Queensland*.

15 Interview Doug Tucker, 18 May 1990. See Bibliography for details of his works.

As well as being divided on a geographic territorial basis, government power is subdivided further according to process, function and constituency. In constitutional government, the theories of separation of powers and checks and balances claim a division of power according to the processes used in governing. With respect to local government, the legislative process in Australia was assigned to a central (that is, state) government and the process of execution and administration to local authorities. Parliament's premise was never a consideration of local government's capacity to govern. Rather, it was predicated on the belief that local government was merely the administrative arm of colonial government and, as such, its powers were those necessary to carry out the functional "housekeeping" activities associated with roads, bridges and sanitation. Colonial and state government diluted the process further by giving executive and administrative power for local and regional activities to statutory authorities. The devolution of power through these processes ensured illusionary local government autonomy.

The functions or activities of government are allocated among the levels of government. In Australia for instance, the function of coining money is assigned to federal government, the control of police and education are primarily state responsibilities and providing bridges, footpaths and, in Queensland, water reticulation¹⁶ are the province of local government. In fact, the theory of dividing powers areally which is most familiar to students of government is that which asserts a division according to functions. Such emphasis diminishes the values of liberty and participation that

¹⁶ An amendment to the Local Government Act in 1942 allocated town water supply as a local government function; in other States, it is the responsibility of large public corporations or ministerial departments.

the areal division of powers is said to promote.¹⁷ Indeed, interpreting *function* as *power* since its inception has allowed the emasculation of local government.

According to Saunders, there are three functions that the central state requires local government to perform.¹⁸ One function is the provision of the necessary infrastructure, which can include road networks, water reticulation, public transport and the organisation of land use, to attract capital accumulation and enhance the material well-being of residents. The second function is the provision of both cultural (such as parks, libraries, sports fields and recreation and tourist amenities) and material (for example, housing for the elderly and kindergartens) collective consumption facilities that help guarantee a healthier and more satisfied labour force. The third function required of local government is to ensure the maintenance of the state's social order. This involves legitimisation of the political, economic and social system via participation in local affairs.

Four main reasons can be suggested for the allocation of these three sets of functions to local government. The first, and probably major, reason is convenience.¹⁹ Most functions are concerned with local needs and are too parochial and time consuming for state government which has state-wide responsibilities. A second function is to defuse conflict by distributing

17 See below for a detailed discussion of these values.

18 P. Saunders, *Urban Politics* (Harmondsworth, 1980), pp.147,148. Saunders is supported by M. Castells, *City, Class and Power* (London, 1978); M. Dear, "A Theory of the Local State" in A.D. Burnett and P.J. Taylor (Eds.) *Political Studies from Spatial Perspectives* (Chichester), pp.183-200; and Johnston, *Geography and the State: An Essay in Political Geography*, pp.190-196.

19 This is clearly brought out in Chapter 8.

decision-making over many debating chambers: parliament, the various local authorities and sundry statutory authorities. By having the details of local provision decided and implemented at the local level, with the state government maintaining overall control of standards and finance, conflict is being deflected from state government. If state government were the focus of all conflicts, as it was before the implementation of urban and rural local government in Queensland in 1878 and 1879 respectively, it would be unable to cope administratively and, always cognisant of the ballot box, less parochially in the provision of services than is the case with a tiered system of government. A third reason has to do with a "divide-and-rule" tactic whereby local authorities are made to compete against each other (and the state) for limited resources in order to provide the necessary infrastructure. This leads to self-interested compartmentalisation of local government lobbying rather than a stronger political force of concerted combined local authorities. According to the ideological perspective of neo-Marxist theory, the fourth reason involves more than the consent of those being governed; "a much firmer state-induced ideological hegemony is necessary for the survival of the social order".²⁰ To Gramsci and his followers, hegemony assumes, firstly, that the ruling ideas in a society are the ideas of the ruling class which are diffused through education, the mass media, police, judiciary and so on; and, secondly, that such political, intellectual and moral leadership of the dominant groups results in the dominated class actively consenting to its own domination.²¹ Dear argues that local government co-opts and controls the

20 Peter Taylor, *Political Geography: World Economy, Nation-State and Locality* (London, 1985), p.120.

21 See Chapter 10 for this in practice. A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York, 1971). B. Jessop provides a comprehensive discussion of this field; *The Capitalist State* (Oxford, 1982).

population through its expenditure on social consumption.²² It accedes to certain demands and maintains citizen participation channels to legitimise its decisions. Neighbourhood interest groups are ignored or acknowledged as representative, depending on the nature of their demands. For instance, the concerns of cattle lobby groups were always considered but on three occasions Thuringowa Shire Council blocked petitions requesting a referendum calling for a five year moratorium on nuclear associated industries to be commenced by the French consortium, Minatone, in the Shire.²³ By putting the financial responsibility for carrying out designated functions onto local government, and creating the element of competition, state governments in Australia have been able to create conditions that diffuse conflict and, by involving the local community in decision-making, aid legitimisation as well as maintain the *status-quo* and, hence, society's social order.

Responsibility for representing different constituencies can be assigned to different levels of government. Hence the House of Representatives and Senate represent different constituencies at the federal level in Australia and, at the local, there could be a ratepayer franchise as occurs in some States. The

22 M. Dear, "A Theory of the Local State" in A.D. Burnett and P.J. Taylor (Eds.) *Political Studies from Spatial Perspectives* (Chichester, 1981), pp.186,193,194,197.

23 The Council ignored a petition with 630 signatures which represented more than the required 10% of the voting population to call a poll. The petitioners would have had no redress taking their complaints to the Minister for Local Government which could overrule local government decisions because his National Party Government was in favour of uranium mining. Minutes, TB, 20 June 1979; 20 July 1979. From 1962 the cattle lobby's interests no longer dominated the Shire Councils' rating structure; their concerns were one of many that the Councils took into account; see Chapter 13.

effectiveness of an areal division of power by constituency depends on the independence of each level, that is, whether its representatives have been elected by the voters rather than selected by any other governing body. Ylvisaker asserts that all representatives at all levels should be elected for a "proper" areal division of powers to provide insurance against "stymie and parochialism and to maximise the fluidity and generality of the process of government".²⁴ Thus constituency has relevance to the efficiency debate: local government versus statutory authorities.²⁵

Process, function and constituency are interrelated as methods for dividing power and can be either shared or exclusive. Hence in Queensland the process of local administration, for example, is shared by a local authority, statutory authorities and the Department of Local Government. Although some functions are the prerogative of individual local authorities, others are joint responsibilities with neighbouring authorities. Taking Thuringowa Council as an example, it and its neighbour, the Townsville City Council, have worked co-operatively with respect to joint road works and industrial promotional activities. Yet, simultaneously, there has been a century of acrimony with respect to water supply and retriulation. The complexities of intergovernmental power relationships are thereby emphasised.

State Government has also gradually divested local government of responsibility for some functions such as the provision and maintenance of public hospitals and, an important revenue earner, electricity and located them in statutory authorities. By using its spending power

24 Ylvisaker, "Some Criteria for a 'Proper' Areal Division of Governmental Powers", p.39.

25 See below for discussion on this debate.

through grants-in-aid - an instrument of courtship - the Federal Government has come to share with State Government a sizeable array of local government functions.

The areal division of powers theory allows for any number of combinations of the components. Indeed, function, process and constituency are not static. As an example, prior to 1920 local government's constituency in Queensland had a plural ratepayer franchise - those whose rates were less than £5 annually were entitled to one vote, two votes if they paid £5 but less than £10 and three votes if the rate were over £10.²⁶ The implementation of adult suffrage in 1920 explores one of the canons of the areal division of powers: how well such constitutional change reflected the political values prevalent at that time in state and local government in Queensland.²⁷

The major characteristic of the areal division of powers reflects, through a particular pattern of areal distribution, the dominant values at a specific time and place. The theory allows an examination of local government within its own economic, social and political territory as well as that of the state and nation at any given period. This characteristic is essential if the model is to possess historical and spatial dimensions. For instance, local government in Australia was imposed by colonial governments and was not a "grass roots" movement as occurred in America.²⁸ It was not considered important enough to be debated during the federation conventions of the 1890s nor was it mentioned

²⁶ C.P. Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977* (Canberra, 1978), p.22.

²⁷ See Chapters 8 and 10.

²⁸ Chapter 8 explores the instigation of local government in Queensland.

in the Constitution. Local government exists because of the legal authority of colonial and state parliaments. The relationship between state and local government is one of superior to inferior, of an areal division of powers by delegation.

The following example highlights how the areal and the political-economy theories of local government can be combined to feature the spatial-time dimension of the Thuringowan model. In a theoretical account of local government's dependence on economic realities, Fincher points out that major economic decisions are "outside" the local and even the national political agenda.²⁹ Affected by growing world-wide inflation of the West and European communist countries, local government in Australia has been in crisis because the decline in revenue, caused mainly by cuts in Federal and State subsidies and grants, was matched by escalating demands for services and central government's increasing devolution of minor, but nevertheless costly, functions to local government.³⁰

The first part of the Thuringowa model included a theoretic explanation of how and why government powers are divided within an areal-spatial-time dimension. The internal and external political, economic and social values of society shape local government. The second aspect of the theory justifies the existence of local government.

Local government has no independent existence. It is part of the state apparatus, and it exists to further the aims of that apparatus. These are to devolve to local government responsibility for local affairs in

²⁹ Ruth Fincher, "Local Implementation Strategies in the Build Environment". *Environment and Planning*, A13, pp.1233-1252.

³⁰ See Chapter 8.

order to diffuse conflict, enhance the liberty and participation of residents and promote efficiency in the provision of services for purposes of democratic stability and, for those who subscribe to the validity of political-economy analysis,³¹ capital accumulation.

Sharpe maintains that a theoretical justification for local government centres on the values that are actually preserved and nurtured by local government.³² What is sought, are not values that apply equally to other levels of government or, if they can be found, exclusively to local government. Rather, it is those values that are promoted more effectively by local government than other levels of government. The most commonly mentioned values of local government are liberty, equality, participation, welfare, efficiency, representativeness and leadership.

Tucker is quick to dismiss the last two values which are advocated by Jones,³³ arguing that they are more distinctive of state or federal government.³⁴ A local government property franchise still exists in all states except Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales.³⁵ With its direct election of the mayor or shire chairperson by compulsory adult suffrage, Queensland has a better claim

31 See Johnston, *Geography and the State: An Essay in Political Geography*, pp.193,194; P. Taylor, *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality* (London, 1985), pp.117-121; B. Jessop, *The Capitalist State* (Oxford, 1982).

32 L.J. Sharpe, "Theories and Values of Local Government". *Political Studies*, XVIII (1970), p.155.

33 M.A. Jones, "Management Innovation in Local Government" in Russell Mathews (Ed.), *Local Government in Transition* (Canberra, 1978), p.85.

34 Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", p.9.

35 Victoria instigated the adult franchise in 1980. Tasmania also has plural voting. Only Queensland has compulsory voting.

than the other states to the leadership value having produced leaders of the calibre of Clem Jones and Mike Reynolds.³⁶ However, because of the weaker powers and responsibilities of local government compared with national and state politics, such local leaders can not be in the same league as a Bob Hawke or Joh Bjelke-petersen. Thus, although representativeness and leadership are of considerable importance to local government, they are not virtues to which local government can lay especial claim.

Maass, Wood and Ylvisaker propose three core values as the *raison d'être* for an areal division of powers as it pertains to local government: liberty, equality and welfare.³⁷ As the following discussion will show, equality and welfare are not appropriate rubrics for local government but participation and efficiency are. Liberty, which relates to the protection of the individual from the misuse of centralised government power, is also problematic.

36 Thuringowa has had two leaders of note: Hodel and Gleeson. See Chapter 17 for details concerning Thuringowa's longest serving Chairman, Joseph Hodel. Hodel was an effective leader in his early years of service. Not only was he appointed a member of the Royal Commission on local government in 1896 but the conservative businessman catered for Thuringowa's years of staggering urban growth - 400% within a decade - within a philosophy which smacked of socialism! (See Chapter 13). Though many regard his actions as parochially narrow, Gleeson has proved himself a capable politician in tapping the fears and angers of the state National Party government to Thuringowa's benefit; see Chapters 9 and 12.

37 A. Maass, "Division of Powers: An Areal Analysis" in Maass (Ed.) *Area and Power: A Theory of Local Government*, pp.9,20,22; P. Ylvisaker, "Some Criteria for a 'Proper' Areal Division of Governmental Powers", Chapter 2; R. Wood, "A Division of Powers in Metropolitan Areas" in Maass, *op.cit.*, Chapter 3. The following chapters discuss various aspects of these values: for instance, Chapters 10, 11 and 12 examine "grass-roots" democracy, participation and liberty whilst Chapter 14 explores local government's welfare function.

There are enough examples to demonstrate the inability of a small local authority whose members are usually part-time to act as an effective barrier against a large, sophisticated state government bureaucracy. Colonial and later State Government often wielded their power arbitrarily against the interests of local authorities. Thuringowa's councillors came to believe that this was one constant in the relationship between them and central government's bureaucratic decision-making,³⁸ even when Thuringowa produced evidence of corruption.³⁹ Nevertheless, in the 1980s Bjelke-petersen's increasingly dictatorial legislative changes to local government favoured Thuringowa Shire. Thwarting the Labor Party, which had control of Townsville City Council (and which supplied the state and federal political representatives for the area), was the reason why Thuringowa, under the conservative Dan Gleeson, was allowed not only to maintain its borders but become a City thereby limiting the growth of Labor. What becomes obvious from a study of a specific local authority is that the degree of liberty fluctuates for any one local authority.

Dupre⁴⁰ and Johnston⁴¹ are sceptical of the liberty value of local government on other grounds. They argue that it is certainly possible for local government

38 One such example would be Thuringowa Council's inability to obtain better water access for its graziers and developers vis-a-vis the State Government's underground water contract with big business interests, the Greenvale Nickel consortium (see Chapter 16).

39 See Chapter 12 for two examples of "poll-rigging": one by a neighbouring local authority and the other by poll-signature collectors.

40 J. Stefan Dupre, *Intergovernmental Relations and the Metropolitan Area*, Paper No.1, Centennial Study and Training Programme on Metropolitan Problems (Toronto, 1967).

41 Johnston, *Geography and the State: An Essay in Political Geography*, pp.190-192.

to promote individual liberty but, just as central government does not have a monopoly of arbitrariness, equally local government's interests are not necessarily those of individual citizens. Their contention is supported by the numerous examples of favouritism, such as prompt road repairs of cattle and sugar interests and neglect of small farmer interests, by Thuringowa Councils.⁴² Land use zoning is another case in point. A person's home is no longer his/her castle, unless it has the correct zoning.⁴³ Local government has the wherewithal to be a major force against individual liberty, particularly through its regulative activities. What is often protected by a local authority is not so much individual liberty as the rights of certain sections of the community or its own policy decisions.

Exploration of the concept of liberty, particularly in relation to a local authority's territorial boundaries and its provision of essential services, also shows that an areal division of powers was often ineffectual in combatting an erosion of liberty experienced by one local authority's constituents vis-a-vis those within its neighbouring local government authorities.⁴⁴

Although there are problems with obtaining maximum liberty, there is substantial evidence that liberty is promoted by local government. Tucker cites a number of Queensland examples to prove that local government has always had a meaningful role to play as a buffer between the untrammelled power of the sovereign state and the

42 See Chapter 17.

43 Jones describes the crusading, evangelical zeal of the professionals and politicians in local government who approve the demolition of old inner housing and the relocation of the "slum" residents to paradise - high-rise flats! M.A. Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, (West Melbourne, 1981), pp.16,17.

44 See Chapters on Secession and Water.

citizen.⁴⁵

Local government *per se* helps counteract the process of centralisation, particularly in Queensland due to the absence of the checks and balances supplied by an upper house of parliament and, until the Goss government, a parliamentary public accounts committee. It also helps offset the increasing imposition of uniform standards in services by state politicians, bureaucrats and specialised professionals in the name of equity. Purdie stresses that this attribute is "the very foundation of the democratic system".⁴⁶ Although this statement exaggerates the case, it attests the strength of the belief that local government is necessary to soften the impact of arbitrary state regulations.

Tucker also contends that the existence of local government increases choice and therefore people's liberty in a way not yet discussed. Individuals may wish to express different values and preferences at the local and central levels.⁴⁷ For instance, during its years of poverty, Thuringowa ratepayers favoured low-quality services and low rates at the local level but demanded high-expenditure services (rural subsidies, for example) at the state level. Citizens may also wish to display a voting preference for conservative rule at the local level and labor rule at the state level, as occurred in a number of Thuringowa's local and state elections.⁴⁸ An areal division allows the constituent the liberty to choose political preferences at differing government

45 Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", pp.16-18.

46 D. Purdie, *Local Government in Australia* (Melbourne, 1976), p.100.

47 Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", pp.25,26.

48 Brisbane voters elected Clem Jones Labor council between 1961 and 1975 but most voted Liberal at state government elections.

levels for differing purposes.

There seems to be a feeling that because the liberty value of local government existence is generally ignored but lauded in times of amalgamation threats, it supports self-interest and therefore is not a genuine value of local government. One of the principles of the Thuringowa model is that liberty should not be maximised but provide a safety net. Examples from Thuringowa's history reveal that when its or Townsville's liberty was maximised and the other's ignored, the results were serious. For instance, Thuringowa's rights were ignored in the Greenvale water agreement and the State Government imposed conditions for Thuringowa's access to Townsville's Ross River Dam water supply. On the other hand, Thuringowa was made a city without proper regard for Townsville's liberty. The accumulated result has been bitterness, grand-standing, a mischievous reluctance to work cooperatively and refusals to compromise philosophies and practices for the good of the whole. This culminated in the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission's (EARC) proposal for Thuringowa to be abolished,⁴⁹ a measure which has been interpreted by Thuringowa Council and many residents as a betrayal of their liberty rights. It is precisely because the abuse of liberty is loudly protested and the consequences of such contempt are grave that the centrality of liberty as a criterion of local democracy in action is confirmed.

The areal division of government powers theory does not see liberty as the protection of the individual from centralised power only. An areal division helps protect the individual's or group's liberty against any level of

⁴⁹ Electoral and Administrative Review Commission, *Report on Local Authorities External Boundaries Review*, Vol. Two - The Report (Chapters 13 to 21) (Brisbane, 1991); hereafter EARC.

arbitrary government action and concentration of political and economic power by providing a system of countervailing power between government levels and across levels. Thus, at a particular point in time, liberty might be high in one local authority but not in another; but this does not remain constant. The countervailing power helps ensure a state of flux.

The diversification that the areal theory allows in the fluctuating degree of liberty experienced by a local authority is seen as a strength by Ylvisaker for two reasons. One is because it assures friction and debate and, hence, participation in local politics. If Thuringowa is a representative example, it was over issues of liberty - interference by government in local decisions - that caused most agitation and participation in politics. Two, because the distinctive values of local government are compatible, they need to be optimised in combination. No one value should be maximised, otherwise "the confusion of Babel could be re-created".⁵⁰ Liberty is but one instrumental value to be served by local government.

The second value or justification of local government proposed by Maass and Ylvisaker is equality. They contend that local government promotes equality in the political sense because it provides broad opportunities for people to participate in public policy. The use of the concept equality to describe what in effect is participation invites unnecessary confusion. Langrod insists that local government and democracy are incompatible because inequality is the consequence of local government policy and practice.⁵¹ Tucker, Harris, McPhail and Sharpe recognise that local government can

⁵⁰ Ylvisaker, "Some Criteria for a 'Proper' Areal Division of Governmental Powers", pp32,33,38.

⁵¹ G. Langrod, "Local Government and Democracy". *Public Administration-London*, 31, 3 (1953), p.28.

promote economic and social inequality.⁵² Quasi-independent local authorities provide differing levels of services thereby hindering uniform (or equal) standards of service provision. State government-imposed financial divisions within a local authority, designed to prevent cross-subsidisation of one part of the local authority by another, also promote inequality; the rich do not wish to subsidise the poor and *visa versa*. Unlike income tax, local rates are not means tested; they vary within a local authority and between authorities in ways unrelated to the ratepayers' ability to pay. It is state and federal governments which adopt redistributive policies such as endowments and grants-in-aid to mitigate some of the inequalities of local government.⁵³ Thus equality is a distinctive value of central, not local, government.

Participation is a more appropriate justification than equality for the existence of local government. *Participation* refers to those activities of both council members and ordinary citizens that lead to direct involvement in the governmental process. It is a multi-dimensional concept denoting a wide range of behaviours which differ according to the extent of motivation demanded, the capacity for conflict that could be generated, and the scope of the outcomes to be achieved.

Gates perceives the opportunity to help formulate public policy and manage community affairs to be a virtue

52 Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", pp.10-13; C.P.Harris, *Financing Local Government in Australia* (Canberra, 1975), p.26; Ian McPhail, *Joint Study into Local Government Finances - Australia and New Zealand 1976, Report of the Joint Steering Committee Appointed by the Local Government Ministers Conference* (Canberra, 1976) and Sharpe, "Theories and Values of Local Government", pp.155,156.

53 See Chapters 8 and 13 for examples of these.

of local government.⁵⁴ Maass et.al. argue that an areal division of powers serves to keep local governmental power close to its origins by providing readily available opportunities for citizen participation in public policy.

The notion that local government is closer to the people and therefore more truly representative and responsive than state and federal government cannot be fully supported. Local government is only closer to some people who can be more easily identified in a smaller government jurisdiction and to that extent it could be argued that it is more responsible. According to Chapman and Wood, local government is no less interest-based than other spheres of government.⁵⁵

Taking Thuringowa as a case in point, participation in local government office was not optimised; in fact it was the prerogative of the few. Indeed, both central policies and internal practices ensured that those who were deemed appropriate to rule did so. This was also the case after an adult franchise was legislated in 1920. As Dahl asks: in a political system where every adult may vote but where wealth, social position, knowledge, publicity and other resources are unequally distributed, who actually governs?⁵⁶ Views both on class and the group interests it promoted and, to a lesser extent, on gender and their interrelationship with representation and group interests were the umbilical cords connecting

54 R.C. Gates, "Local and Regional Government: Roles and Structure". *Planner*, 16, 4 December (1976), p.43.

55 R.J. Chapman and Michael Wood, *Australian Local Government: The Federal Dimension* (Sydney, 1984), p.14.

56 Robert Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven, 1961), pp.1,6. H.G. Oxley's main theoretical concern was an exploration of egalitarianism and power interrelations in two towns in Australia; *Mateship in Local Organization: A Study of Egalitarianism, Stratification, Leadership, and Amenities Projects in a Semi-industrial Community of Inland New South Wales* (St. Lucia, 1974).

local governmental and non-governmental divisions of power.

The creation of statutory authorities removed activities and decisions that popularly-constituted local government could well have handled. To Morrison, the superimposing of special purpose statutory boards over existing local authorities, while in some ways derogatory to local government power, built up "a district consciousness".⁵⁷ Contemporary local government analysts argue the contrary: non-representative statutory bodies such as hospital and fire boards produced functional and territorial fragmentation and, because the members were (and are) government appointees and responsible to the appropriate Minister, they have lacked the legitimacy and hence interest to establish priorities that reflected the multiple, competing and complementary needs and aspirations of the community or to be accountable for decisions that ignored such values.⁵⁸ As they were subjected to only an indirect type of informal pressure-politics control, they represented sizeable "surrenders" of local privileges and prerogatives in return for promises of administrative benefits. Fear of strong local government was a powerful reason why local government was not given a chance to be a viable democratic alternative to non-accountable *ad hoc* authorities or a counterweight to state government's centralised power.

It is these weaknesses that persuade political geographers like Johnston to argue that participation is an unconvincing component of a theory of local government

⁵⁷ Morrison, *The Influence of Party Politics on Local Government 1910-1932*, B.A. (Hons.) Thesis, University of Queensland (St. Lucia, 1933), p.5.

⁵⁸ R.N. Spann, *Government Administration in Australia* (Sydney, 1979), pp.118,119,140; Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", pp.44-51.

existence.⁵⁹ However, participation can be defended on a number of grounds as a serious value of local government.

Firstly, on a crude comparative scale, it is self-evident that opportunities for participation, particularly non-elected citizen participation, diminish rapidly as we pass from local to state to national government.⁶⁰ Swedish and American research shows that participation becomes more difficult as size increases, even for the advantaged few.⁶¹ Thus, because local politics are local, local government provides more readily available points of access, pressure and control internally and, by using local authorities as lobby groups, externally than does centralised, geographically-distant government.

Secondly, the concomitant of much ratepayer participation is conflict, which Australians often regard as unhealthy. Indeed, local government continually tries to minimise conflict through administrative reform because it views conflict with ratepayer groups and between community activists as unglamorous, exhausting and potentially dangerous at the ballot box. However, spatial patterns of conflict over boundaries and "turf politics" are endemic to local government.⁶² Local

59 Johnston, *Geography and the State: An Essay in Political Geography*, p.192.

60 Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", p.29.

61 Robert Dahl and Edward Tufte, *Size and Democracy* (Stanford, 1973), p.63. Also see Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York, 1972).

62 Cox coined the term "turf politics" to describe the activities of groups who attempt to attract onto their turf that which their members regard as beneficial and keep out those developments and residents seen as harmful; K.R. Cox, "Residential Mobility, Neighbourhood Activism and Neighbourhood Problems". *Political Geography Quarterly*, 2 (1983), pp.99-117.

government academics argue that local authorities should reassess the situation: rather than a stance that sees lobbyists as rabble-rousers to one that promotes local government's role as providers of an arena for conflict resolution between groups with differing values and self-interests.⁶³ Such a role encourages community participation in local government thereby enhancing democracy and internal decision-making as well as ratepayer satisfaction through active involvement in quality-of-life decisions.

Thirdly therefore, participation is seen to have personal and long-term community benefits. With respect to the former, opportunities for direct citizen participation in the formulation and implementation of public policies enhances self-esteem, a sense of personal competence and, what is often disparaged, satisfaction in being involved in community issues. Jones maintains that self-development is a much under-rated but totally justified motive and consequence of citizen and councillor participation.⁶⁴ With respect to long-term community benefits, local government has long been held as the "nursery for the supreme legislature".⁶⁵ It provides "...a proving ground for the acceptance of responsibility for policy decisions and the management of public money".⁶⁶ From surveys of the proportion of state parliamentarians who had prior local government experience, Tucker contends that the justification for

63 Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, p.24.

64 Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, p.22.

65 Jeremy Bentham, "Jerry Bentham to His Fellow Citizens of France, on Houses of Peers and Senates" (1830) in William Tait, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, Vol.IV (Edinburgh, 1843), p.429.

66 Margaret Bowman, *Local Government in the Australian States: An Urban Paper* (Canberra, 1976), p.14.

local government as a training and testing ground for service in state parliament is perhaps strongest in Queensland with one-quarter to one-third possessing such a background.⁶⁷ The extent to which the belief in local government as a stepping-stone for those with greater political ambitions has permeated Queensland's political culture is interesting if inconclusive of the importance of this aspect of participation.

Fourthly, local government is the most open of the three levels of government. Legislation demands that budgets, rate books, minute books and financial statements be available for inspection and copying by any elector or creditor.⁶⁸ Local government is also at the forefront of all governments in relation to freedom of information in another way. Local government statutes permit participation opportunities through open committee meetings. Even so, the situation could be improved as such provisions are not mandatory and some local authorities, including Thuringowa, jealously guard their decision-making processes through bland minute books and closed committee deliberations.⁶⁹ A few Queensland

67 The Liberal Party seemed to make less use of local government as a filtering device for selection to state government than the National or Labor Parties. As the Liberal Party's strength was the capital city, the main reason for the discrepancy is because of the dominance of the Brisbane City Council by Labor for so many years; Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", p.35. The ratio for Federal House of Representatives who had served in local government, which was nominally non-partisan, was one in five; Bowman, *Local Government in the Australian States: An Urban Paper*, p.15.

68 See the following sections of the *Local Government Act*: S.16, S.25, S.26 and S.29.

69 For instance, in 1979 Cr. Gleeson, Chairman of Thuringowa Shire Council, accused four councillors of "gross irresponsibility" in "leaking" information to the press. Three of the four, Crs. Moroney, Sohn and Tyrell, were unrepentant, claiming their right to inform residents of matters which affected them. Gleeson demanded acceptance of majority rule. *TDB*, 22 September 1979, p.7.

authorities have proceeded beyond this and adopted the so-called "secrecy by-law" in response to a series of politically embarrassing leaks to the press.⁷⁰ This has promoted the tendency for the monthly council meeting, which is open to the public, to rubber stamp off-stage committee decisions, a practice that, despite streamlining the volume of council business, also limits opportunities for the elected members themselves to participate fully in council business. In fact, mayors and chairmen have been known to use the committee system to deny certain councillors access to decision-making power which, in turn, limits their effectiveness with their constituents and, hence, their chances of being re-elected.⁷¹ Many find closed council practices regrettable, especially so since a number of local authorities operate effectively without such restraints on citizen or member participation.⁷²

Fifthly, legitimation issues are germane to the participation function of local government. A system of local government grants the potential for popular participation, within acknowledged constraints. Such participation signifies an acceptance of the state apparatus, and gives it legitimacy. EARC conceded the participatory value of local government through its acknowledgement that the Government could have to spend \$2million in enhancing this aspect of local politics to

70 Ipswich City Council was one; see Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", p.31.

71 In Thuringowa, Hodel and Gleeson utilised this method in conjunction with manipulation of loyal councillor support; see Chapter 17.

72 Redcliffe City Council is one Queensland local authority which found that the predictions of dire consequences of throwing committee meetings open to the public were not justified. Other examples of the experiment in Australia were instituted by the Leichhardt Municipal Council in New South Wales and the Gawler Town Council in South Australia and, overseas, by the Toronto City and Metropolitan Councils.

offset the aggrieved feelings over enforced amalgamation.⁷³ The recommendation was, in reality, a measure to maintain the legitimation of the state apparatus.

Sixthly, the fact that participation is not maximised either by the councils or the public is probably less critical than the fact that opportunities for ample participation are available. People want to know that the process allows ready possibilities for complaint, for information and for other types of involvement, whether or not they use them. It also seems that debate on the extent of citizen participation required for policy and administrative effectiveness favours the view that increased participatory mechanisms are not conducive to local government efficiency.⁷⁴ For instance, the opportunities for increased participation through simple-majority referenda, polls and recall stymied local authority action in Queensland between 1902 and 1930.⁷⁵ Tucker believes that "misguided emphasis on the participatory principle can seriously undermine the representative principle" as it is the elected representative who has the greater legitimate "authoritative" say in local government decision-making.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, adequate participatory

73 New Zealand's Department of Internal Affairs estimated that \$30m was an estimate of transition costs in their amalgamation exercise. Such costs of change are referred to as "marriage grants"; EARC, pp.476-478.

74 Leonie Sandercock, "Citizen Participation: The New Conservatism" in Patrick Troy (Ed.) *Federal Power in Australia's Cities* (Sydney, 1978), p.117 and Shanen Drefetz and Allen Goodman, "Participation for What or for Whom?". *Journal of Comparative Administration*, 5, 3 (1973). pp.367-374.

75 For instance, Thuringowa took out only five loans between 1902 and 1928; Queensland legislation now expressly forbids this range of citizen participatory measures. See Chapter 13.

76 Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", pp.30,37.

mechanisms do have the effect of ensuring more accountable and democratic local government than might otherwise be the case.

It is accountability that, seventhly, is the most important justification for the participatory value of local government. Local government is accountable at the ballot box; statutory authorities and private business, which some critics of local government consider more appropriate service providers than local government, are not. There is also evidence to show that many have fallen too much under the influence of their controlling professional group, which Sharpe describes as a "danger of incipient syndicalism".⁷⁷ The Carter Inquiry into the gross mismanagement of Ward 10B at the Townsville General Hospital is surely an appropriate example.⁷⁸ The previous token in-house inquiries would not have occurred with such ease if responsibility had been in the hands of representative government rather than an appointed statutory corporation. Local political ambitions at elections would have been a countervailing measure to ensure protection of liberty against the inaction of the Hospital Board and the previous State Government.

Indeed, participation can countermand truncation

⁷⁷ The quote is from Sharpe, "Theories and Values of Local Government", p.174. For Australian evidence see R.N. Spann, *Government Administration in Australia* (Sydney, 1979), p.140. For comparative Canadian evidence see Kitchen, who argues that the financial freedom of non-representative statutory corporations "has permitted much indulgence in empire building"; "Some Organisational Implications of Providing an Urban Service: The Case of Water", p.297.

⁷⁸ See *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, September 1990 through February 1991; Queensland Government, *Commission of Inquiry into the Case and Treatment of Patients in the Psychiatric Unit of the Townsville General Hospital*, 2 March 1975 - 20 February 1988, vols. I & II (Brisbane, 1991).

of voter liberty by central government. This is the final reason why academics like Sharpe are convinced that participation is "unquestionably stronger than liberty" as a value of local government.⁷⁹ From the late 1970s Bjelke-Petersen's government increasingly attempted to manipulate the results of the ballot-box by instigating a ward system and redistribution of internal boundaries in local authorities governed by Labor Councils. All returned Labor Councils with overwhelming majorities. The participatory value can offset curtailment of the liberty value of local government.

According to Maass *et.al.*, the third distinctive value of local government is welfare but, to others, it is better viewed as efficiency. Ylvisaker believes an areal division of power will promote welfare measures that service and facilitate the community's needs in accordance with efficient administrative principles such as delegation, decentralisation, scale, specialisation and comparative costs. This definition of "welfare" sees it in a narrow service rather than ameliorative sense. Only since the 1970s have a few local authorities thought ameliorative welfare services should lie within local government's jurisdiction; the Townsville City Council led the way.⁸⁰ At the local government level, "welfare" is akin to examining what functions are provided and how effectively they are provided. Thus the term "efficiency" is preferable to "welfare" in the local government context in Australia.

Tucker is not alone in stating that economic

⁷⁹ Sharpe, "Theories and Values of Local Government", p.160.

⁸⁰ Townsville actually instigated welfare services in the 1940s; see Chapter 9. This has been one of the benefits of the overspill of the Townsville-Thuringowa boundary for Thuringowa's Councils who could ignore welfare provisions in favour of the traditional functions of local government. See Chapter 14 for more details.

efficiency - rather than technical efficiency - is one of the values to which local government can lay special claim; Jones prefers *effectiveness* as a workable concept to avoid the ambiguities surrounding *efficiency*.⁸¹

Efficiency or effectiveness in local government is defined by bureaucrats and professionals in terms of economies of scale and by politicians in terms of consumer satisfaction as expressed at the polls.⁸²

Thuringowa's adherence to economies of scale for most of its first century with respect to its roads policy was shortsighted "penny-pinching" whereas the provision of water reticulation shows a progressive Shire supplying a quality-of-life service 30 years before a wealthier neighbouring Shire. The reasons for these differences highlight two important considerations: one, the ambiguities inherent in any local authority's decision-making and, two, identifying such ambiguities in the exploration of liberty, participation and efficiency in local government.

Measurement of economies of scale must deal with four separate components in the output of local authorities: quantity, quality, time and costs. Quantity refers to such items as the length of roads upgraded or houses connected with sewerage. Much more difficult to measure, quality of service refers to the type and

81 Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", pp.13,38-51; Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, pp.89-111; also see Sharpe, "Theories and Values of Local Government", pp.153-174. Chapter 16 explores the Boards' and Councils' water reticulation services; Canadian research into water supply supports the contention that local governments are more likely to promote economic efficiency than private enterprise or statutory bodies. Harry M. Kitchen, "Some Organisational Implications of Providing an Urban Service: The Case of Water". *Canadian Public Administration*, 18, Spring (1975), pp.297-308.

82 Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, p.109.

appropriateness of, say, road upgrading. Two local authorities might have the same number of kilometres upgraded but one might have more roads bituminised than the other. However, bituminisation might not be warranted in some rural areas. Economies of scale has to include an adjustment for quality factors when measuring comparative costs. Time is the central element in measuring accessibility. Locational factors which involve the time and cost of travel to the facility is important to ratepayer judgement of the usefulness of the service. Jones points out that it is false to assume that there is some optimum size when scale economies will be maximised because each service has a particular and strong logic for its own optimum service population.⁸³ If a simple definition of economies of scale were valid then it would be always worthwhile to establish one large workshop and maintenance centre in Thuringowa rather a main central centre with a small one at Giru, for example. Sensitive location of facilities is a pivotal function of local government.

Measurement of costs also have to take account of the "lumpy" nature of costs in most authorities. "Lumpiness" means that costs are increased because there is often some surplus capacity in a service area. For instance, at some point there is too much work for one grader but not quite enough for two, but a second is bought. It is usually assumed that future growth will utilise the surplus in service costs and reduce the unit costs. This was so with Thuringowa's new shire hall in 1980; it was good economic sense to incorporate extra space into the building because the continued growth in suburban Thuringowa quickly ensured its use. Such common sources of distortion are often the real source of apparent cost differences rather than size. Lumpiness is obviously a factor in the economies of scale debate.

⁸³ Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, p.100.

One major problem with efficiency resource allocation has to do with the spillover-effect. To prevent duplication or a drain on one authority's services by residents outside that authority, the problem of interjurisdictional spillovers would need to be solved. Nevertheless, as this study confirms, spillovers between local authorities often balance each other. For instance, Townsville constantly claims - and correctly so - that people from Thuringowa use Townsville facilities. However, the rate base of the central city and shopping complexes (one of which is in Thuringowa and used by Townsvilleans) is largely based on the value of consumer expenditure, including that of the non-resident. Thuringowans also pay user charges on other services, for example, childminding and attendance at the civic theatre. On the other hand, Townsvilleans using the many recreational facilities in Thuringowa do so free of charge. The common solution to spillovers is calls for amalgamation. One of the disadvantages of this is that it would perpetuate the classic textbook example of a small minority of land owners in the central city gaining large unearned capital gains on property because suburban and, if the Thuringowa-Townsville amalgamation goes ahead as per EARC's recommendation, rural residents would endure high costs to maintain and increase inner-city property values.

Jones' preference to amalgamation is joint local authority committees.⁸⁴ The three values of local government existence would be utilised: each authority's liberty would be protected; residents would have choice between authorities providing a different combination of public goods; both the local authority and its residents would be forced to participate in the delivery of local

⁸⁴ Tucker et.al. recommend that joint local government authorities be established as a transitional arrangement before final amalgamation is affected; *Local Government in Queensland*, Vol.1, p.42,220; Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, pp.89-111.

government functions for the betterment of a wider region; efficiency would be enhanced through coordination of the spillover effects. However, there are some problems with this solution, too, as the declining effectiveness of Thuringowa's and Townsville's joint committee system from the 1980s reveals. Efficiency depends on each authority's ability to co-operate and compromise on its philosophical and pragmatic differences for the good of the whole region. Exacerbated by the granting of city status to Thuringowa in 1985, the conflict engendered by the closure of Valencia Street, the failure of the Townsville Thuringowa Joint Library Agreement and the infrequency of the Townsville Thuringowa Joint Committee meetings were regarded by both sides as parochial recalcitrance rather than as vital to the enhancement of participatory democracy in action.⁸⁵ Personality differences are also a factor in the effectiveness of joint committees. Unfortunately, they were a major determinant in the unsatisfactory resolutions to joint concerns in Townsville-Thuringowa.⁸⁶ However, compounding the decision outcomes was the interference in Thuringowa-Townsville local government by State Government. Such illiberal state government practices promoted inefficiencies in local government joint committees for its own political ends.⁸⁷

Increased productivity is the catch-cry for efficiency. This poses a problem for local government.

85 EARC, Vol. Two, pp.290-292.

86 Evidence to EARC supports this conclusion; EARC, Vol. Two, pp.276,277,289-293.

87 Joint committees may have greater success under the Goss Government's commitment to effective local government practices. Changes have been incorporated in the *Local Government Act 1936-1991* and the *Local Government (Planning and Environment Act) 1990-1991* that should prove adequate to ensure co-ordination between local authorities.

Jones argues that it is the most labour-intensive of all levels of government and its services are difficult to merchandise or computerise.⁸⁸ Its multipurpose nature covers up to 100 different services and this currently prevents local government from specialising, the factor most pertinent to increases in productivity.⁸⁹ However, efficiency can be increased if, as Jones further argues, state government stops contending that a local authority must either achieve all scale economies in in-house production or be amalgamated.⁹⁰ It is a false emphasis to see a local authority as the only supplier. In reality, local government is a consumer cooperative trying to purchase the best package of goods and services for the local area. Local authorities should investigate whether the council or outside contractors can provide a cheaper and/or more effective service. Neighbouring local authorities could also specialise in one or two areas and contract their services to each other. In fact, Thuringowa recommended a similar type of arrangement in the 1950s but it was not seen as appropriate by its neighbours then.⁹¹

88 Many who advocate computerisation for increased productivity forget that most improvements in economic performance have come from self-service. Michael Jones, *Managing Local Government: Leadership for the 21st Century* (North Melbourne, 1989), pp.32,107,108.

89 Another problem that has become critical since the mid-1980s is "incrementalism". Local government has been characterised by small slow changes. It is still dominated by incremental cash budgeting. The cash line-item budget is a document of control and compliance not a document of management, particularly forward management. This type of budget is laid down in the local government Act but some councils, for instance the Townsville City Council, are adopting a parallel budget for internal usage. The program management budget allows forward planning and a comparison with the current and past two years' budgets. Interview John Patrick, 24 June 1991.

90 The following argument is from Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, pp.102,103

91 See Chapters 8 and 14.

Notwithstanding the problems associated with maximising efficiency, it is argued by local government academics that local government is inherently more likely to protect the economic efficiency value than higher levels of government and statutory authorities. The following are their reasons.

One justification is that local government is in an ideal position compared with a centralised bureaucracy and regional statutory authorities to allocate resources in accordance with the preferences of the local community. Local government has the capacity to choose, on behalf of the community, from various goals and objectives those that reflect the multiple, competing and complementary values of the community. If the local authority gets it wrong, the participatory value of local government can influence the efficiency value through pressure group politics and ultimately through the ballot-box.

Thus, the second reason involves accountability of elected representatives. By virtue of its elective nature, local government has the legitimacy to organize priorities in accordance with local needs, aims and values. By contrast, there is evidence that statutory authorities often fall too much under the sway of their controlling professional groups. Etzioni maintains that local government as a multi-purpose organisation tends to serve each of its goals "separately and all of them together more effectively and efficiently than single-purpose organizations of the same category".⁹²

The third reason relies on empirical research evidence which supports the contention that representative local government is a more "cost-effective performer, that is, more productively efficient" than

⁹² Amitai Etzioni, *Modern Organisations* (Englewood, Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964), p.14.

non-representative, special-purpose statutory bodies.⁹³ Kitchen's conclusion is that local authorities' superior performance in the provision of at least water retribution is in part due to the pressures to perform which flow from their greater public accountability as directly elected bodies. In contrast, the financial freedom of the Canadian statutory authorities which supplied water allowed "much indulgence in empire building".⁹⁴ American research concludes that the best services and benefits are those which do not "separate consumption of services from control over their production".⁹⁵ Elected representatives have incentives, that appointees to statutory authorities do not, to weigh the electoral impact of alternative courses of action.

There are two Queensland exemplars of this. The Carter Inquiry into the Townsville Hospital Board demonstrates the real and potential inefficiency and corruptibility of statutory authorities without ballot-box accountability. The Goss Government's restructuring of the Fire Brigade Boards is another example of disenchantment with certain structures in non-representative service delivery. Hence, local government's representative presence in the local community makes it more exposed to the scrutiny of residents and thus increases pressure for efficient performance.

The areal division of government powers theory also allows an examination of economic efficiency in terms of

93 Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", p.47.

94 Kitchen, "Some Organisational Implications of Providing an Urban Service: The Case of Water", p.297.

95 See Etzioni, *Modern Organisations*, pp.97-104; Richard Rich, "Equity and Institutional Design in Urban Service Delivery". *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, 12, 3 (1977), pp.383-408; Ester Stanton, *The Client Comes Last* (Beverly Hills, California, 1970).

the optimum size of a local authority. It has long been widely believed that local government systems in most countries were - and still are - fragmented and inefficient causing duplication of facilities and lack of coordination. This has been the dominating concern of the involved elite in colonial and later state government in Australia. There have been 29 colonial/state inquiries into optimum size and local government boundaries in Australia.⁹⁶ Two of the most recent are Victoria's Local Government Commission's Report in 1986 and Queensland's EARC's deliberations in 1991.⁹⁷

H.G. Well's trenchant piece on the malicious parochialism of small units is worthy of consideration. However, bigger is not necessarily better. American research shows that smaller not larger units of local

96 Six each in New South Wales and Victoria, three each in Queensland and South Australia, four in Western Australia and seven in Tasmania. Queensland's Royal Commissions are discussed in Chapter 12. For details of the other inquiries see Jones, *Managing Local Government: Leadership for the 21st Century*, pp.173-175.

97 The commission's report was essentially a summary of the traditional case for reform in the earlier Bains report in 1979; Victorian Local Government Commission, *The Restructure of Local Government in Victoria: Principles and Programme* (Melbourne, 1986) and Board of Review into Local Government in Victoria, *Local Government in Victoria: Role Structure and Administration*, Vol.1 (Melbourne, 1979-1980). Major amalgamations were recommended because it was believed that larger authorities would adopt corporate planning management as well as lower administrative costs per head - a major argument by EARC and Townsville City Council for the amalgamation of Thuringowa with Townsville. However, approximately half the local authorities in Victoria formed a lobby group with specialist economists, lawyers and public relations firms and, together with strong public agitation, demanded a referendum. State government abandoned amalgamation plans because of the large-scale grass-roots political revolt, particularly as it might prevent re-election of state parliamentarians. For more details see Jones, *Managing Local Government: Leadership for the 21st Century*, p.177. EARC, pp.45-81, 266-305.

government are effective at limiting government spending.⁹⁸ Indeed, Jones argues that there is too easy an acceptance that amalgamation will necessarily produce economies of scale rather than the reverse; amalgamation often simply produces a short term, once-off improvement in economies of scale.⁹⁹ If the English and American experience of local government amalgamation have valid implications for Australia, the promised economies of scale did not eventuate. Amalgamations of urban and rural local authorities in Sweden and the United Kingdom did not produce any economies of scale: servicing costs of especially the rural areas were not reduced and poorer residents were further disadvantaged.¹⁰⁰ In fact, independent evaluations paint a bleak picture of the re-division of power through amalgamation: staff increased, unions and the professional politicians both gained in power, bureaucratic oligarchies were created in the confusion surrounding amalgamation and *per capita* spending in fact increased.¹⁰¹

98 Cited in Jones, *Managing Local Government: Leadership for the 21st Century*, p.179.

99 Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, pp.102,103.

100 L.J. Sharpe, "Intergovernmental Policy Making: The Limits of Subnational Autonomy" in Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, *Guidance, Control, and Evaluation in the Public Sector* (New York, 1986), pp.159-182. Also see John Hutcheson and James Prather "Economy of Scale or Bureaucratic Entropy?: Implications for Metropolitan Governmental Reorganisation". *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, 15, 2 (December, 1979), pp.164-182.

101 For examples from England see B.K. Lucas and P. Richards, *A History of Local Government in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1978); J. Dearlove, *The Reorganization of British Local Government: Old Orthodoxies and a Political Perspective* (Cambridge, 1979). For details of American *per capita* increases in spending see S. Erie, J. Kirilin and F. Rabinovitz "Can Something be Done?: Propositions on the Performance of Metropolitan Institutions" in Lowdon Wingo (Ed.) *Reform of Metropolitan Governments* (Washington, 1972), pp.7-42; W. Niskanen, "Bureaucrats and Politicians". *Journal of Law and Economics*, xvii, 3, December (1975), pp.617-659.

diversity of interests and its consequence, debate, as central instruments of liberty, are equally important considerations of appropriate size.¹⁰² Jones, Tucker and Chapman and Wood support this argument: characteristics of efficiency which are too often overlooked in the polemics of management theory are liberty, ratepayer participation and the prevention of alienation.¹⁰³ In fact, Jones goes so far as to argue that Australia, like America, France, Italy, Spain and Switzerland, could have far more local authorities, particularly in its cities, and have smaller staff ratios to elected representatives.¹⁰⁴ This would enhance the governing rather than bureaucratic aspect of local government. As well, smaller units could also enhance the core values promoted by local government. According to Jones, the main aim of local governments is to provide "sensitive, participative and responsive government...and try to be efficient".¹⁰⁵

Thuringowa provides a particularly good case to test the validity of optimum size and economies of scale theory as there have been at least 67 attempts to change the Shire's boundaries; the first one occurring within a year of its founding. There is the view that political

102 Ylvisaker, "Some Criteria for a 'Proper' Areal Division of Governmental Powers", pp.37,38.

103 Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, pp.112-116; Tucker, et.al., *Local Government in Queensland*, Vol.1, pp.26,52,53,138-140,213; Chapman and Wood, *Australian Local Government: The Federal Dimension*, pp.13,14;

104 For example, Switzerland has 3029 local authorities for a population of 6.5 million. Such an areal division of government powers has ensured direct participative democracy. "Parochialism" is regarded with pride rather than a cultural cringe as it is in Australia. Jones, *Managing Local Government: Leadership for the 21st Century*, pp.11,14,178,179.

105 Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, p.112.

reality should be in line with social and economic reality: Thuringowa's densely populated areas are the suburban overspill from Townsville. This was so from 1879 to 1937 and from 1964. Nevertheless, in the face of Townsville's continual manoeuvring to take over the more lucrative rating areas in Thuringowa, the constant assessment by Thuringowa's Chairperson that since the 1970s Thuringowa has not had a boundary problem¹⁰⁶ is not naive. It illustrates the need to challenge the alleged economic inefficiency of interjurisdictional spillovers and to scrutinize how well the threatened territory services the three values of participative responsive government and if amalgamation could do it better.

In the end, efficiency and effectiveness in local government can best be defined and judged in terms of consumer satisfaction, the right mix of services for rate taxation, and a reasonable ratio of administrative expenses to rate revenue.

A theory of the existence of local government needs to answer the question: why is there a local state? It has been argued that local government exists because it effectively promotes certain values that give meaning to democracy in a tiered, geographical and spatial distribution of government powers. The economic, political and social values prevalent in society at a particular time and place direct the fluctuations in liberty, participation and efficiency (as well as the form and degree of sharing and exclusivity of process, functions and constituency) in local government. Thus, a modified areal division of government powers theory which incorporates the values theory and certain aspects of the

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in David Hughes, The effects of growth on small and medium urban centres in Queensland and the significance of inter-jurisdictional spillovers, M.Ec. Thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland (Townsville, 1977), p.124.

political-economy theory would appear to satisfactorily answer the question of existence.

Given that local government has been allocated certain functions, attention needs to focus on how it fulfils them. Although local government is the servant of state government (and, in some respects, federal government), it is far from an impotent arm of higher level government. This requires the development of a theory to account for local decision-making within the parameters set by state policy.

The major failing of the proponents of the areal theory of powers is their concentration on a top-down model of power.¹⁰⁷ The timidity of local authorities to utilise the powers granted under local government legislation is significant. As this study of Thuringowa reveals, the reasons are numerous, not least of which is the various Councils' philosophy of the nature of local government.¹⁰⁸ In fact, the areal division of government powers theory lacks a coherent theory of action.

There are several theoretical approaches that have relevance for certain facets of local government action; they concentrate "on different slices of the same reality".¹⁰⁹ Johnston advocates three: the local instrumentalist, the local pluralist and local

107 For examples of top-down characteristics of the theory see Maass, "Division of Powers: An Areal Analysis", pp.9-26; J. Dupre, "Applied Areal Analysis: The Case of Canada", pp.89-109; Wood, "A Division of Powers in Metropolitan Areas", pp.53-69.

108 Nowhere is this clearer than in striking the rate, taking out loans and allocating works provisions; see Chapter 13.

109 Burnett, "The Application of Alternative Theories in Political Geography: The Case of Political Participation", p.43.

managerialism.¹¹⁰ Jones devotes a book to organisational and social planning theory.¹¹¹ Massam utilises the public goods and collective decision-making theories within a systems analysis paradigm.¹¹² Burnett adds locational theory and neo-Marxist theory to those already mentioned.¹¹³ Floyd adds a cybernetic perspective to systems analysis.¹¹⁴ However, all theories are argued by their proponents in the context of urban local politics. For a theory of action that is relevant to rural-urban and, as was the case with Thuringowa between 1937 and 1964, rural local government, only certain facets of some of the above theories are applicable.

The theory of action within the Thuringowa model will utilise pluralist theory, the instrumentalist or political-economy theory and the managerialist-bureaucratic bargaining model in attempting a theory of why local government acts in certain ways, and a modified systems approach to help explain theoretically how local governments act in particular ways. In formulating this theoretical approach to explain the spatial allocation of public resources, the overall function of local government, explanations are sought in the social, economic and political environment, government structure, processes and participants.

110 Johnston, *Geography and the State: An Essay in Political Geography*, pp.196-247.

111 Jones, *Organisational and Social Planning in Australian Local Government*.

112 Massam, "Spatial Structures of the State: The Local State", pp.50-64.

113 Burnett, "The Application of Alternative Theories in Political Geography: The Case of Political Participation", pp.25-48.

114 Michael Floyd, *Policy-making and Planning in Local Government* (Aldershot, 1984).

If local participation and accountability are important characteristics of the theory of local government existence, this implies a pluralist theory of local government action. The actions of local government at a particular place and time reflect the beliefs and attitudes of those who elected the councillors currently running it but, simultaneously, any local government action is a reaction to local pressure groups. Seen from this perspective, the policy-making process is one of government weighing and sifting the diverse demands of citizens because local authorities are controlled by politicians primarily concerned with gaining or staying in power through the electoral system and who are therefore responsive to the changing concerns and needs of differing community groups.¹¹⁵ Public opinion plays a decisive role in securing changes in local government action. Since society consists of many overlapping interests - farmers, home owners, consumers, labourers, and so on - no one group is ever able to dominate local government decision-making for long. Characteristics of the conflict that can arise between citizens, neighbourhoods, elected representatives and local government officials are a diversity of interests which are usually sharply defined and locality specific,¹¹⁶ a variability in the complexity of the conflicts,¹¹⁷ conflict instability because the participants, demands and problems constantly change as well as councillor

115 Thuringowa provides another test case in its delivery of services to its disparate urban and rural areas; see Chapters 14, 15 and 16.

116 For instance, the many secession movements as detailed in Appendix 3.

117 A good example of this is the difference in the complexity of conflicts engendered by water reticulation to Saunders Beach and Giru. The provision to both involved technical difficulties but the latter involved community meetings, polls, reversals of community agreements and confused angry councillors; see Chapter 16.

action or inaction on various political demands.¹¹⁸ pluralist analysis reflects the ideology of liberal democracy¹¹⁹ and argues that the actions of local government reflect the desires of the majority on key issues that influence the legitimation of local government.¹²⁰

pluralist theory, as outlined by Dahl, incorporates notions of participation, apathy and "slack power".¹²¹ How people choose to use their political, economic and social resources is important in community decisions. Most are not interested in local political affairs and rarely participate directly.¹²² Comparatively few participate actively in pressure groups or nominating for office.¹²³ However, the slack or potential power of the apolitical is always available to be utilised and, hence, councillors run their local authority in ways that would never encourage slack power to be exercised in a political disruptive way, especially at the ballot box.

Although the pluralist theory allows an interpretation of much government and citizen action in Thuringowa, it does not explain why cattle and, to a

118 Examples of councillor inaction would be Thuringowa's continual refusal to listen to the numerous petitions from Giru and district for secession from Thuringowa (see Appendix 3) and disdain for the anti-uranium lobbyists.

119 P. Coulter identifies three aspects of liberal democracy - political competitiveness, political participation and public liberty; *Social Mobilization and Liberal Democracy* (Lexington, 1975). The bulwark of liberal democracy is the existence of elections.

120 Compare Johnston, *Geography and the State: An Essay in Political Geography*, p.198.

121 Robert Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven, 1961), pp.223-310.

122 Dahl called these *homo civicus*.

123 These, Dahl labelled, *homo politicus*.

lesser extent, sugar cane interests dominated Thuringowa council deliberations on appropriate rate levels and provision of services for over 50 years. The local instrumentalist theory of local government is relevant here. Firstly, the political-economist theory argues that a country's economic system sets the parameters for local political life. Hence in Western countries, local authorities "serve" the interests of the dominant economic groups. The latter's interests influence and constrain local government budgetary allocations over collective consumption expenditure in areas such as roads, parks or welfare services.¹²⁴ Thus local government is "captured" by, and operated in favour of, a particular local interest group. The unequal distribution of economic and social resources makes an inevitable impact on political rights and their exercise; those with economic and social resources cannot be ignored in the exploration of power in the political sphere.¹²⁵

The local instrumentalist theory is useful on two more counts. Firstly, it was not just a matter of not wanting to become involved in parish-pump politics that caused apathy in Thuringowa; certain structural factors prevented full participation. For instance, an adult franchise was not introduced in Queensland until 1920 (and is still not implemented in some other Australian states) and day-time meetings prevented members of the working and lower middle class from nominating for leadership.¹²⁶ Secondly, certain factions led by the

¹²⁴ Alan Burnett, "The Application of Alternative Theories in Political Geography: The Case of Political Participation", p.40.

¹²⁵ For a sociological exploration of these relationships see H.G. Oxley, *Mateship in Local Organisations: A Study of Egalitarianism, Stratification, Leadership, and Amenities Projects in a Semi-industrial Community of Inland New South Wales* (St. Lucia, 1974).

¹²⁶ See Chapter 11.

Chairman within a number of Thuringowa's councils were able to capture control of local government action. For example, nearly a century apart, Chairmen Hodel and Gleeson ensured that non-aligned councillors were not members of influential sub-committees, particularly the finance committee.¹²⁷

Local pluralism and local instrumentalist theories still do not explain the substantial influence of the shire clerk in Thuringowa council affairs in the 1920s and 1980s especially. Local managerialism sees decisions taken by local government as determined largely by "gatekeepers" - the bureaucrats and professionals in local government - who are influenced by the organisation in which they operate as well as by wider structural constraints such as local government legislation and fiscal allocations. The shire clerk (and accountant, engineer and town planning officer) play a central role in assessing political demands and converting them into decisions, plans and policies. A theory of local government action must acknowledge the important role of these individual decision-making agents - without, of course, granting them autonomous status.

Although all three theories examine intra-government processes and actions, local managerialism and local instrumentalism also look beyond the local authority to ascertain how it is influenced by outside structural forces. They allow an emphasis on what determines who decides who does and gets what.

The overall role of the local state is to act as an input-output mechanism providing services in response to local needs and demands according to central state-

¹²⁷ See Chapter 17.

constituted constraints (see Diagram 1).¹²⁸ This suggests a systems paradigm. The following three examples highlight the benefits of utilising systems analysis theory: firstly, it permits the charting of complex interactions between individuals and organisations; secondly, it enables the structuring of the dynamic process of a political system in terms of inputs, conversion, outputs and feedback; and, thirdly, it allows the clarification between the above process, the total environment and policies.¹²⁹

Inputs include state government edicts and community needs and wishes. Inputs also encompasses support - voting, paying taxes, obeying by-laws, and so on - for the legitimisation of local government. The conversion section aggregates, weighs and interrelates the inputs to produce a set of outputs. It does so according to whether a local pluralist, local instrumentalist or local managerialist model is used. In its unmodified form, systems analysis lacks a theoretical explanation of the conversion process of the inputs and outputs in the systems model. That is why theoretical paradigms like local pluralism, local instrumentalist and local managerialist need to be included in a theory of action. Outputs include rate levies, services, regulations, construction, councillor self-enhancement, lobbying for local rights, building of airports, and so on. The outputs are essentially the stakes for which participants in the political system are competing. The feedback mechanism is the important linking device in the model because it is through feedback that the system is continually modified, enabling it to survive. Thus

128 Dear and Clark argue that the "local state functions largely to facilitate central state actions of crises management and control"; M. Dear and G.L. Clark, "Dimensions of Local State and Autonomy". *Environment and Planning A*, 13 (1981), p.1277.

129 Burnett, "Alternative Theories in Political Geography", p.42.

negative and positive feedback loops, in which a whole series of cause and effect relationships are connected, form a circular chain. Feedback and the conversion process particularly have to take account of the total environment if outputs are to be efficient and satisfying to ratepayers. A systems approach indicates the types of linkages among major components of local government theory and processes and, for this reason, it is a necessary component of a theory of local government.

One of the major criticisms of systems analysis is a predeliction to view government planning as essentially concerned with the maintenance of the *status quo*.¹³⁰ Yet this is precisely what occurred in local government decision-making in Thuringowa from 1902 to 1964, with only one or two exceptions. However, it can also be argued that a systems approach is most suitable for examining periods of conflict, change and development, too.¹³¹

Floyd and Stetzer stress that critics misinterpret characteristics of systems analysis.¹³² They argue that systems analysis contains the concept of homeostasis which, in terms of a complex political system, is the tendency to maintain and restore a steady state. This does not necessarily mean maintenance of the *status-quo*. Although it involves a "structure-maintaining feature", homeostasis also has a "structure-elaborating and

130 Michael Floyd, *Policy-making and Planning in Local Government: A Cybernetic Perspective* (Aldeshot, Hampshire, 1984), p.131.

131 For instance, see Massam, "Spatial Structure of the State: The Local State", pp.50-64.

132 Floyd, *Policy-making and Planning in Local Government*; Donald Stetzer, *Special Districts in Cook County: Toward a Geography of Local Government* (Chicago, 1975).

changing feature".¹³³ In order to maintain a steady state in an inherently unstable system, the system may have to change in certain aspects. Thus, a "complex adaptive system as a continuing entity is not to be confused with the structure which that system may manifest at any given time".¹³⁴ Indeed, continuity of an adaptive system may require, as a necessary condition, change in its structure or processes or conversions or outputs or even excision of part of a local authority's territory, as occurred in Thuringowa on eight occasions.¹³⁵ The concept of homeostasis fits well with an areal division of government powers theory. Each change reflects the accumulated and sometimes altered homeostatic adjustments that occurred before; the local authority adapts itself to the new structure and the steady state is restored through modification of its goals and outputs so that it continues to command support and is able to satisfy demands. A modification of systems analysis, which is incorporated within a theory of both the why and how of local government action, provides an analytic framework to gain insights into the confused reality of a case study of rural-urban and rural government.¹³⁶

A theoretical examination of local government needs to contain a theory of how government power is divided, a theory of existence and a theory of action. This study of a local authority over 106 years shows that an areal division of powers per se will not create automatically

133 Stetzer, *Special Districts in Cook County: Toward a Geography of Local Government*, p.23.

134 Walter Buckley, "Society as a Complex Adaptive System" in Walter Buckley (Ed.)-*Modern Systems Research for the Behavioural Scientist: A Sourcebook* (Chicago, 1968), p.493.

135 See Appendix 3.

136 Burnett, "Alternative Theories in Political Geography", p.42.

liberty, democracy and participation. Values concerned with political governance at any time affect the balance between shared and exclusive powers as they pertain to process, function and efficiency across the three levels of government and within any local authority. The complexity of Queensland local government is apparent. Local government was created as a lackey to colonial government; it was weakened further by the creation of statutory authorities. Yet within its parameters, local authorities had the power to implement numerous functions of significant stature but many failed to use it. Even so, the effects of what the councils did or did not do were often serious - for instance, Thuringowa's Divisional Boards and, after 1902, Councils were ever mindful of their responsibilities towards the district's cattle graziers and cane farmers but virtually ignored the struggling market farmer. Local government is a coercive institution with powers to police aspects such as town planning, room ceiling height, minimum distance from neighbours, dog control, water restrictions, health and building inspection which involve sensitive issues of human liberty. As the subsequent chapters demonstrate, the internal use of power by Thuringowa's Councils reveals that local government is more than rates, roads and rubbish.

CHAPTER 8

Overview of Local Government¹

The Queensland Government's policy to transform the whole state into a mosaic of local government districts was pursued with a routine stolidness which perhaps reflected the unexciting future it saw for the new administrative units. The *Local Government Act* of 1878 enforced local government in the larger urban areas.² In October 1879 the *Act to Provide for Local Government outside the Boundaries of Municipalities* (short title: *Divisional Boards Act* of 1879) ensured that all areas of Queensland would be administered by local government

1 This chapter draws on a few crucial works which describe local government legislation in Queensland: Tucker, et.al., *Local Government in Queensland*, Vols.1 and 2; J.D. Tucker, "Queensland" in J. Power, R.C. Wettenhall and J. Halligan (eds.) *Local Government Systems of Australia*, pp.379-569; J.R. Lavery, "An Historical Survey of Local Government in Queensland", pp.73-104; C.P. Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859-1977* (Canberra, 1978); C.P. Harris, *Financing Local Government in Australia* (Canberra, 1975); C.P. Harris, "Intergovernment Grants and Local Government in Australia". Unpublished Research Paper (Townsville, 1984), pp.1-15; C.P. Harris, "Local Authorities and Social Welfare Services and Facilities" in Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, *The Delivery of Welfare Services* (Canberra, 1977), pp.1-68; Morrison, *Local Government in Queensland*; A.A. Morrison, "Local Government in Queensland: Local Government To-Day", Part VI, *Local Government*, 33, 15, December (1950), pp.3-13; A.A. Morrison, "Local Government in Queensland: The Latest Age", Part V, *Local Government*, 33, 13 (October 1950), pp.1-12; A.A. Morrison, *Influence of Party Politics on Local Government 1910-1932*. B.A. (Hons.) Thesis, University of Queensland, 1933.

2 This Act gave the Governor-in-Council power to constitute, unite, sever or annex any municipality with or without petition or counter-petition. J. Power, R.C. Wettenhall and J. Halligan "Overview of Local Government in Australia" in J. Power, C. Wettenhall and J. Halligan (eds.) *Local Government Systems of Australia*, p.13; hereafter, Power et.al., "Overview of Local Government in Australia".

authorities.³ Under the Act, the compulsory introduction of local government gave Government the jurisdiction to create then divide, amalgamate or modify local authority boundaries. For Lavery, the most radical feature of the 1879 Act was the government's power to impose incorporation as a local government authority on the inhabitants without consultation and, if necessary, appoint members to the Divisional Boards.⁴ It is because of this arbitrary division of powers, particularly with respect to constituency and process, that Marsden believes a study of local government in Queensland has more than parochial relevance as the 1897 Act "achieved territorially ubiquitous local government. Nowhere else in the world, perhaps, has such a large area been so subdivided so rapidly for so few".⁵ The boundaries of the various Divisional Boards, including Thuringowa's, were gazetted in November 1879, the Government's intention being to include 1 000 persons in each division.⁶ The lodging date for nominations for

3 Statutes in force in the Colony of Queensland, Vol. 11, 2 October 1879. By 1875 local government was firmly established in Victoria. New South Wales did not extend local government into her rural areas until the *Local Government (Shires) Act* of 1905; the Western Lands Division of New South Wales did not acquire local government until the 1950s. Tasmania legislated in 1906 and Western Australia in 1892 and 1911 to extend local government throughout their states. Ruth Atkins, "Local Government" in R.N. Spann (ed.) *Public Administration in Australia* (Sydney, 1973), pp.224-226.

4 Lavery, "An Historical Survey of Local Government in Queensland", p.79. See Chapter 10 for details of the reaction to the imposition of local government in the rural areas of Queensland.

5 Brian S. Marsden, "'The Whole colony was to become a municipality': The Territorial Foundation of Local Government in Queensland". *Urban Issues*, 3, 2, September (1972), p.131.

6 Letter from Henry Jordan, Registrar General to the Colonial Secretary, 3 November 1879 reproduced in *Mackay Mercury*, 26 November 1879.

divisional Board membership was January 1880.⁷

This legislation followed, and acknowledged the failure of, a voluntarist policy whereby the Colonial Government had tried to encourage regional groups to form local government authorities under the *Municipal Institutions Act* of 1864 and *Provisional Councils Act* of 1864.⁸ Only eight centres - Townsville, Gayndah, Clermont, Roma, Allora, Cooktown, Mackay and Peak Downs - petitioned for local government incorporation under these acts.⁹

The commonly accepted interpretation for the failure of voluntary incorporation has centred on environmental factors: "the geographical characteristics of sparsely populated expanses and an inhospitable environment were

7 G.H. Knibbs, *Local Government in Australia* (Melbourne, 1919), p.55.

8 The *Municipal Institutions Act* of 1864 improved the legislative framework of the *Municipalities Act* of 1858 inherited from New South Wales; incorporation was granted if at least 50 householders petitioned the government. However, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the provision for plural voting in annual elections to furnish wealthy property owners greater influence in local councils had significant implications for the future character of local administration. Only Peak Downs was incorporated under the *Provincial Councils Act* but it was dissolved almost immediately.

9 Townsville was incorporated in 1866. Ten municipal boroughs had been created under the New South Wales *Municipal Institutions Act* of 1858: Brisbane (1959), Ipswich, Toowoomba and Rockhampton (1860), Maryborough and Warwick (1861), Drayton (1862), Gladstone, Dalby and Bowen (1863); Drayton was dissolved in 1875.

inimical to the evolution of vigorous local government".¹⁰ Since 1788 colonists had been dependent on the entrepreneurial role of central government which, through necessity, had become the provider of basic services. Generally, graziers, settlers and shopkeepers saw no need to change the *status quo*. To them, the costs of local taxation outweighed the vaunted benefits of sharing government power by managing the functions delegated by parliament. This unwillingness to contribute toward public amenities or social capital was a serious deterrent to the introduction of local government and, even today, states Larcombe, it remains a problem.¹¹

Moreover, most people would not have thought it feasible to incorporate their sparsely populated tracts into a working local government authority. Local people in Thuringowa, for example, if they seriously thought about incorporation, had two choices of a town "centre", neither of which seemed a possibility. From 1864 until 1880 Thuringowa contained only one small hamlet, Clare, which was hardly a hub for local government because of its tiny population and its situation on the periphery of

10 Power et.al, "Overview of Local Government in Australia", p.20. This mainstream interpretation has relevance for Queensland, New South Wales and parts of Tasmania. However, South Australian research is revealing that there were numerous examples where local residents actively sought local government incorporation for their area. Local initiatives were neither numerous nor widespread in Tasmania, nevertheless large landed interests were readier to instigate rural local authorities than their counterparts in other states. See J. Robbins, "Localism and Local Government in South Australia", *Politics*, XII, i, May (1978), p.81 and Ruth Atkins, "Local Government" in R.N. Spann (Ed.) *Public Administration in Australia*. 2nd edn. (Sydney, 1973), p.223.

11 Larcombe, *The Origins of Local Government in New South Wales 1831-58: A History of Local Government in New South Wales*. Vol.1, pp.6-13. Compare Sydney which was not incorporated into a municipal authority until 1842, 54 years after its founding.

what was to become Thuringowa's south eastern boundary (see Map 2). The second possibility was for Townsville, already a municipality, to extend its boundaries. In 1866, in a calculated bid to advertise its potentiality as a viable port, Townsville had obtained incorporation as a municipal authority. In the 1860s, the infant port was nevertheless struggling economically; it had no wish to take on the responsibility of extending its boundaries and becoming both an urban and rural local authority. In fact in the mid-1870s the Townsville Municipal Council was temporarily dissolved.¹²

Faced with the failure of voluntary incorporation, the Queensland Colonial Government attempted to set up road trusts between 1871 and 1874. Special purpose road authorities were seen as a substitute for local government, especially in New South Wales and Victoria, as they provided a major function - the construction, maintenance and financing of roads - normally under the jurisdiction of local government. However, as Tucker has pointed out, Queensland's "curious experiment...bore no real resemblance to a genuine system of road trusts...for it was non-statutory, non-elective, non-taxing and, in many instances, non-effective".¹³ Each road trust lobbied the Public Works Department for funds; when grants were received they were often spent on improving roads to the Road Trustees' own properties.¹⁴ The obvious solution was an enforced division of powers in which a local authority structure would supervise the construction and maintenance of roads in a more just and efficient manner.

¹² QPD, 1878, Vol.XXV, pp.74,204,591.

¹³ Tucker, "Queensland", p.379. Compare J. Collinson, "Those Roads & Bridges: Genesis of Local Government in Queensland". *Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, 5 (1954), p.932, who claims the road trusts had elected members acting in an honorary capacity.

¹⁴ Collinson, "Those Roads and Bridges", p.32.

Two other reasons for institutionalising local government emerged during debate on the *Local Government Bill* of 1878 and the *Divisional Boards Bill* of 1879. One concerned the parliamentarians' determination to secure re-election to the colonial parliament by winning votes with roads and bridges in his electorate; the other was the fear, characteristic of the nineteenth century, that big government would create a dependent people lacking in initiative. According to the Postmaster-General,

[f]irstly, central government was far too much burdened with the construction and supervision of works of a purely local character, and that the evil, instead of being diminished, was gradually increasing; until...the value of a member of the Legislature, especially a representative of the outlying districts was gauged not so much by the legislation he assisted in framing for the benefit of the country at large, as by the amount of money he secured from the Treasury for the construction of works for his own particular constituency... Secondly, it is of the highest value that the people shall be taught to take care of their own affairs...that they must be self-reliant and that they must not rely on the central authorities...for what they ought to be best able to do for themselves.¹⁵

Most parliamentarians and certainly both Premiers, Griffith (1878) and McIlwraith (1879), were convinced that the solution lay in local government.

In financing local works, the Colonial Government carried a tremendous financial burden which, it decided, was better borne by the relevant local areas. Taxation was closely linked with representative government, democracy and regionalism: self-government and direct taxation in the form of rates would not only lessen the burdens of the state but benefit each district.¹⁶ By controlling their own taxation, local people would spend local money on local works according to local needs;

¹⁵ QPD, 1879, Vol. XXVII, p.276.

¹⁶ QPD, 1878, Vol. XXV, p.224.

presumably they would therefore be more inclined to accept this fiscal imposition. Central government adroitly unloaded financial burdens in the name of democratisation and decentralisation.

Anxiety over secessionist claims by North and Central Queensland provided a further reason. The Government hoped that dividing government power in Queensland to create numerous local authorities would defeat separatist agitation as each local government would have some degree of autonomy. North and Central Queensland had petitioned for separation in 1866; in 1869 they demanded that three provinces, North, Central and South Queensland, be established in the interests of local government. The petitioners envisaged three large, powerful, regional authorities "which were deviously intended as vehicles for creation of new States";¹⁷ the creation of numerous, small authorities, on the other hand, would counter such a move as each would be far too small to help fulfil new state ambitions.

The Acts of 1878 and 1879 thus were intended to further central government's ability to cater for the needs of the Colony's widely dispersed population, reduce the grass roots desire for regional secession and ensure not only relief but protection from local pressures upon central government. The following discussion delineates, firstly, the main characteristics of the 1879 legislation up to 1902, secondly, the major changes and developments in the period of democratisation experiments, 1902-1936 and, thirdly, the developments, particularly government interference and the proliferation of quangos, since 1936.

McIlwraith's *Divisional Boards Act* was a short simplified version of Griffith's detailed, relatively

¹⁷ Tucker, "Queensland", p.380.

complex *Local Government Act* of 1878. These parallel streams of local government law firmly cemented the main features of local government in Queensland. In 1879 Queensland's constituency was divided into 72 divisions and 18 municipalities, each to be administered by a board or council respectively, of not less than three nor more than nine members and, if sub-divided, there were to be not more than three members per sub-division, but the number for each sub-division did not have to be the same. The 1879 Act continued the annual election of members on a three-yearly rotational basis under a plural ratepayer franchise. The chairman was elected annually by his fellow members.

Until the *Valuation and Rating Act* of 1890, people were entitled to one vote if the annual value of their property was less than £50; two votes where the value was £50 but less than £100; and three votes where the value was £100 and over. After 1890 if the unimproved capital value of the land was less than £500, the owner or occupier, depending on who paid the rates, was allowed one vote; for values of £500 but less than £1 000, two votes; this entitlement rose to three votes for values of £1 000 and over. A corporation or joint stock company owning property in the local government area could utilise to up to nine votes. Elections were by postal voting with the retiring officer sending a ballot paper or papers to eligible male and female ratepayers¹⁸ who were not in arrears on their rates, Australian-born or naturalised and at least 21 years of age. Voters crossed out the name of every candidate for whom they did not intend to vote. After 1887 voters could also vote at urban polling booths.¹⁹

¹⁸ Except if they were the manager, secretary or director of a company.

¹⁹ Always mindful of its connections with the town, Thuringowa manned one booth at the court house in Townsville for city businessmen.

Revenue makes possible each government's generalised range of activities and is therefore a major index of both government power and responsibility. Both Colonial and later State Government ensured that the financial base of local government was limited. The *Valuation and Rating Act* of 1890 changed the principles of valuation and rating which remain the basis of local government taxation today. Previously, rates were assessed on the net annual value of improved town, suburban and country land. However, because it was a tax on property improvements, which tended to discourage progress, the tax base was changed. The levy of rates under the 1890 Act estimated the fair average value of unimproved land of the same quality held in fee-simple in the same neighbourhood (that is, the unimproved capital value), with special provisions for land held under lease for grazing and agricultural purposes and tenure for mines. Rural land could not be valued at less than £20 and suburban land, £30. The Government set the minimum and maximum levels of general rates that a local authority could charge. As we will see, Thuringowa's desire to get things moving in the fledgling Division led the Board to strike the highest rate possible (1/- in the £) in 1881 and to continue for a considerable number of years with its policy of extracting "as much as possible out of the people" in order to maintain its vigorous, capital works program.²⁰ However, although Parliament abolished rate ceilings after World War II, by the 1960s Thuringowa's Councils had become moribund and the Shire had the lowest rates in Queensland.²¹

The 1879 Act also allowed local authorities to strike special rates. Some, which in the aggregate could not exceed 3d. in the £, could be struck for the purpose of defraying the cost of constructing and maintaining

²⁰ NQH, 24 May 1893, p.19.

²¹ TDB, 23 September 1968, p.6.

works relating to such things as sewerage, drainage and public libraries as well as for the destruction and prevention of pests and the eradication of noxious weeds and plants. Other special health, water, cleansing and loan repayment rates were set at a rate to repay or maintain the service. Special rates (for instance, health) could be levied on all ratepayers but separate and some special rates (water reticulation) on those in the benefited area.

The device known as a "benefited area" is an expression of the "user", or more accurately, "beneficiary pays" principle. It provides an excellent example of how the areal division of powers operated internally; how councils balanced services against constituent desires for equitable rating *vis-a-vis* ratepayers in the neighbouring sub-division and against their desire to be re-elected. It became a useful piece of administrative machinery for use when ratepayers complained about contributing more in rate revenues and receiving less in expenditure benefits than some other ratepayers. Together with internal financial sub-divisions, which ensured that revenue raised in a particular area was, except for costs such as administration, spent in that area, their purpose has been to minimise cross-subsidisation of residents in other parts of the local authority. On the one hand, the internal division of powers through benefited areas and financial sub-divisions promoted liberty in the sense that constituents living in poorer areas of the division were not burdened with paying for the desires of richer ratepayers, and *visa versa*. On the other hand, such division eroded equity because financial sub-divisions and benefited areas prevented redistribution of income and costs thereby emphasising "parochial and indeed selfish attitudes in the community".²² Local government

²² Tucker, "The Structure of Local Government in Queensland", pp.133,134.

in this respect has not protected the egalitarian values considered central in Australia's ethos. Nevertheless, Tucker argues that financial sub-divisions, because they are conflict resolution devices, have been valuable tools for local authorities.²³ However these benefits may be illusory if Thuringowa's experiences have wider applicability.

To increase their revenue, local authorities could obtain bank overdrafts which could not exceed the previous year's income. Loans were also permitted not only because of restrictions on ordinary revenue but because of the important principle that the cost of the works be related over time to the benefits received from them. Initially loans could only be borrowed from the Colonial Treasury because of mismanagement by the Brisbane and Ipswich Municipal Councils during the 1860s. The *Local Works Loans Act* of 1880 classified loans and assigned a term of redemption for each class of public works: thus the term of loans for waterworks was 40 years; for permanent stone, brick or concrete drainage or sanitation works, 30 years; for metalled roads to a depth of 6 inches and a width of 16 feet and bridges, mainly constructed of hardwood, 10 years; and for other roads and works of a temporary nature, 5 years. In its first two decades, Thuringowa made use of these borrowing concessions, taking out as many loans as the Treasury permitted (see Appendix 5).

Local authorities could also obtain revenue through toll charges. Always quick to implement revenue-earning schemes, Thuringowa's toll gate at the junction of the Georgetown and Dalrymple Roads and Flinders Street West (see Map 3) commenced in 1881. However, it only operated for a few years as the Divisional Board soon realised that, because of the over-spill into Thuringowa of

²³ Tucker, "The Structure of Local Government in Queensland", p.134.

Townsville's rapidly growing suburbs, a toll gate would be an impost on Thuringowa businessmen and residents conducting business and working in their own town.²⁴

Besides rates, loans (including bank overdrafts) and charges, government grants were the fourth source of revenue. This financial basis of local government has remained unchanged. In order to provide local authorities with the finances to implement the *Divisional Boards Act* of 1879, the Colonial Government established the system of endowment on rates. £2 for every £1 raised in rates from 1880 to 1885; thereafter £1 for £1. Both local and colonial governments soon realised, however, that enormous works expenditure was needed; the 1887 *Divisional Boards Act* therefore increased the period for double endowment from five to 10 years but allocated a fixed amount to be divided proportionally among local authorities. The move proved hasty and ill-conceived: endowment became such a heavy drain on the Treasury that new provisions under the *Local Government Endowment Act* of 1890 reduced appropriations from £250 000 in 1889-1890 to £113 000 in 1892-1893, to £30 000 in 1902-1903, and then withdrew them entirely. Along with other local authorities, Thuringowa forcefully opposed the abolition of the endowment as it had contributed at least £34 162 to the Shire's revenue and works programs.²⁵

24 In 1897 in an attempt to lessen their tax burden, the Thuringowa Ratepayers Progress Association employed "a reliable man" to tabulate the numbers and kinds of vehicles using the causeway and calculated that at 1d. for every vehicle and horseman a toll gate would yield £1 157 per annum. Though the takings would have increased its revenue by over one-third for the year, the Divisional Board believed that it could not penalise industry or recreation. Thuringowa Ratepayers Progress Association to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 12 May 1897; reply 4 June 1897; Reports Book 1896-1898 (JCU). Some self-interest was involved as the Members had both rural and town interests.

25 Calculated from Statistics of Queensland, 1880-1903; Minute Books, 1880-1904. See Chapter 13.

Although there are various values that local government may claim to protect or enhance more effectively than other levels of government through an areal division of powers - such as liberty, participation and economic efficiency²⁶ - there are but two defining characteristics of a local government authority: that it operate in a restricted geographical area and that it possess the power to levy and increase taxation without the prior consent of another level of government. The latter characteristic *ipso facto* confers the power to govern.²⁷ However local authorities are not governments in the sense that they do not rule or govern by enacting statutes; they operate by enacting by-laws which have to be ratified by the Governor-in-Council. Local government authorities derive their power from Parliament which imposes frequent limitations.

The powers and duties of local government laid down in the 1878-1879 legislation seem substantial and wide-

26 The following chapters discuss various aspects of these values: for instance, Chapters 10, 11 and 12 and examine "grass-roots" democracy, participation and liberty whilst Chapter 16 explores the Boards' and Councils' water reticulation services. For discussion on the competing values of local government see the previous chapter.

27 Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", pp.4-7. The tax referred to is the general rate not specific-purpose devices such as water rates which are methods of charging in an exchange situation and not genuine taxes. Although the Minister imposed minimum and maximum rate levels prior to World War II, this does not alter the fact that local authorities have not needed consent for rates within this range.

ranging.²⁸ However, these powers were restricted. For instance, though local government had control of buildings and building construction, it lacked the power of town planning. If a local authority wished to supply gas or electricity in a town where a private company was established, as Thuringowa thought it might in the 1890s, it had first to exercise its power of purchase over the company's plant. As well there was a clear proclivity on the part of central government, noticeable in the voluntarist period of local government, to transfer local functions to government departments or *ad hoc* statutory authorities instead of restructuring local government. The status of local government was diminished right from its legislative conception within Queensland.

The weakness of not just Queensland but Australian local government has been commented on by numerous writers but none with more contempt than Sidney and Beatrice Webb who visited Queensland and other Australian Colonies in 1898. Enormously influential in British local government as intellectuals and politicians, they were shocked at the minor role of local government in Australia.²⁹ Fifty years later, Bland remarked that "nowhere in the British Commonwealth is local government

28 Boards and councils were given specific duties such as constructing roads and bridges and specific powers over the construction of buildings, prevention of fires, public nuisances, places of amusement, public carriers and vehicles plying for hire, slaughter houses and abattoirs, markets, public and private roads, streets, water supply and distribution, sewerage and drainage, street lighting, cemeteries, tree planting, public reserves, public decency, health and contagious diseases, offensive trades, traffic and processions, public libraries, museums, botanical gardens, places of recreation, reserves and commons.

29 Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain* (Cambridge, 1920), p.19. It should be noted that the Australian system cannot be easily compared with the British which has only two tiers of government.

so rudimentary as in Australia".³⁰ Compared with England and America, local government in Australia has always been impotent: education, police and rail transport are state affairs.

Just as environmental factors posited rural local government, so, too, paradoxically, they limited local government power. In particular, ever since its European origins as a convict settlement, Australia's harsh environment and vast open spaces helped create Australia's well-documented dependency on state and federal government. Local governments thus looked to other tiers of government for bureaucratic solutions, welfare support and economic intervention and initiatives; they themselves were unwilling to accept a bigger share of government powers - and responsibility - and deemed central co-ordination and control necessary in the interests of efficiency, economy and uniformity.

For instance public health, particularly the control of infectious diseases, had to be more than a local government responsibility because rats, mosquitoes, hook worm, influenza, poliomyelitis and typhoid were not confined by local government boundaries. Health control could not be left to individual local authorities. The

³⁰ F.A. Bland, "Public Administration and its Problems" in C. Hartley Gratton (ed.) *Australia* (Berkley, 1947), p.120.

neglect by one could destroy the efforts of many.³¹ Thus the *Health Act* of 1884, which was a fairly comprehensive measure entrusting local governments with the care of public health in their areas, ensured that a Central Board of Health possessed wide powers to make regulations and supervise the work of the local governing bodies. However such division of responsibility was extended to other areas of a more local nature, such as control of slaughter houses,³² as "it was a *modus operandi* which enabled the central body to secure the acceptance of its policies by local governments",³³ and reflected the minor role cast for local government.

This trend to special-purpose authorities to carry out local government functions was despite extensive legislation, the *United Municipalities Act* of 1881, the *Divisional Boards Act Amendment Act* of 1882, the *Local Authorities (Joint Action) Act* of 1886 and the *Water Authorities Act* of 1891, designed to secure the co-operation, voluntary or otherwise, of neighbouring local authorities in the control, maintenance and improvement of boundary roads and bridges, and similar special-purpose functions, for instance, traffic control, water

31 Thuringowa and Townsville looked uneasily over their shoulders whenever an epidemic occurred in the district. In 1897, for instance, although Thuringowa Divisional Board had taken action without delay to suppress an outbreak of typhoid fever at the Ross River Meatworks, the Townsville Municipal Council sent an urgent telegram to Brisbane demanding the Home Secretary take stringent measures and intervene immediately; telegram, 24 August 1897 and letter, 24 September 1897, both to Home Secretary; Correspondence Records re. Local Government, 1885-1914 - Thuringowa, COL/076; hereafter COL/076. See Janice Wegner, "Nightcarts and Nuisances": Local Government and Health in North Queensland, 1879-1945" in Roy MacLeod and Donald Denoon, *Health and Healing in Tropical Australia and Papua New Guinea* (Townsville, 1991), pp.178-191.

32 This was vested in a government department in 1898.

33 Laverty, "An Historical Survey of Local Government in Queensland", p.80.

supply and cemeteries. However local authorities proved reluctant to transfer power to another legally incorporated local authority board to provide a common service for their ratepayers as they feared it could open the way for a later amalgamation. It would seem that central government had little choice but to create statutory authorities for efficiency. Again, if Thuringowa can be seen as representative, the equation was not that simple. After much debate and numerous meetings, Thuringowa and Townsville were on the brink of forming a joint water board but Brisbane advised Thuringowa that it may regret the loss of power and should reconsider. It did, and unfortunately (because of its lack of long-term water resources) decided to form its own water authority in 1897.³⁴ Central government's interference in local authority debate, which counselled caution over the instigation of joint boards, suggests that it preferred to keep local government impotent thereby lessening any threat to colonial, and later, state power. Thus not just local, but central government's, fears ensured that the trend toward statutory authorities was strengthened.

Local authorities preferred to enter into something less formal than joint authority boards, such as joint committees. Thuringowa and Townsville had two joint committees: one, the Flinders Street West Joint Committee operated with an efficient lack of tension; the other, to decide on a cemetery, experienced more acrimony. In 1893 Thuringowa Divisional Board representatives believed that the Townsville Municipal Council's proposed site in Thuringowa near QME for the district's new cemetery was "most objectionable" because the prevailing winds would blow over the gracious residences in Hermit Park Estate. That the same winds would have blown over Rossvale, a suburb containing workers cottages, first was

³⁴ See Chapter 16.

inconsequential:³⁵ notions of class affected the Board's perceptions of the sort of environment each class was entitled to enjoy. Local government's role affected more than rates, roads and rubbish.

Reform of local government in England and eastern United States, especially the imminent consolidation of London's many local authorities and progress towards the creation of the Greater City of New York, reinforced the belief that a comprehensive review of Queensland local government was warranted. It seemed that parochialism had run rampant with the creation of another 12 municipalities and 45 divisions. As well, the dual system of local government needed to be reconsidered as there were over 50 statutes affecting local authorities. The Royal Commission on Local Government was appointed in 1896 to examine all relevant matters, including the forms of local government, methods of constitution, functions and finances.

Consisting of 21 members, including Thuringowa's Divisional Board Chairman, Joseph Hodel, the Commission suggested that the Government had been too compliant in permitting so many new authorities, resulting in "a loss of energy in the system generally and avoidable friction",³⁶ and recommended that a comprehensive review of the territorial structure of local government be undertaken "with a view to the amalgamation of certain of these areas".³⁷ This was not undertaken until the Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries in 1928. The 1896 Commission also stipulated that "before areas are subdivided in future the fullest information should be

³⁵ One also wonders about the sort of smell the Board thought a cemetery would emit! *NQH*, 15 November 1893, p.17.

³⁶ Tucker, "Queensland", p.381.

³⁷ Report of the Royal Commission on Local Government, *V&P*, Vol.II (1986), p.525.

obtained, not only as to the present alleged inequalities or grievances, but also as to the probable future requirements of the whole district concerned".³⁸ This caveat would appear to have been influenced by the evidence from Commissioner Joseph Hodel, Thuringowa Divisional Board Chairman, concerning the Government's refusal to consider the large petition from Thuringowa ratepayers against the secession of the Haughton River-Mt. Elliott-Woodstock area to Ayr in 1892-1893.³⁹ It is doubtful whether Hodel's influence went beyond the Report as the number of local authority areas, particularly shires, rose from 160 in 1903 to a peak of 186 in 1916.

The abolition of "all local authorities whose expenses of management are shown to bear an undue proportion of the amount of revenue raised by general rates" was also recommended because the Commissioners believed that excessive fragmentation had resulted in unnecessary spending and inefficiency.⁴⁰ The majority of such local authorities had small populations and were located in the west or north of Queensland. For instance, Cardwell's administrative expenses were 41% of rate revenue whilst Barcaldine's was a high 72%; in comparison, Thuringowa's was a respectable 13%.⁴¹ Amalgamations did not occur. The traditional view given for Brisbane's inactivity was its desire to minimise the

38 Report of the Royal Commission on Local Government, V&P, Vol.II (1986), p.525.

39 Royal Commission into Local Government, *Minutes of Evidence of the Local Government Commission of 1896* (Brisbane, 1896), p.53. The influence of big business on Brisbane's decision was also charged; see Chapter 12. This is a recurring theme in Thuringowa-State Government relations and is examined in the chapters on secession and water reticulation, particularly.

40 Royal Commission into Local Government, *Report of the Local Government Commission of 1896* (Brisbane, 1896), p.25.

41 Calculated from Statistics of Queensland, 1895 and 1896.

backlash by local government authorities over threats to their existence. Another reason points to conservative government's desire to keep local government power weak through numerous small authorities rather than the creation of fewer large authorities.

The Commission recommended modifications to the legislation to streamline the division of government power areally: the abolition of the dual system of local government and the introduction of a unified system based on urban councils catering for cities (with a population of over 15 000) and towns and shire councils for rural areas.⁴² This recommendation was implemented in the *Local Authorities Act* of 1902.

Between 1902 and 1936 Queensland local government was reformed and modified substantially. The major reforms were concerned with the democratisation of local government, the "greater city" movement and some extension of local government powers. However there was a simultaneous emphasis on increasing *ad hoc* authorities or turning to state departments to provide and co-ordinate local functions that it believed local government could not readily or satisfactorily perform.

The democratic devices of referendum, recall and initiative were considerably expanded by the amending Acts of 1910, 1912 and 1913. Introduced by non-Labor Governments they were attempts to increase ratepayers' involvement in government. Griffith's *Local Government Act* of 1878 already incorporated one element of participatory democracy: 20 ratepayers could demand that the question of whether a loan should be raised be put to a poll of ratepayers and if one-third of the total number of votes recorded on the voter's roll opposed the loan, the council or board concerned could not proceed with the

⁴² Report of the Royal Commission on Local Government, V&P, Vol.II, 1896, p.527.

loan. Thuringowa ratepayers used their democratic rights on at least two occasions and forced the cancellation of bridge loans.⁴³ The *Local Authorities Act* of 1902 changed the requirement to a simple majority of votes cast with the result that "in many cases Local Authorities...refrained from making any attempt to borrow because of their fear of the ratepayers".⁴⁴ As a case in point, Thuringowa only took out five loans between 1902 and 1928.⁴⁵ In the context of a ratepayer franchise the effect was inimical to progress as council loan initiatives were stifled by polls and the threat of polls.

In 1910 ratepayers controlling at least one-fifth of the votes in an area could force a poll on the question of the provision of a recreation park. Further amendments in 1912 and 1913 allowed one-fifth of the ratepayers to petition for a poll on a variety of matters: the location of the council's office, internal territorial arrangements relating to the distribution of financial burdens and "any other question relating to local government".⁴⁶ Ratepayers could also demand a new election; the new "recall" provision in the 1910 Act empowered the Governor-in-Council to dissolve any council upon the petition of one-fifth of the ratepayers and vested the entire discretion in such matters in the Government. A 1912 amendment conferred on the Government a power of removal of the mayor or chairman if, as had happened, he refused to carry out the resolutions of the majority of councillors and, if the council failed to do so, appoint his replacement within 14 days. The

43 See Chapter 13.

44 C.E. Chuter, *Local Government Administration* (Brisbane, 1921), p.11.

45 See Appendix 5.

46 *Local Authorities Acts 1902-1913*, Section IIA.

Governor-in-Council was also given power to rescind by-laws. Except for the latter, these provisions were genuine attempts to make local government more participative and responsive to community needs. However Charles Chuter, one of the most able local government administrators in the Home Secretary's Department, believed that "the existence of provisions of this nature...constitute a blot on our local government" and should not be tolerated.⁴⁷ In effect, councillors were "not to be trusted" and were in reality delegates and not representatives. The result was a lack of initiative and interest: "No man of position and personality would become very interested" in standing for local government.⁴⁸

The major development of the local government system was the abolition of the property franchise and its replacement with electoral democracy. The debate on participation reflected the conflicting values concerning local government powers and equity prevalent in the political community. Arguing that no local authority consisted of one class only, the Labor Party opposed the privileges of the wealthy and their monopoly of power in local government as wrong in principle and vicious in practice. In 1902, 1910, 1915 and 1918, Labor tried unsuccessfully to introduce adult suffrage into local authority elections, arguing that resident non-landholders had rates built into their tenancy rentals; every person therefore contributed indirectly to the revenue of the local authority and should have

⁴⁷ Chuter, *Local Government Administration*, pp.7,8.

⁴⁸ Morrison, *The Influence of Party Politics on Local Government 1910-1932*, pp.27,28.

representation on that body.⁴⁹ It therefore came as no surprise when in 1920 the Labor government, for the first time firmly in control of both Houses, amended the Local Government Act to introduce "one-man-one-vote".⁵⁰

The property franchise reflected the traditional conservative argument that only those with property - "a stake in the country" - could be trusted to exercise political power responsibly.⁵¹ Labor retorted that responsibility was learned through participation in politics, an argument that had already succeeded at State and Federal levels:

the principles of citizenship and civic conscience required development ...and people can learn the use of liberty only by full possession of it.⁵²

Non-Labor and the Local Authorities Association "held that the grant of adult franchise was an absolute injustice" as the Bill completely revolutionised local government.⁵³

Amendments to the franchise were not popular with the Liberal Opposition nor with local government authorities and were rescinded when Labor was defeated in 1929. They were reinstated permanently when Labor regained office in 1932.

49 This latter argument was eloquently presented by E. Theodore during debate on Labor's Bill on Local Government in 1910. See Hansard 1910, p.1402. During these years, Labor was interested only in class and not gender issues.

50 New South Wales is the only other State which does not have a property franchise; Tasmania also has plural voting. Only Queensland has compulsory voting.

51 See Hansard, 1915-1916, pp.2588,2596,2610; 1920, p.330.

52 Hansard, 1920, p.343.

53 Speech by Hon. John Appel, a former Home Secretary in the Denham Government, QPD, 1920, pp.346,347.

In the same local government Amendment of 1920, elections were to be triennial and the election of the mayor or chairman was to be by the whole of the electors in lieu of selection by fellow councillors, thereby endowing him or her with greater freedom of action as the direct representative of the voters. The previous legislation placed mayors and chairmen in a ceremonial or figurehead role which allowed the senior salaried officials to become more influential. Because they were directly elected by all electors, the Governor-in-Council no longer had power to remove mayors or chairmen for failing in their executive role. As chief executive officer and *ex officio* member of all standing and special committees of council, the chairperson or mayor now played a central role in council business. One Local Government Department spokesperson described them as "the one-man bands of local government".⁵⁴ They became highly visible public figures who gained considerable advantage over their fellow councillors, firstly, because they represented the entire area rather than just one division and, secondly, because they were usually re-elected for more than one three-year term which allowed them to acquire detailed administrative knowledge and implement long-term works programs.

The expertise and capabilities of staff was addressed for the first time. Efficiency was not just a matter of fewer local authorities or the ratio of administrative expenses to revenue. The quality of those administrative services included staffing concerns. Town and shire clerks were now expected to obtain certificates; by the 1970s they were required to have degrees in local government.⁵⁵ Apart from some specific

⁵⁴ Sunday Mail, 28 January 1979.

⁵⁵ According to Tucker, the standard of qualification - passes in 16 semester units - required of local authority clerks is possibly the most demanding in Australia; "Queensland", p.398.

duties and obligations,⁵⁶ the *Local Government Act* has been fairly non-specific leaving local authorities much discretion in delineating the clerk's role in their by-laws.⁵⁷ In many councils, the clerk became the dominant salaried official or the co-ordinator of administrative action. As permanent professionals, clerks were able to build up an extensive knowledge of local conditions and how to interpret local government law which gave them considerable power vis-a-vis temporary elected councillors and the mayor or chairman, especially before

56 Clerks are responsible for the safe custody of minute-books, all books of agreements, account, receipts, vouchers and generally all documents relating to the local authority's affairs; they must sign annual financial statements; and the authority's correspondence is addressed to them.

57 At their meeting on 21 March 1888, Thuringowa Divisional Board Members delineated the duties of the Clerk, some were very specific whilst others were open-ended, probably reflecting the youth of rural local government:

"Guarantee: He shall place in to the hands of the Chairman a Fidelity Bond immediately after his appointment and until such Bond is issued by a Company, a local guarantee.

Duties: Attend all Meetings, Keep Accounts, minutes, etc. on the proper forms, Keep copy of all correspondence and discharge all duties required and necessary as the Clerk.
Rates and Banking: Accept and bank all monies; bank not later than between 2 and 3pm o'clock.

Cash and Receipts: No monies shall be paid on any account from Cash Receipts; all deposits to correspond exactly with a given number of cash receipts.

Cheques Stamped: Countersign all cheques and all property is to be stamped with the Board's stamp.

Cash and Statement: Immediately after the first of every month, make out a Statement of the Finance Committee.

Copy of Bank Books: Keep a facsimile copy of all bank books.

Assessor: Advise and assist the Assessor in every way.

Clerk and Chairman: Assist the Chairman in every way.

Cut-up Lands: All land cut up to be brought to the notice of the Board, also obtain all plans which may be of use.

Memo of Ownership: Keep names of all changes.

Office: Hours - 9am to 5pm each day, Saturdays excepted, 9am to 1pm or at such times as the Chairman deems

necessary". Minutes, 21 March 1888, Minute Book 2 March 1887 to 24 February 1893, 11 THU/D1 (QSA).

the 1920 reforms. In Thuringowa, the opposite occurred. The clerk - the managerial gatekeeper - did not unduly influence Thuringowa politics until the 1920s and then again from the late 1970s.⁵⁸ Until the 1930s a clerk could also be a councillor on a different council although this situation was probably unique to Thuringowa whose shire clerk was also an alderman on the Townsville City Council from 1927 to 1930. Tucker believes that it was this case and concern over dual loyalties and confidentiality that probably led to the legislative changes.⁵⁹

Another consequence of the 1920 reforms allowed party politics, organised election campaigns and policy commitment to enter local government elections. Although this occurred very early in Townsville, party politics did not surface until the 1970s in Thuringowa.⁶⁰

By the time of the state elections in 1915 the proposal for a Greater Brisbane had become a political issue. Ryan's Labor Government, committed to a program of city enlargement in the interests of efficiency, "greaterised" the cities of Ipswich, Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Charters Towers and Townsville with scant consultation with the councils and residents of the local governments concerned.⁶¹ Although in his election speech Ryan had pledged that the scheme would be "subject to the approval of the areas concerned",⁶² issues of liberty and equity dropped out of sight; issues of efficiency in a fairly narrow service

58 See Chapter 17.

59 Interview J.D. Tucker, Brisbane, November 1985.

60 Chapter 10 explores the reasons for this.

61 Thuringowa felt it had been unfairly dealt with in the Greaterisation of Townsville in 1918; see Chapter 12.

62 *The Worker*, 12 March 1915.

sense became the dominant concern (except in the case of Brisbane). "Greaterisation" was merely a readjustment of territorial boundaries whereas the *City of Brisbane Act* of 1924 incorporated two cities, six towns, ten shires and portions of two other shires and granted Brisbane Council its own charter, including both general and "express" powers which were subject only to the approval of the Governor-in-Council and the veto of Parliament. "Greater Brisbane was a unique experiment in the Australian context".⁶³ It was responsible for both local and metropolitan functions, activities undertaken by two tiers of government in other Australian cities.

That there were relatively minor changes to rating powers between 1902 and 1936 reveals the tight rein kept on the unequal division of government powers and, hence, status of the two levels, state and local.⁶⁴ To alleviate the many complaints from local authorities that limitations on the general rate hampered them in their activities,⁶⁵ ceilings were increased from 3d. in the £ in 1902 to 1/- in the £ by 1936 but were not abolished until after World War II. Some of the limits on borrowing were removed. Loans could be borrowed from the State Treasury or by the issue of debentures on the open market. The Opposition were very much afraid of the extension of borrowing powers, when taken in conjunction with the grant of adult franchise.⁶⁶ Their fears proved unsubstantiated: as at 31 December 1935 Brisbane City Council owed £23 million, the other 22 city and town

⁶³ Lavery, "An Historical Survey of Local Government in Queensland", p.88.

⁶⁴ For instance, in 1934 local authorities were able to charge a special sewerage and cleansing rate upon all rateable land, whether occupied or not, in the area where a sewerage works operated.

⁶⁵ Speech by the Home Secretary, Hansard, 1920, p.315.

⁶⁶ Hansard, 1920, p.335; 1923, p.401.

councils, £3.5 million and 121 shire councils, £3 million.⁶⁷ Local authorities were not big borrowers.

With the end to the endowment, the general situation was one which emphasised the tax base as the main source of finance. However grants from the State Government re-emerged as a significant source of revenue in the 1930s. The grants were for unemployment relief⁶⁸ and were financed from the proceeds of the *Income (Unemployment Relief) Tax Act* of 1930 which levied an additional progressive income tax that was collected by employers. Local authorities could also receive loans from the Unemployment Relief Fund equalling one-half the size of the grants. The tax was repealed in 1939.⁶⁹

In 1929 and 1934 the State and Federal Governments respectively introduced subsidies for loans raised by local authorities to finance approved works. The state subsidy was tied to the amount spent on labour and for constructional works, which was one-third of the labour cost. The Commonwealth grant was introduced for a 10-year period and paid to the State Government for distribution. It provided a 50% interest and redemption subsidy on loans for public works (the loan would additionally attract the normal state subsidy).

Despite these grants and subsidies, the heavy

⁶⁷ Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, p.53.

⁶⁸ Besides finding employment, relief assistance in the form of rations was also available but not through the local authority.

⁶⁹ It was replaced by the *State Development Tax Act* of 1939 which sought to stop the system of intermittent relief work and implement a full-time employment plan. However employment was to be on works undertaken by State Government departments rather than local government. This scheme netted £7 million by the time it was discontinued in 1942 when the States ceased to levy separate income taxes.

dependence by local government on its rates remained. In the mid-1930s rates averaged 40% of current revenue; this increased to 60% in 1940 when unemployment grants ceased.⁷⁰ These percentages varied according to local circumstances and philosophies; for instance, Thuringowa's poverty and conservatism ensured that it was 20% above the state norm with rates accounting for a high 66% of its revenue in 1934 and 82% in 1940.⁷¹

The Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries in 1928 recognised that closer settlement, the relapse in the mining industry, ravages of the prickly pear but particularly developments in motor transport along with the construction of main roads had modified the circumstances in which local governments functioned. It therefore recommended that the number of local authorities be reduced by 67.⁷² Councillors and conservative politicians were severe opponents and it was not until 1948 that a limited number of boundary changes to south-east Queensland councils eventuated.

Laverty argues that it was in the interests of equity, efficiency and economy that the Commission recommended the abolition of financial divisions;⁷³ however, it was also a territorial issue as financial divisions meant that a shire was an aggregation of small shires. With the abolition of a property franchise, these devices helped fulfill certain objectives of participating groups and classes, who sought to promote social and cultural homogeneity by maintaining economic

⁷⁰ Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, Table II-1, p.43.

⁷¹ See Chapter 17 and Appendix 6.

⁷² Royal Commission into Local Authorities Boundaries (H.J. Ryan, Chairman), *Report of the Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries* (Brisbane, 1928), p.11.

⁷³ Laverty, "An Historical Survey of Local Government in Queensland", p.88.

jurisdictional boundaries which protected them from standards they did not wish to share or be made to pay to share. It became obvious that ratepayer disquiet was more powerful than equity and efficiency because, although financial divisions were abolished in 1932, they were soon reinstated and were not included in the 1936 Act.

There was some extension of the powers of local government. Amending Acts in 1910, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1927 and 1929 permitted councils to erect and lease shops on land vested in them, erect dwellings for their employees, take measures to attract settlers and provide for aviation services. (Thuringowa was one of the first rural authorities to operate an aerodrome). In 1923 the "first instalment in town planning powers" was granted;⁷⁴ a council could declare certain suburbs a "first-class" section which allowed control over construction materials and other aspects relevant to fire prevention; define an area as residential, regulate the classes of buildings that could be erected and prohibit the erection of advertising hoardings and business and trade premises; stipulate the size of blocks, the height and alignment of buildings and the regulations pertaining to subdivisions.

Although health legislation widened the scope of local government responsibilities, it not only continued the tradition of sharing public health activities with the State Health Department but gave the Central Board of Health, and the Commissioner of Public Health who succeeded it, authority to act in default of or over-ride the local authority. A Royal Commission into public hospitals in 1930 recommended that the contribution of local governments to hospitals be cut by 50% and that they be relieved of the responsibility for the treatment

⁷⁴ Lavery, "An Historical Survey of Local Government in Queensland", p.89.

of infectious diseases. It was not until 1943 that the contribution was reduced and it was only after the Federal Government commenced subsidies to hospitals in 1944 that local governments were no longer obliged to contribute to the cost of establishing, operating and maintaining hospitals. Their representation on local hospital boards was reduced to one.

Besides acting as the construction and maintenance authority on behalf of the Main Roads Commission (later Department) for which it was reimbursed, a local authority was required to contribute to the cost of construction and maintenance of roads declared under the *Main Roads Act* of 1920.⁷⁵ For poorer local authorities, such as Thuringowa, this arrangement did not give much relief; in fact, Thuringowa was constantly worried that roads in the Shire would be classified under the Act thereby placing a significant financial burden on its meagre resources.⁷⁶ The proportional costs lessened with the entry of Federal Government road grants and subsidies in the 1960s.

A spate of Royal Commissions during the 1930s strengthened the trend to special purpose statutory authorities. They believed that *ad hoc* authorities and state departments were the proper controlling authorities because the local function under consideration warranted large capital expenditure and effective state-wide

⁷⁵ By 1931 a local authority was expected to contribute half the maintenance costs of state highways; 20% of the capital cost and interest, repayable over 30 years, and 50% of the maintenance costs of main roads; 20% of the interest on the capital cost, repayable over 20 years, and up to 50% of the maintenance costs of developmental roads; 50% of the capital cost and interest, repayable over 30 years, and 50% of the maintenance costs of secondary roads; the percentage was negotiated before tourist roads were commenced. Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859-1977*, p.51.

⁷⁶ See Chapter 15.

planning and co-ordination in the interests of both efficiency and economy. With the advent of the motor car, for instance, state-wide planning, supervision and funding of a main roads' system were seen as the functions of a Main Roads Commission. Jones argues that local authorities might well have assumed responsibility for main roads had not colonial government's infatuation in the late nineteenth century with railway construction, as "the main physical communication infrastructure", left them utterly bereft of funds for such expensive undertakings. In 1881, the year the Townsville-Charters Towers railway was completed, of the total monies spent on new capital formation works (such as roads, bridges and railways), colonial governments were spending 51% on railway construction and 8% on roads; local authorities were spending 16% on roads. Similar ratios continued into the 1930s.⁷⁷ Thus, with a history of relatively slight, local involvement in road construction, local government had little alternative but to bow out of main roads' development. To be sure, local authorities, including Thuringowa, heaved a sigh of relief.

From 1936 to the early 1980s, there were three additions to the legislation that gave Queensland local government distinctive characteristics compared with local government in the other States. These are the general competence power, water reticulation responsibilities and a major role in land use planning. The latter two, together with well-established services and powers such as sewerage, flood mitigation, stormwater

⁷⁷ Jones, *Local Government and the People*, pp.57-59; N. Butlin, *Investment in Australian Economic Development* (London, 1964). Also see N. Butlin, "The Shape of the Australian Economy, 1861-1900", *Economic Record*, 34, 67 (1958), pp.10-29. One attempt by Thuringowa Divisional Board to get the Townsville to Ingham road between Bluewater Creek and Crystal Creek gazetted as a "main road" was seen by the Under-Secretary of Public Works as naive in the extreme; minute on letter from Thuringowa Divisional Board, 5 August 1887, COL/076.

drainage, litter control and beach protection, add up "to a formidable battery of functions of direct environmental significance" which allowed Queensland local government to play a key role in "the controversial area of environmental control - the traditional housekeeping role viewed in a different light".⁷⁸

According to Laverty, the *Local Government Act* of 1936 contained the "most revolutionary alteration in the powers of local government".⁷⁹ It extended the general competence power granted to Brisbane City Council in 1924 to all local authorities; one of the maxims of the areal division of powers.⁸⁰ This was a clear departure from the British tradition and current practice in other States. R. Robinson, who succeeded Chuter as Under Secretary of the Department of Health and Home Affairs in 1941, remarked that the legislation was "a resurgence of the spirit of local government in its highest sense".⁸¹ Hanlon, the Secretary of Health and Home Affairs, described the legislation as

largely a charter of local government ...which empowered local government to make by-laws on any matter of domestic concern...that was not illegal under some other Act of Parliament. That is as it should be...I doubt if there is anything in the world so wide delegated to the local authorities.⁸²

Hanlon explained the need for the legislative change quite simply: local governments frequently made by-laws which were pronounced within their powers by their local solicitor but were subsequently ruled *ultra vires* by the Crown Law Office when submitted for ratification to the

⁷⁸ Tucker, "Queensland", p.405.

⁷⁹ Laverty, "An Historical Survey of Local Government in Queensland", p.90.

⁸⁰ See previous chapter.

⁸¹ Robinson, *For My Country*, p.389.

⁸² QPD, 1936, pp.642,807.

Governor-in-Council. The general competence and by-law making powers bypassed the need for frequent legislative amendments to grant the necessary specific powers.⁸³

The *Local Government Act* granted local authorities full power to make by-laws for promoting and maintaining the peace, comfort, culture, education, health, morals, welfare, safety, convenience, food supply, housing, trade, commerce, and manufactures of the Area and its inhabitants, and for the planning, development and embellishment of the Area, and for the general good rule and government of the Area and its inhabitants, and for the direction, administration, and control of the working and business of the government of the Area.⁸⁴

The discourse is quite different to previous acts and highlights the recognition that the legislators viewed local government as more than "housekeeping tasks". Unfortunately, even within the same section of the Act, express powers were given for the provision, construction, maintenance, management, execution, control and regulation of a considerable variety of matters.⁸⁵ The vesting of these specific powers and the accumulation of others in amendments to the Act over the last 50 years have weakened progressively the general competence power because a particular power alongside a general power inevitably suggests that there is a weakness in the

83 QPD, 1936, pp.642,643.

84 Queensland Department of Local Government, *Local Government Act of 1936-1975*, Section 30 (Brisbane, 1983), p.110.

85 Some of these are roads, bridges, tunnels, ferries, culverts, gardens, public parks and play grounds, scenic resorts, markets, baths, tramways, omnibuses, traffic, sanitation, suppression and abatement of nuisances, abattoirs, milk supply, town planning, reclamation of land, agricultural drainage, advertising on roads, sky signs, brothels, itinerant vending on roads, petrol pumps, pleasure resorts, public decency, public meetings, verandah fences, etc.; Queensland Department of Local Government, *Local Government Act of 1936-1975*, Section 30, pp.110,111. A number of these were subject to overriding provisions of other legislation.

general power, which therefore does not include that specific power. The State Crown Law Office has tended to be conservative in its judgements and usually applied Dillon's Rule: "If in doubt, you do not have the power".⁸⁶

An amendment to the Act in 1942 stipulated that town water supply was a direct function of local government and not, as in other States, of large public corporations or ministerial departments.⁸⁷ However this distinctive arrangement has been eroded. During the 1970s the Government divested some local authorities of their bulk water supply functions and conferred them on *ad hoc* statutory authorities. On the other hand, the relative importance of local government in town water supply has been growing in New South Wales reflecting the spread of urbanisation outside Water Board areas. Tucker cites evidence from Canada, Britain and Australia to show that local government is perhaps the most efficient provider of bulk water.⁸⁸

Alone among the States, Queensland has no large, centralised town planning bureaucracy. Queensland local authorities produce land use plans according to legislative guidelines and, upon Government approval, administer them. One advantage is that a politically accountable authority can make decisions that resolve competing claims with due regard to locally-perceived priorities and values. Another is that the local authority has a vested interest in the success of the planning, particularly with respect to the emergence of what has been called, "planning by negotiation". This

⁸⁶ Tucker, "The Powers and Functions of Local Government in Queensland", p.9.

⁸⁷ Tasmania is the only State where there is anything like a similarity with Queensland.

⁸⁸ Tucker, "The Case for Local Government", pp.38-51.

means that rezoning is not determined in advance of development but takes place as a condition of development by private land developers.⁸⁹ Local authorities are able to recoup a portion of the betterment which would otherwise accrue to the developer as windfall profit following approval of a change to a higher land use.⁹⁰

The *Valuation of Land Act* of 1944 implemented the recommendation of the 1928 Royal Commission that there should be uniform land valuations conducted by a statutory authority. The office of the Valuer-General was established and the state was divided into 12 Valuation Districts. Unimproved capital value was retained as the basis of land valuation, but in relation to improved land, the value was to be assessed as if the improvements did not exist and on the basis of what a willing (but not anxious) buyer would pay a willing (but not anxious) vendor.

Loan subsidies, discontinued because of the war, were reinstated by the State Government in 1944. They were now tied to the capital cost rather than the labour cost of works. Both the State and Commonwealth provided grants for roads. In the mid-1960s the subsidies and grants represented 23% of the general revenue of Queensland's local authorities, though most of that percentage was due to loan subsidies. This reflected the large rise in loans, especially by non-city councils, and was a collorary of the extension of borrowing beyond the Treasury from non-government financial institutions.

The situation changed with the election of the

⁸⁹ P.D. Day, "Planning Law and Implementation" in Department of Regional and Town Planning, *Queensland Planning Papers*, 1 (Brisbane, 1977), p.11.

⁹⁰ It is not without its deficiencies though; see P.D. Day, "The Appeals System - Enriching the Lawyers but Stifling Planning". *Queensland Planning Papers*, 9 (1979), pp.1-23.

Whitlam Labor Government. In 1973 the Labor Government introduced specific-purpose grants paid directly to local governments through the Grants Commission which received submissions from regional groups of local authorities. The grant was apportioned according to need as the Whitlam Government sought to reduce inequalities among local authorities. By 1976 over one-half of all grants received by local authorities were paid by the Commonwealth. The grants were special purpose grants for a variety of schemes, some very short-lived, including aged and disabled homes, Aboriginal advancement, home care services, development of tourist attractions and capital assistance for leisure facilities. These Commonwealth specific purpose grants, excluding roads, represented 32% which was a substantial increase from the proportion of nine percent in 1971-1972. In comparison, general purpose grants initially determined by the Commonwealth Grants Commission were allocated from 1974-1975 and, in 1975-1976, represented 13% of all grants received.⁹¹ The change of government in 1976 effectively ended direct federal grants to individual local authorities. The general purpose grants by the Commonwealth became income tax sharing grants: a fixed percentage of income tax revenue (1.52% in 1976) was apportioned to local government to be divided 30% on a per capita basis and 70% on an equalisation or financial need basis through the State Governments', State Grants Commission.⁹² Nevertheless, being general purpose grants, they were able to be apportioned on the basis of

91 For general works, a minimum of 15% to a maximum of 33 1/3% of capital costs or of annual loan charges; for water supply and sewerage, a minimum of 20% of the capital cost or annual loan charges plus 75% of the net annual deficit of the undertaking, up to a maximum of 33 1/3% for water supply and 50% for sewerage; Harris, "Inter-Government Grants and Local Government in Queensland", p.3.

92 Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, pp.59,60; McPhail, "Local Government", pp.105-116; Tucker, "Queensland", p.525.

a local authority's own needs rather than on the priorities of the Federal Government as occurred with specific purpose grants.

Inter-government grants have not kept pace with inflation. Since 1976 State grants have declined in real terms by 30% and, as loan subsidies were the major form of grant, they too have been reduced following the reduction in subsidy rates. After 1980-1981 State road works subsidies dropped from 15% to 10%. This was particularly serious as local authorities were still required to pay State levies on declared roads.⁹³ The State Government justified its reductions in grants and subsidies on the grounds that local authorities had adequate revenue sources through rates, loans and Commonwealth general revenue grants. However Commonwealth grants have decreased since 1983 and high interest rates promoted caution in loan borrowing. The total effect has been a shift forcing increases in general, special and separate rates; the burden of financing services, which have come to include welfare and tourist services, shifted to the ratepayer.

The Whitlam Government attempted to promote regional co-ordination throughout Australia by allocating fiscal equalisation grants to local governments on a regional basis. Particularly through the diversity of grant purposes, Labor sought to incorporate local government into a national framework for accomplishing federal economic and social objectives. The Whitlam era can be seen as an attempt to redefine the division of areal powers: either to use local government to implement

⁹³ 10% of the cost of works on main roads and urban sub-arterial roads and 15% on secondary roads, as well as 10% of the maintenance costs on secondary roads. Executive of the Local Government Association of Queensland, "Analysis of Financial Issues Relevant to Local Government in Queensland". *Locgov Digest*, 9, May/July (1983), pp.13,14,20.

social reform or to weaken State Government power by upgrading local government. The Fraser Government aborted this Federal initiative in regional planning and co-ordination by reverting to the system of using State Governments as the distributing agents of Commonwealth grants.

Probably more indicative, than Whitlam's initiatives, of the fear of territorial aggrandisement was the decisive rejection of regionalist movements on two separate occasions: one in 1947 and the other in 1971. Following a proposal by the Commonwealth Government which was concerned with post-war reconstruction with respect to promoting full employment and the development of unused resources, the State Government proposed a regional-form of government of 18 regions⁹⁴ based on community of interest and industries, so that each region had an existing or potential population sufficient to allow the development of a complete range of tertiary industries and many secondary industries. However Queensland's approach was more centralised than the other States: the Co-ordinator General of Public Works was empowered to act as a planning authority in respect to an orderly program of works, the creation of additional means of employment, an equitable distribution of employment throughout the State and the allocation of funds between Government Departments and local authorities. Despite these grand objectives, the Government did not establish any regional development committees or introduce other kinds of regional programs. Even so, the adverse reaction of local authorities who feared territorial oblivion was sufficiently strong for the Government to abandon its

⁹⁴ Lavery, "An Historical Survey of Local Government in Australia", p.97 and Tucker, "Queensland", p.385 put the number at 25 however Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, pp.176-179 actually enumerates the divisions and displays them on a map.

diluted plans for regional development.

1971 saw the establishment of the short-lived Regional Co-ordination Councils. The provisions of the *State and Regional Planning and Development, Public Works Organisation and Environmental Control Act* offered considerable potential for regional planning and development. The Co-ordinator General's Department, subject to the Minister for State Development, had

high and admirable aspirations... which saw the philosophy of regionalism as recognising the need to balance local and state interests; to integrate physical, macro-economic, and social planning; to integrate urban and rural development; and to guide the spatial extent of industry and population.⁹⁵

It divided the State into 10 Regional Co-ordination Councils, the first meeting being held in Townsville for the Northern Region in 1973. However, the promising venture into regional co-ordination was still-born. Firstly, local government saw the Councils as a threat to their local autonomy. Secondly, in contradiction of the provisions of the Act, the Regional Co-ordination Councils were advisory bodies without statutory planning authority. Thirdly, when it eventually seemed that regional co-ordination was gaining local government approval, the State abolished them in 1977 without any indication that the move was being considered; no reasons were forwarded for its abrupt policy change other than that regional bodies were no longer necessary. Given the strong fear of regionalism by the State Government, especially National Party members, and the lack of any real endeavour to reform local government, the retreat from regionalism to greater centralisation was not surprising.

⁹⁵ Co-ordinator-General's Department, *Regional Planning and Regional Co-ordination* (Brisbane, 1973), p.18; also see Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, p.191.

It was not only fear of strong local government that influenced State Government action. Party politics was another factor. Both the weakness and strength of local government can be seen in the events of the 1970s and early 1980s. A clear example of the former was the relative ease by which Bjelke-Petersen's government ignored the value of liberty and arbitrarily changed local government legislation - granting Thuringowa city status in 1985 is the exemplar - to hinder the Labor party.⁹⁶ The strength of commitment to local government values, especially liberty and participation, surfaced with the voting backlash at the polls. The imposition by Bjelke-Petersen's Government of the ward system on the Labor governments of Townsville, Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Maryborough shortly before the 1982 local government election was seen by the Councils as politically inspired. Resenting the dictatorial measure, the electors, whose wishes were not canvassed, returned their Labor Councils with a majority; no National Party candidates were successful in any of these areas. In the same year, developers demanded the dismissal of Maroochy Shire Council because of its sensitivity to environmental issues and high-rise accommodation. The Premier mooted the idea of restructuring local government in the region to create a Sunshine Coast City. Angry resident and media reaction shelved the idea until after the resounding victory for the Nationals in 1983. A Committee of Inquiry was set up to establish the feasibility of splitting Maroochy Shire into a coastal city and rural shire; the Committee opposed this and the

⁹⁶ See Chapters 9 and 12 for details. Another example: although the 1928 Royal Commission believed that the election of the mayor and chairperson by fellow councillors was more appropriate than franchise election, the Government took no action until 1972; in an unsuccessful attempt to weaken the power of the Labor Party in municipal government, the City of Brisbane Acts were amended to provide for the election of the Lord Mayor by his/her fellow aldermen.

Council was safe once more.⁹⁷ In late 1983, the Premier was again clumsily attempting to threaten the dismissal of Labor-controlled councils:

State Cabinet will consider sacking the Labor-dominated Townsville City Council...and had ordered an investigation by the Auditor-General into the council's finances...Mr. Bjelke-Petersen has urged the city's residents to vote themselves a member in the biggest business in the State - the State Government...[if they] want a good job done in Townsville...'I'm not running Townsville; you've got a Labor council here'."⁹⁸

The Government has been implicated in over-ruling or even by-passing local government decision-making processes, especially with respect to land rezoning. Two examples of ministerial land-zoning will suffice: the Douglas Shire Chairman claimed "a land developer had State Cabinet instruct the Douglas Shire Council to rezone sensitive rainforest land";⁹⁹ another newspaper headline announced: "Hinze scraps shire ruling: the Sunshine Coast will be the testing ground for new legislation as the State government moves to over-ride a local authority's rejection of a major development proposal".¹⁰⁰ Such measures were "a reassertion of negative State government attitudes towards local government".¹⁰¹

Since its inception, the Queensland Government has done little to improve the status of local government or strengthen and reform its structure, functions and finances. Only in three areas - general competence powers, water supply and town planning - have local government's powers and functions increased. No new

⁹⁷ J.D. Tucker, *Local Government GT204 1985*. External Studies Readings (St. Lucia, 1985), Topic 9, p.6.

⁹⁸ *Daily Sun*, 8 October 1983.

⁹⁹ *Daily Sun*, 11 October 1983.

¹⁰⁰ *Sunshine Coast Daily*, 5 July 1984.

¹⁰¹ Tucker, "Queensland", p.386.

functions have been given to local government since the 1940s. On the other hand, considerable local government functions have been taken over by semi-government statutory authorities or government departments. Local government analysts unanimously acknowledge that the history of local government in Queensland has been one of reducing and confining the powers of local government. As argued in the next chapter, the truncation of government powers was a major factor preventing the development of a focus of pride in Thuringowa.

Chapter 9
A Focus of Pride

Constituent, councillor and outsider perceptions of Thuringowa as a political entity rather than a promoter of community identity were both cause and effect of the Thuringowa model of local government in practice. As in other chapters, the reasons for certain inputs and outputs highlight the implications of spatial factors, especially Thuringowa's proximity to Townsville. Brisbane's whittling of the exclusivity of power and functions held by local government has been a major determinant of the stature of a local authority. Nevertheless there were occasions when Thuringowa's contribution to the economic development of the whole region was disproportional to its status and location.

Morrison and Robinson suggest that local government authorities have always been a source of local pride because of their intimate association with the citizen:

In no field of government is the association so close. The authority meets in the local area, its members are widely known among the citizens, it deals with the day to day problems and needs. Except in remote rural areas, residents are at no time during the day or night far removed from some amenity or service provided by the local authority. Transport facilities, both static and dynamic, health and sanitation, control of nuisances, Municipal libraries, parks and recreation reserves - these are but a few of the fields of such intimate contact. Especially is this the case now that every adult is in possession of the franchise, for thus everyone is enabled to exert some influence in the field of local government by which he is so much affected.¹

Such a contention, argues Purdie, is basically unfounded, though close association may occur at times of threat to

¹ Morrison, *Local Government in Queensland*, pp.75-77.
R.H. Robinson, "Short History of Local Government in Queensland", *Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, V, 6 (1956), pp.1176-1191.

local boundaries.² However Purdie does believe that because "local government exists to serve local people, is administered by local people, and is able to provide for them a statutory voice", it does have the potential to be a community leader.³ In similar vein Atkins maintains that if a local council manages to become a focus of local pride then "virtue is added into it".⁴ The consensus is that it is desirable but difficult for a shire or city council to epitomise local identity and pride: Thuringowa, it will be seen, follows this general trend, for it has notably failed to generate a widespread feeling of community.

Pessimistic though these writers have been about the potential role of local authorities in such community development, they have generally provided only superficial explanations for failure. Lack notes that the concept of community has received very little attention from Australian local and regional historians who are easily tempted to ignore realities by satisfying their readers' need for "belonging and a sense of identity...by assuring them of the existence of

2 Purdie, *Local Government in Australia*, pp.11,34. Chapman and Wood, *Australian Local Government: The Federal Dimension*, p.14 confirm Purdie's point of view. Compare the claims of a close association between Thuringowa Divisional Board and its constituents during the 1892-1893 and 1918 secessions; see Chapter 12.

3 Purdie, *Local Government in Australia*, pp.14,15. It seems that the Townsville City Council has become a source of local pride and identity since the 1970s with the instigation of joint council-community committees and with the provision of services that are closely linked with the welfare, cultural and self-dignity aspects of individuals, such as Day Care, Kindergarten, Welfare Centres, the Civic Theatre, City Mall and the Perc. Tucker Memorial Art Gallery.

4 Atkins, "Local Government", p.246.

community, perhaps by writing celebratory history."⁵

Four reasons suggest themselves for Thuringowa's failure to establish itself as the catalyst of community pride. Two of these factors, though especially acute in Thuringowa, undoubtedly affected some other Shires, especially those immediately adjacent to thriving municipalities:⁶ Thuringowa was an urban-rural shire and contained many discrete economic and social interests; additionally, it not only lacked a natural centre of its own but has had from its inception a centre outside its boundaries - Townsville - which was always seen as the area's hub. The other two factors affected all local government authorities: only limited power and autonomy could be assumed by a local authority under Queensland local government legislation; although every government authority in every country has limited revenue, the basis of all the revenue of local government in Australia has been a single source, rates⁷ and, in a shire like Thuringowa, the largest yield feasible from this one source continually fell short of what was needed to provide a reasonable level of basic services.⁸

The first and most obvious reason for the diffuse and incorporeal nature of local government is that its boundaries do not encompass a community of like interests. Chuter, one of Queensland's foremost experts

⁵ J. Lack, "Residence, Workplace, Community: Local History in Metropolitan Melbourne", *Historical Studies*, 19 April (1980), p.39; he cites A. Lemon, *Box Hill* (Melbourne, 1978) and B. Barrett, *The Inner Suburbs: The evolution of an industrial area* (Melbourne, 1971) as examples of such histories.

⁶ Examples would be the Pioneer and Mulgrave Shires.

⁷ Compare the multiplicity of sources open to state and federal government, many of them concealed. See Laverty, "An Historical Survey of Local Government in Queensland", p.98.

⁸ See Chapter 13 Revenue.

in local government, always insisted that like interests should be a major determinant in creating shires.⁹ This was also a major emphasis in EARC's 1991 determination of boundaries.¹⁰ The reality has often been quite different, and this is one of the clearest reasons why local authorities have seemed relatively inconsequential to their constituents. Though loyal councillors and electors in Thuringowa hotly argued the contrary when threatened by secession movements, in fact Thuringowa has always contained heterogeneous interests; the *pot pourri* that was Thuringowa included diverse elements of sugar cane, dairying, mixed farming and grazing, as well as working class suburbs centred on the Ross River Meatworks, and the more white-collar and middle class suburbs of western Townsville.

Thus each small service centre - Woodstock, Reid River, Mingela, Rollingstone, Mutarnee and Minehan's Siding (later the sugar mill township of Giru) - tended

9 Chuter was Assistant Under-Secretary in the Home Secretary's Department and administrative head of the local government system. He was appointed to the Royal Commission on Local Authority Boundaries in 1928. Taking evidence for the Commission, Chuter devoted many questions to determining if areas within shires had a "community of interest" with that shire or neighbouring shires. For instance, he tried to ascertain if Giru had "a community of interest" with the Shire of Ayr or the Shire of Thuringowa. Evidence, Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries in 1928, COL/224, pp.912, 979; hereafter COL/224. Compare Ballarat which, after Eureka, developed an "unique urban consciousness in which civic pride and a sense of community were the cementing ingredients"; J.W. McCarty, "Melbourne, Ballarat, Sydney, Perth: The New City Histories", *Historical Studies*, 19, April (1980), pp.6,7.

10 Thuringowa and Townsville Cities were prioritised for review of their boundaries because one of EARC's criteria for examination was that "LA boundaries should conform to community of interest principles, and for that purpose, an LA should generally:...reflect community self awareness and foster community based action", Vol. One, p.68; additionally "the area should include the territory with which the major centre has special linkages, and patterns of travel, life and work", Vol. Two, p.271.

rather to become a focus of local identity in itself. Each provided the postal address, the school, the pub, the store, the church, the cricket pitch and tennis court, the dance barn or hall, the meeting centre for the Country Women's Association, the farmer, grazier or progress associations and, after World War II, the picture theatre.¹¹ Practically all the day-to-day social, religious, economic and political life of Thuringowa's country people revolved around their particular country "town". They did not identify with Thuringowa.

Indeed, the word "Thuringowa" did not appear in the title of any business operating in the Shire, which has not been the case in the neighbouring Hinchinbrook and Dalrymple Shires.¹² Any firm in Thuringowa Shire wishing to identify itself by location selected some other name: Partington Brickworks, North Queensland Brewery and Yabulu Nickel Refinery, whilst the Townsville Boiling Down and Meat Preserving Company was the first name mooted for the Alligator Creek Meat Works. Similarly, the names of hotels were characteristically taken from immediate localities.¹³

As Thuringowa did not possess a coherent community of interest or even a town to become the hub of shire

11 E. Griffiths was given approval to build Giru's first picture theatre in 1953; Minutes, 20 February 1953.

12 A perusal of the telephone directories and Pugh's Almanac since 1880 confirms this. In the 1970s the following businesses operated: Hinchinbrook Hotel, Hinchinbrook Panel Beating, Hinchinbrook Service Station, Hinchinbrook Aboriginal and Islander Co-operative Society, Dalrymple Caravan Park, Dalrymple Meats, Dalrymple Motors and the Dalrymple Pastoral Agency. In 1986 the first company with Thuringowa in its title - Thuringowa City Bus Company - commenced a suburban to city bus run in Townsville and Thuringowa.

13 For example, Woodstock, Rising Sun, Stuart, Haughton River, Reid River, Alice, Range, Giru, Kirwan, Ross and Rollingsstone.

activity, it was not surprising that residents and outsiders alike continued to look to Townsville. For 15 years before Thuringowa came into existence as a local government area, its settlers had been looking to Townsville to provide services which Thuringowa could never do - for example, port, educational and major shopping facilities. It was this proximity to, and dependence on, Townsville as Thuringowa's point of identity that constitutes the second factor for the Shire's inability to become the focus of pride.

No Townsville suburb in Thuringowa Shire saw itself being, first and foremost, part of Thuringowa. They were, after all, physically, economically and socially attached to the steadily growing port of Townsville.¹⁴ For those who lived in Townsville's suburbs, the city gave them their identity, not as "Thuringowans" but as "Townsvilleans".

Politically, until the 1960s Thuringowa's local authority was usually seen as a "local Townsville body", there to ensure that Townsville's progress was not hindered.¹⁵ Road and bridges were the first priority of the early Boards for this very reason.¹⁶ When Thuringowa's Councils neglected the arterial roads out of Townsville, there were calls from the Townsville and District Development Association for the dissolution of the Shire.¹⁷

Caught in Townsville's economic web, any new industry or business in Thuringowa was seen solely in terms of its Townsville, rather than Thuringowa, context.

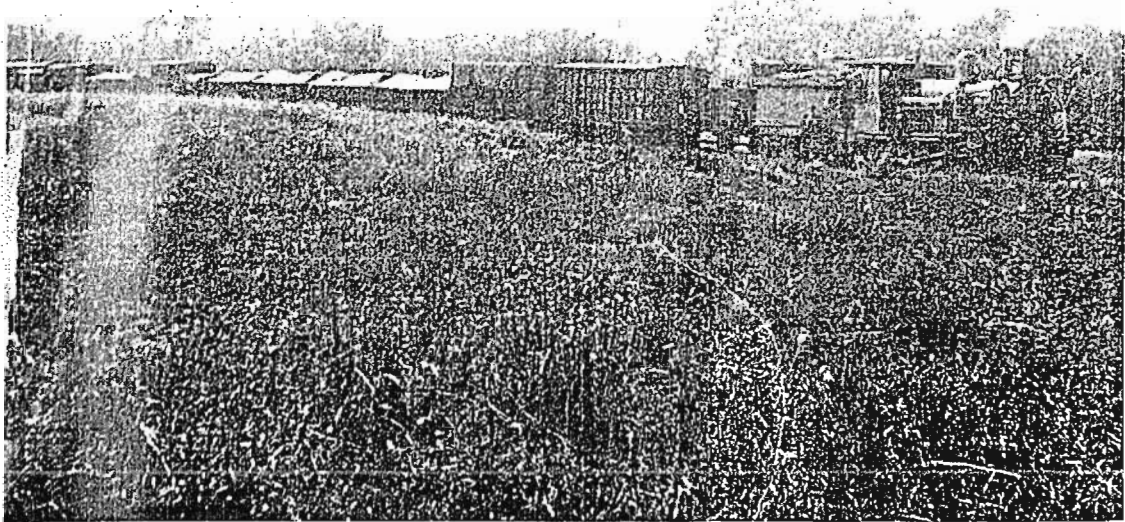
14 Compare Carlton in Melbourne and Redfern in Sydney; two famous suburbs known for their individualism.

15 *TH*, 18 April 1895, p.11.

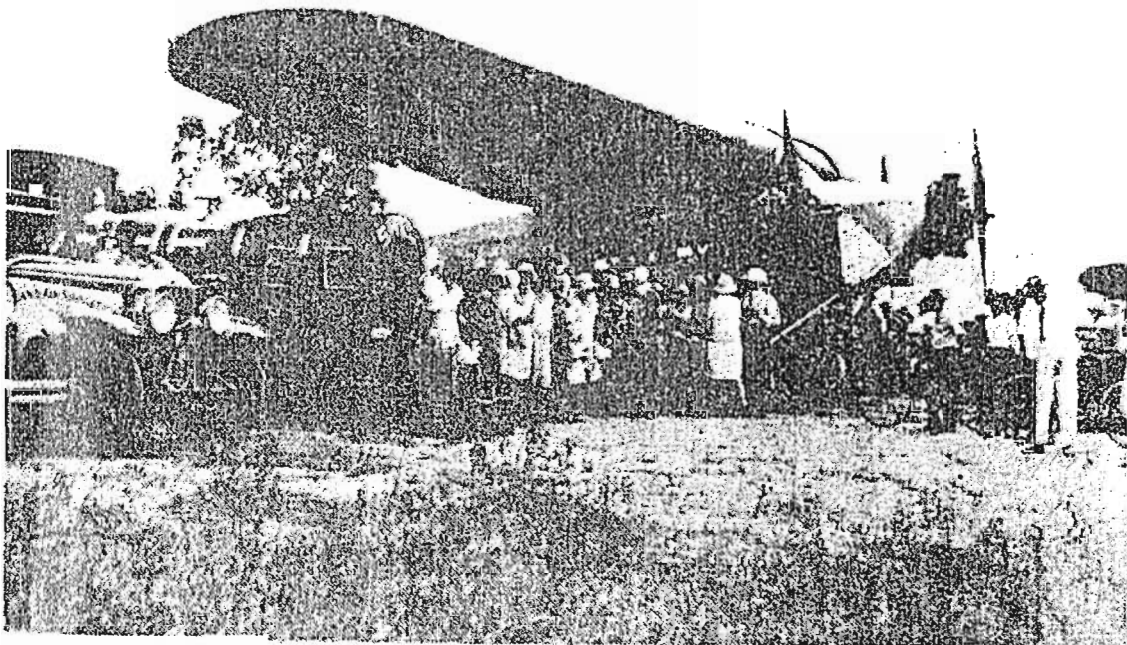
16 See Chapter 15.

17 See Chapter 12.

The Ayr Tramway and the "Townsville" Aerodrome.



These two major developments were a great source of pride for the Thuringowa Council; it was largely owing to the intrepid spirit of the Council that both these projects materialised. (Top: *Townsville Picture and Prose*, p.80; Bottom: *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 1 April 1980, p.4).



The "Star of Townsville" at Ross River Aerodrome, Townsville, March 31, 1930. The aircraft carried the first air mail from Brisbane.

The newspapers proclaimed: "Coal prospecting near Townsville - Impetus to Townsville as a port and mining industry"; "Travelling Dairy - Boon to Townsville"; "Stock Experiment Station and Farm aids Townsville"; "Nickel Plant to be built at Townsville".¹⁸

There was also "Townsville's First Airport".¹⁹ In late 1928 Queensland Air Navigation Limited successfully canvassed the north for subscribers to its proposed passenger and freight service from Brisbane to North Queensland. By 1930 the Townsville City Council was still refusing to spend the necessary money to develop an airstrip within its borders on the Town Common. Thuringowa Shire Council voted to spend £371 on site preparation for an aerodrome at Ross River opposite the present QME works, prompting a dilatory Townsville City Council to contribute £100 to the project.²⁰ Yet Townsville won the kudos. Even when the Commonwealth Controller of Civil Aviation was congratulating Thuringowa on its civic mindedness and faith in the rapid development of aircraft "as the normal means of transport", he did so in terms of establishing the Townsville Municipal Airport!²¹

In fact for any newsworthy event in Thuringowa, Townsville was invariably acclaimed the host. The first balloon ascent to be held in the Townsville region occurred on 22 June 1890 when, with studied showmanship,

18 TH, 20 November 1888, p.11; 23 March 1889, p.28; 12 July 1890, p.16; 29 July 1891, p.17.

19 TDB, 20 September 1967, p.5.

20 11 THU/144; 11 THU/132; "Townsville Airport" (Townsville Municipal Library). Also see TDB, 22 February 1973, p.2.

21 E.C. Johnston, Controller of Civil Aviation, to Thuringowa Shire Council, 9 August 1934, No.AS9286, Correspondence with Commonwealth Departments of Air and Defence mainly on land for airfields 1934-5, 1942-5; 11 THU/141; hereafter 11 THU/141

the Van Tassell sisters performed to an excited Sunday crowd at Gulliver's Gardens in Acacia Vale, a suburb in Thuringowa Division.²² There was also Australia's first bull fight which took place at Mount St. John Zoo in Thuringowa Shire on 1 May 1933; but it would make Townsville, not Thuringowa, "world famous":

In addition to his daring capture and handling of crocodiles...and the staging of the biggest rodeos conducted in Australia...the spectacular Mr. St. John Robinson once created an uproar in southern states by staging Australia's first and only Spanish style bull fight.²³

Again Townsville received all the publicity for what "was probably the first air pageant staged in the Commonwealth by a private individual". It featured the first woman's parachute jump in the North. Held in Thuringowa Shire on 1 May 1938, the pageant was staged by the same "spectacular Mr. St. John Robinson", the Thuringowa businessman who had organised the bull fight.²⁴ No one appeared to mind, however, that the name of Thuringowa never figured in these colourful exploits. Nor was there concern that Thuringowa Ratepayers' Association was labelled "a Townsville ratepayers' action group" by the *National Times* which hailed the group as Australia's first local government association to organise a referendum on uranium mining and processing.²⁵ Rarely, and not until 1957, did a Thuringowa Councillor protest that such "oversights" were really "a disregard of the

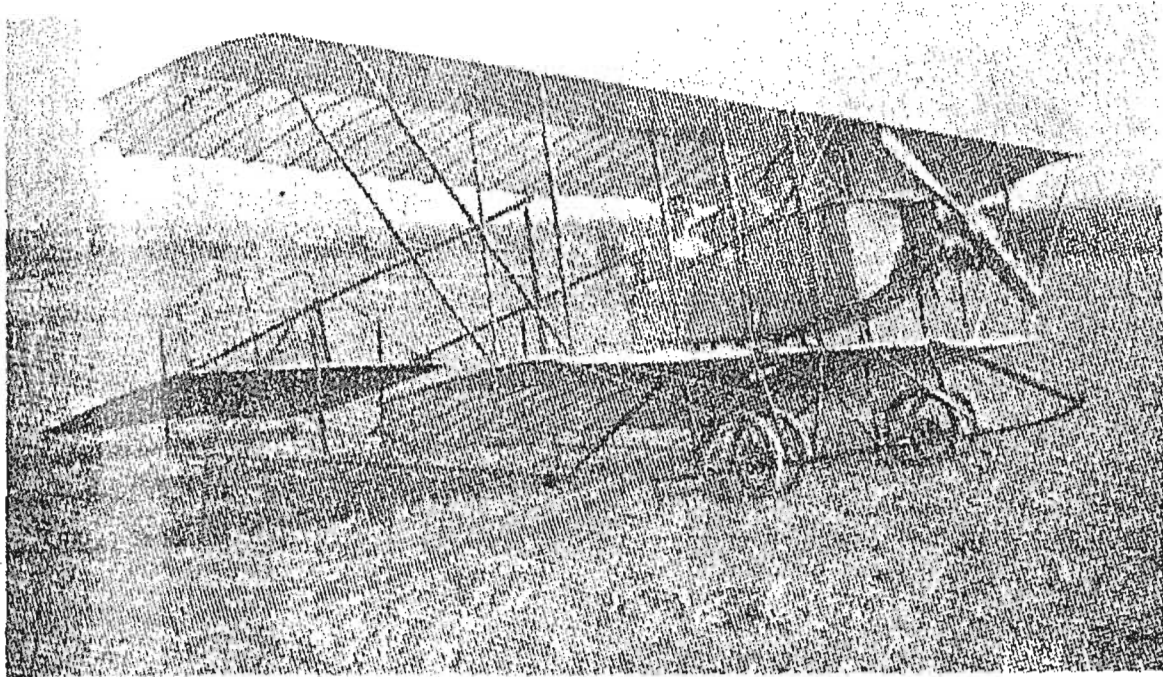
22 *TH*, 23 June 1890, p.11, 5 July 1890, pp.5,8. Earlier balloon ascents had been held in Melbourne and Sydney. Vantassel Creek and Vantassel Street (near the present Swifts Meatworks) were named in honour of this event.

23 "Rapier", "Australia's First Bull-Fight Aroused Storm of Protest", R.A. Watson, (Rapier) *The Townsville Story* (Townsville, 1951), p.36.

24 To highlight Townsville's Golden Jubilee in 1913, the first aeroplane to land in the Townsville region did so on the Cluden Racecourse situated in Thuringowa, *TDB*, 22 February 1973, p.2.

25 *National Times*, 26 May 1979, p.13.

"History-Making" Feats in Thuringowa.



The arrival of the first aeroplane created huge excitement for the people of Thuringowa and Townsville. (*Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 22 February 1973, p.2).



Frequently bizarre activities of Thuringowa's Zoo Proprietor, St. John Robinson, like teasing this crocodile (bottom), won acclaim nationally and internationally. (*Cummins & Campbell's Monthly Magazine*, September 1936, pp.44).

shire...".²⁶

Consistently throughout its history, this was the case: whether it was as a part of august occasions like the visit of the Governor-General in 1890 and the Royal visit of 1954, or during the myriad of school speech nights, or involvement in the opening of such major economic developmental and transport facilities as the yabulu Nickel Plant, Thuringowa's representatives were there, as Townsville's rather passive, invited cousins.²⁷ Thuringowa was widely viewed as essentially only a local government authority, not as an autonomous and well-rounded community.

Except for a few notable examples such as the Townsville to Ayr railway and the region's first airport, Thuringowa seemed consciously to reject a leadership role within the region until the 1980s. During the 1930s and 1940s, Wordsworth and his Councillors deliberately eschewed even token displays of leadership: the Chairman made it clear that the Council would not join the Townsville City Council in entertaining prominent visitors nor participate in other public celebrations, except for council representation at Townsville's Anzac Day activities. Pragmatic Wordsworth was particularly sensitive to the costs involved and unwilling to spend revenue on non-essentials.²⁸ Occasional attempts to project a more appropriate public image seemed cautious if not half-hearted. For example, in the mid-1950s, A.H. Innes suggested that the Council should bestir itself and

26 For example, see complaints from Councillors Innes and Benson, *TDB*, 20 September 1957 and Minutes, *TB*, 5 March 1984. Such complaints never occurred with respect to the uranium issue.

27 *TH*, 3 January 1891; Minute Books, 2 March 1954 to 21 October 1960; *TDB*, ? December 1958, Press Clippings Book, 1955-1964.

28 Letter to Townsville City Council, 19 April 1940, General Correspondence, 11 THU/J18.

find a runner for the Olympic Relay Team because it would be "for the honour of the Shire".²⁹ Innes also proposed, this time without success, that the Council should build a new shire hall as it would lift the status of the Shire and show ratepayers that the Council was progressive.³⁰ As it approached its centenary, Thuringowa Shire called for submissions from public relations consultants in order to publicise Council activities. Characteristically, one Councillor thought it was "a disgusting state of affairs to even consider having a public relations officer to tell the general public what good fellows we are".³¹

With few exceptions, Thuringowa's Councillors did little to encourage any identification by residents as "Thuringowans". Councillors, too, obviously saw Townsville as the pivot of local identity. Thuringowa was purely a political unit; they never considered that it should also fulfill social, economic or cultural roles characteristic of a community.

Probably the third reason constitutes the single most important factor determining the stature of a local authority in its constituents' eyes - the amount of power it not only has but wields. In Queensland, as in other Australian states, there has always been "a substantial body of statutory and regulatory controls engulfing local councils"³² who "can press for modification to the Acts

29 Minutes, TDB, 17 September 1955.

30 Minutes, TDB, ? March 1956, Press Clipping Book. The hall was finally built in 1964. On yet another occasion the Council refused to adopt his suggestion for an official opening of the Bohle River Bridge; TDB, 27 April 1957.

31 Minutes, TDB, 16 February 1974, p.4. Cr. Dan Gleeson moved the original motion.

32 Purdie, *Local Government in Australia: Reformation or Regression*, p.23.

and Ordinances which set the pattern for them" but the limits of what they may do are prescribed by "paternal and authoritarian" central administrations.³³ Writing before a forthcoming local government election with the express purpose of educating electors on the restricted role of local government in relation to other government departments and acts, an ex-councillor wrote:

Electors should be informed emphatically and often that about 70 percent of the business of councils is determined by local government acts passed by State Government and dictatorially enforced. Shire and city councils are tightly bound by health acts, traffic acts, building acts, noise abatement acts. The list seems endless...Strict rules and endless regulations, which often fail to fit many of the areas where they must be enforced, tie the hands of capable administrators.³⁴

Local government analysts unanimously acknowledge that the history of local government in Queensland has been one of reducing and confining the powers of local government.³⁵

33 J. Wilson, "Local Government". *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 24, 10, 14 September (1959), p.153. See Chapman and Wood, *Australian Local Government: The Federal Dimension*, pp.18,19,44.

34 TDB, 4 February 1985, p.4.

35 Morrison, *Local Government in Queensland*, p.83; Purdie, *Local Government in Australia: Reformation and Regression*, pp.4-24; R.N. Spann, "Local Government" in R.N. Spann (Ed.) *Public Administration in Australia*. 3rd edn., (Sydney, 1973), p.221; Wilson, "Local Government", *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 24, 10, 14 September, 1959, pp.152,153,160; R. Jensen, "Local Government in Queensland: A Need for Re-orientation", *Planner*, 17, 2 (1977), pp.22-26; Greenwood and Laverty, *Brisbane: 1859-1959*, pp.341-344; M. A. Jones, *Local Government and the People*, pp.45,55-59; A. Davies, *Australian Democracy: An Introduction to the Political System* (London, 1958), p.131; Tucker, *Local Government in Queensland*, 1, pp.89-101; R.C. Gates, "Local and Regional Government: Roles and Structure", The Fred Scorer Memorial Lecture, *Planner*, 16, 4 (1976), p.42; and Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859-1977*, p.149. In three areas - general competence powers, water supply and town planning - local government's powers and functions have increased.

As early as the 1880s, the first decade of compulsory local government, the Queensland Government gave to statutory *ad hoc* semi-governmental boards or state departments rather than to local government responsibilities over health, traffic, electricity, harbours, eradication of pests, main roads, abattoirs, slaughter houses, fire prevention, transport and milk supplies.³⁶ Two Thuringowa ratepayers, 80 years apart, deplored such dilution of local government's powers and responsibilities. In 1896 one wrote:

What is badly wanted is less dispersion and more concentration of local government...it is not advantageous for the duties and power to be distributed among half a dozen petty bodies very frequently clashing with each other.³⁷

In 1979 the other expressed a layperson's resigned disillusionment:

local government...plays a submissive role to, for example, the separate departments of education, public works and main roads...and to the bureaucratic maze...a declaration of powerlessness against a 'force majeure' in Brisbane.³⁸

The status of local government was diminished from its legislative conception within Queensland.

Thuringowa's Councils apparently did not object to the progressive loss of powers and responsibilities. On the contrary, they seemed in many instances to welcome

36 Some successful attempts were made to ensure local government representation on these bodies but, according to some experts, generally, "the principle of representative, democratic local government was sacrificed to technical efficiency and uniformity" with inadequate local government representation or with increasing arbitrary centralisation whereby sole commissioners have replaced even the boards and commissions of the statutory authorities; Tucker, *Local Government in Queensland*, p.101. See Robinson, *For My Country*, for a list of functions withdrawn from local government, pp.349-351.

37 NQR, Letter-to-the-Editor, 15 April 1896, p.29.

38 TDB, Letter-to-the-Editor from "Thuringowa Ratepayer", 23 March 1979, p.4.

the narrowing of council functions. On one occasion, for example, the Council called for the establishment of a statutory authority, an independent district water board, to take over the separate water supply powers of both the Thuringowa Shire and Townsville City Councils. There had been a long history of bitter dispute over water supply between Thuringowa and Townsville since the 1890s.³⁹ Tucker believes Thuringowa Council's call for a district water board

is an excellent example of the pressures which emerge in favour of *ad hoc* statutory authorities when local government boundaries divide what is, in other, respects, an integrated urban community.⁴⁰

In fact, it was the inability of neighbouring local authorities to work in harmony on such works programs that led to the creation of many statutory authorities and thus to a reduction of the powers and autonomy of local government.⁴¹

In summary, local government's power and autonomy have been whittled away but often at the instigation, or at least with the acquiescence, of local government itself. On the other hand, considerable responsibility

39 In 1978 Thuringowa Shire Council believed the Townsville City Council was discriminating against Shire residents with respect to a new water agreement between the two authorities. The Townsville City Council supplied water in bulk to Thuringowa's suburbs. The Department of Local Government had to intervene to settle the dispute; as a result, an amendment to the Local Government Act empowering the Governor-in-Council to settle local authority disputes was adopted; see Chapters 8 and 16 and Tucker, "Queensland", p.466.

40 Tucker did not advocate a change in the Thuringowa-Townsville boundary. He agreed with Dan Gleeson, Chairman of Thuringowa Shire: "...the Shire Council does not have a boundary problem"; *Local Government in Queensland*, 1, p.138.

41 Thuringowa's and Townsville's increasing inability to work together from the mid-1970s led to EARC's recommendation that Thuringowa be divided between its neighbouring councils; EARC, Vol. Two, pp.304,305.

has been retained within legislative limits. For example, the *Local Government Act* of 1936 gave local authorities general competence powers to make by-laws in any area as long as they were not incompatible with any act of parliament.⁴²

Compared with other states, local government in Queensland has been given greater functions in regard to water supply and town planning. The former includes water reticulation, flood mitigation and sewerage/storm water disposal; the latter, parks and gardens, building regulations, beach protection and other crucial town planning functions, such as road survey and construction. Altogether, they "add up to a formidable battery of functions of direct environmental significance".⁴³ Councils also have considerable scope with respect to welfare and the arts. They may even own and operate business concerns in competition with private enterprises such as hotels, shops, theatres and transport facilities - though in a capitalist society local authorities have

42 The "general power to govern [gives] full power to make by-laws for promoting and maintaining the peace, comfort, culture, education, health, morals, welfare, safety, convenience, food supply, housing, trade, commerce and manufactures of the area and its inhabitants, and for the planning, development and embellishment of the area" as long as they are not in contravention of other state laws. By 1979, a senior member of the Queensland Bar pointed out that the general competence powers grant local authorities power to establish brothels, and further observed: "Perhaps we have stumbled upon a new way to keep down the rates!" cited in Tucker, "Queensland", p.402. Brisbane City Council received the general competence power in 1924. However, what was intended to be "strong, delegated legislative power" exercised by popularly elected local authorities has turned out in practice to be much less "because by-laws are framed so cautiously to prevent repetition of successful legal challenges on the basis that they are *ultra vires*"; *loc.cit.*

43 Tucker, "Queensland", p.405.

naturally used such powers with discretion.⁴⁴

Whenever a local authority in Queensland has made full use of its powers, there is no doubt that it can, and has, become "a focus of pride" in the sense asserted by Morrison and Robinson and envisaged by Purdie and Spann. For instance, Townsville, Thuringowa's neighbour, may be the best example of a community's identification with its local authority. Tucker compares Townsville with Asa Brigg's Birmingham of the nineteenth century as both have been described as "experimental, adventurous, diverse".⁴⁵

Townsville is the one Queensland city in which something like a "civic gospel" has existed - a vision of civic achievement brought about or facilitated by municipal initiative.⁴⁶

During World War Two, Townsville's Labor City Council organised and operated a number of small business undertakings: an ice-works, a fruit and vegetable mart, wood depot, butcher's shop, electrical sales department

44 To counteract the effects of rural migration to the cities and increasing rural unemployment, the Bulloo Shire Council took on many private enterprise functions: ...the shire owns or operates the hotel, the garage, two of the four stores, the picture theatre, the cafe, the recreation centre and numerous residences, as well as employing thirty-nine men from the 300 people living in the town.

Thus the outback shire town of Thargomindah owes its existence to its local authority, the Bulloo Shire Council. Local Government Act Revision Committee, *Report by the Local Government Act Revision Committee on Powers, Responsibilities and Organisation of Local Government in South Australia* (Adelaide, 1970), p.15. A. Allen, "Frontier Towns in Western Queensland: Their Growth and Present Tributary Areas", *Australian Geographer*, XI, 2 (1969), p.129.

45 Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1968), Chapter 5 and pp.186,187. Toowoomba is seen as having similar basic values to "solid, uniform" Manchester; Tucker, "Queensland", pp.471,472.

46 Tucker, "Queensland", p.472.

and a legal aid department.⁴⁷ Townsville's colourful Deputy Mayor, Tom Aikens, was adamant that such successful business undertakings, launched in opposition to private enterprise, were "a courageous approach" to protecting Townsville citizens from profiteering and overcharging in a town whose civilian population of 22 500 was swamped by a military population of 67 500.⁴⁸ Townsville identified with its Council on this occasion and again, according to Tucker, in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the Council actively promoted not only industrial and tourist development but social and cultural well-being through a subsidised art gallery and civic theatre, social welfare activities and a land development scheme for first home owners.⁴⁹ For Thuringowa, to have duplicated such services would have been financially and politically inept. Townsville welcomed Thuringowa consumers and Thuringowa paid Townsville subsidies for the use of facilities. Falling within Townsville's economic, welfare and cultural orbit permitted Thuringowa the political luxury of husbanding its own resources and making provision almost exclusively for "bread and butter" activities, though this did little to enhance its image and profile.

However in 1958 Thuringowa agreed to participate in Townsville City Council's library program on the basis of an annual charge of £250 plus cost of books damaged or

47 A ladies rest room was also commenced. Speech by T. Aikens, *QPD*, Vol. 191, 1947-1948, p.1662. Also see Moles, *A Majority of One*, p.62 and Tucker, "Queensland", p.467.

48 *QPD*, Vol. 191, 1947-1948, p.1715.

49 Tucker, "Queensland", p.473.

not returned in excess of the deposit held.⁵⁰ Three years earlier, that modest amount had been too expensive: Thuringowa rejected library participation by five votes to two. A motion that "an inquiry be instigated with a view to setting up the Shire's own library" was also lost by the same five votes to two.⁵¹ Evidently, two Councillors were attempting to persuade their colleagues that local government was more than the provision of roads, bridges, water and sanitation; cultural facilities which enhanced the quality of life in the Shire were also a necessary local government function. In 1956 Cr. A. Innes cynically asked his fellow Councillors if they were capable of taking "a forward move"; as a test case, he moved that a new shire hall be built containing shops, the revenue from which would pay off the loan:

Cr. Kelso:.....The project would be undertaken at the appropriate time.

Cr. Batley:.....I would then support it; not now.

Cr. Innes:.....I will remember that. It is the Elizabethan spirit which won the Empire.

Cr. Leon:.....Next year.

Cr. Wordsworth:..It is a big undertaking for such a small Shire - I'm sorry.⁵²

Thuringowa Shire could often appear narrowly stolid and pragmatic even to its own Councillors.

There were times when Thuringowa Councils did make forward moves, very dramatic forward moves and was able to marshall a temporary level of constituent identification and pride, for instance when it implemented three impressive projects: the erection of three shire halls, the establishment of the Townsville to

50 Minutes, 22 August 1958. In July 1985 Thuringowa opened the doors of its own library. Although the library is operated with the Townsville City Council under a Joint Library Board, it is quite different in kind and in scale to the 1958 venture. TDB, 10 July 1985, p.2.

51 Minutes, 15 July 1955.

52 Minutes, TDB, ? March 1956, Press Clipping Book.

Ayr railway and the "Townsville" aerodrome. Nevertheless it must be stressed that Thuringowa only momentarily changed ratepayer perceptions of it as merely a limited bureaucracy.

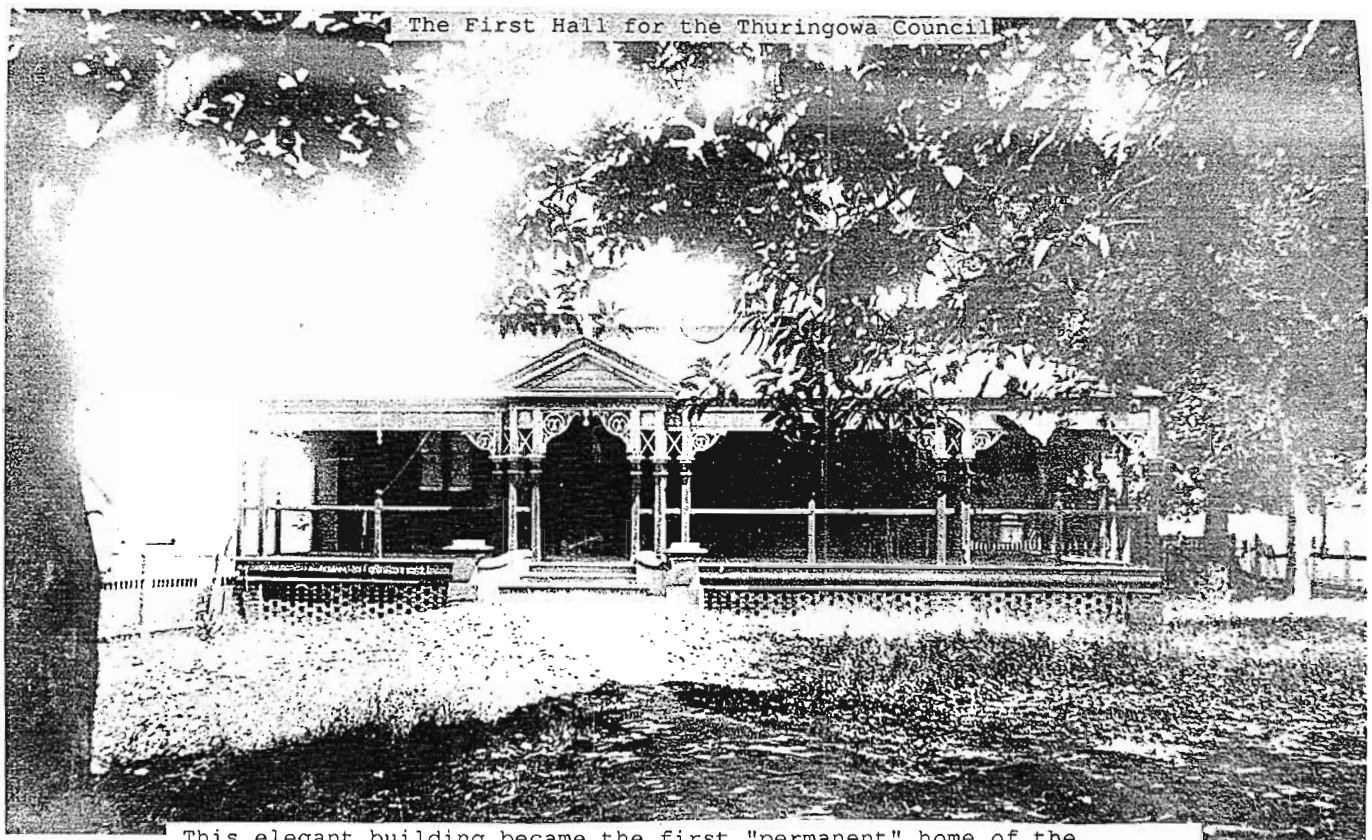
As the chief physical symbols of local government, shire halls not only reflect the status of the local authority but evoke such sense of pride in their shire as is felt by ratepayers and residents. An examination of both the construction and structure of Thuringowa's three shire halls is particularly worthwhile for what they suggest about the perceptions, particularly of Councillors, of the status of Thuringowa Shire Council and Thuringowa Shire, and of the Shire's relationship with Townsville.

The initial proposals to erect the first and second council administration buildings were unsuccessful for reasons which reflect each Council's rather narrow view of the role and functions of local government. In 1888 Divisional Board Member, William Lennon, voiced the unanimous decision of his fellow Board Members: "The business of the Divisional Board is to make roads".⁵³ The majority opinion in 1956 agreed that amenities for ratepayers should be considered first.⁵⁴ Though the 1956 hall proposal had been accepted by 1961, the Council decided to reduce the project by £20 000 in order to buy road making plant.⁵⁵ That road works should be the priority for Councils nearly 80 years apart was not surprising. Harris, in reporting the results of a survey of local authorities' attitudes in Australia, drew attention to the concern about the deficiency of roads among Queensland local authorities, particularly rural

⁵³ Minutes, TH, 25 February 1888, p.23, 24 March 1888, p.10.

⁵⁴ Minutes, TDB, ? March 1956, Press Clippings Book.

⁵⁵ Minutes, TDB, 20 May 1961, p.10.



This elegant building became the first "permanent" home of the Divisional Board and, after 1902, Shire. Set back on a grassed block of land, it resembled the large, impressive home of one of the Board's wealthy suburban ratepayers. Note the ornamental brackets, a new architectural idea. (Courtesy Oxley Library, No.43686).

authorities. This concern was a reflection of the primary housekeeping role enforced on local authorities through successive acts of parliament.⁵⁶

Only when the more mundane concerns of Thuringowa's Councillors were eventually surmounted did decisions to build shire halls ensue. For instance, by 1889 the divisional Board had accumulated £5 000 in endowment funds which not only permitted major bridge works but made the hall a viable proposition. Between 1956 and 1960 the Thuringowa Shire Council took out loans for "needed amenities" such as the first bitumen road undertaken solely by Thuringowa Shire, road drainage and mosquito eradication works in Giru and a new weir for the Paluma Water Supply.⁵⁷ Having first created the needed amenities the Council could then turn its attention to a Shire building. The building would nevertheless contain ample office space, the rental from which would repay the building's loan and leave intact both the general revenue and the capacity to take out further loans for amenities (see Photograph).⁵⁸ When the third shire administration building opened its doors in 1980, the Council's operations were big business; it was administering million dollar budgets and keeping abreast of necessary housekeeping tasks. Its financial position was relatively sound. Thus, in each case, bread-and-butter tasks came first; only when those were accomplished did each Council feel able to commit its finances - to the extent that these were still available - to include what each considered to be a wider function of local government.

56 Harris, "Local Authorities and Social Welfare", p.41.

57 A £5 805/10/0 debenture loan was taken out for sealing Ross River Road in 1959. Other bitumen roads had been laid by the Main Roads Department. Minutes, TDB, ? April 1959, ? July 1959, Press Clippings Book.

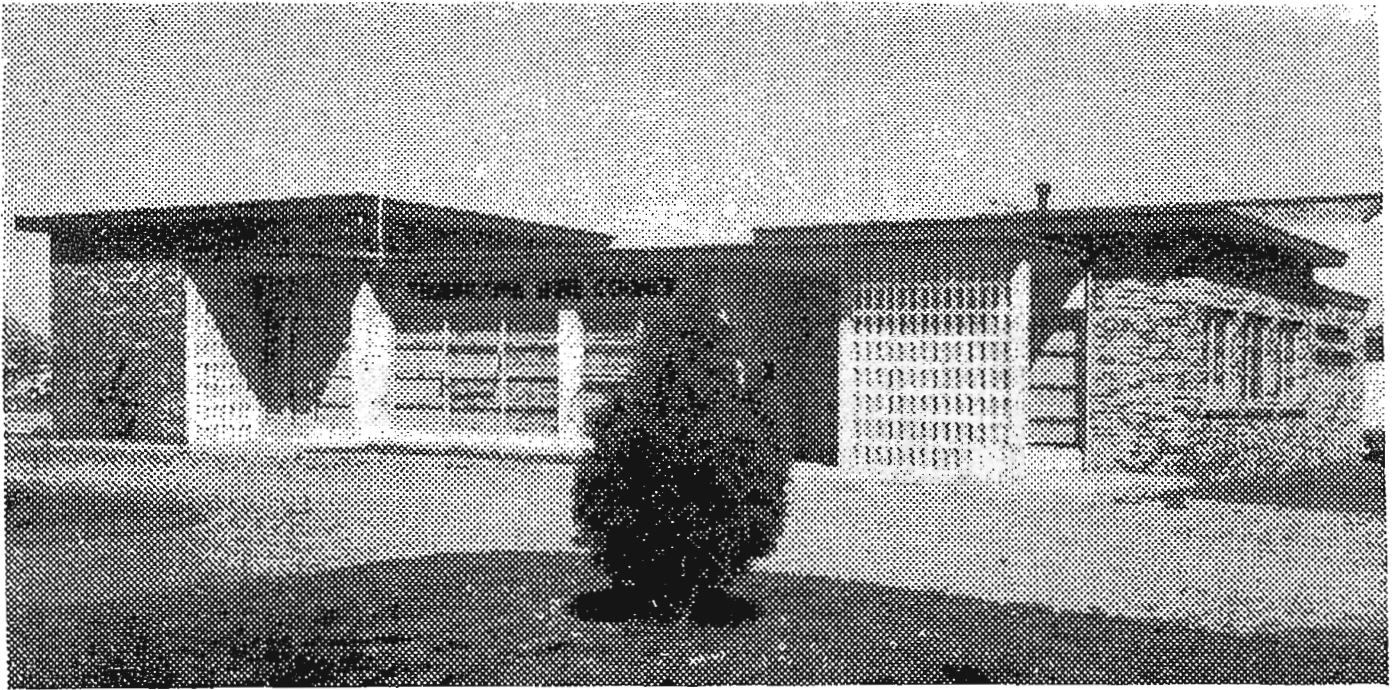
58 TDB, ? January 1959; Minutes, TDB, ? February 1960, Press Clippings Book.

No doubt, then, pragmatism was the dominant factor within Shire thinking, but the energies that eventually saw the construction of three shire halls over the century reflected some sense of pride in Thuringowa's achievements.

The first shire hall, set back on a grassed block of land enclosed by "a neat palisading fence", resembled the large, elegant home of one of the Board's wealthy suburban ratepayers. It had "a comfortable appearance" with concrete steps leading to the shady verandah around three sides.⁵⁹ Accommodating a spacious board room, 40ft. x 20ft.6in., and sporting new architectural ideas (like ornamental brackets to the verandah containing the initials T.D.B. {Thuringowa Divisional Board} which were "painted in heraldic colours"), the style was appropriate for a rural-suburban Division (see previous Photograph).⁶⁰ Having no urban main street, a town hall built in the monumental tradition would have looked conspicuously out of place in Thuringowa, particularly in the suburbs of Townsville. The Board Members obviously had neither the pretensions nor the desire to compete with Townsville's imposing business edifices. The local newspaper editor enthusiastically approved the design,

59 Other concessions to the area's climate - for by 1889 European settlers had learnt to respect North Queensland's heat - were the 15 foot high ceilings, 12 large air shafts (the internal apertures of which were four feet from the floor) and the size of the rooms. In fact the building contained only three rooms and the vestibule which was eight feet wide with cedar panelled counters separating it from the clerk's office on one side and the surveyor's room on the other, each 20ft. x 16 ft; *TH*, 25 May 1889, p.15.

60 The architects were Tunbridge and Tunbridge; the wooden building was four feet off the ground on brick piers, "the outside series of which were connected with a continuous web of open brickwork", *TH*, 16 February 1889, p.12. In comparison, Hinchinbrook Shire's Hall was described as a "plain, unpretentious weatherboard structure, neither lined nor ceiled [and] of no architectural beauty"; Wegner, *History of the Hinchinbrook Shire*, p.281.



Built in 1964, this second shire hall replaced the first one, even though the site was incongruously situated within Townsville due to the 1918 boundary change. (Courtesy Thuringowa City Library).

inviting ratepayers to "contemplate with pride and satisfaction...the outward and visible sign of the importance and prosperity of the Division".⁶¹ Indeed Thuringowa's Board had clearly done this despite the unpretentiousness of the building: they selected a site at the junction of Charters Towers Road, Ingham Road and Flinders Street West which ensured that the building presented "a conspicuous feature from several points of view as one enters or proceeds from the main thoroughfare".⁶²

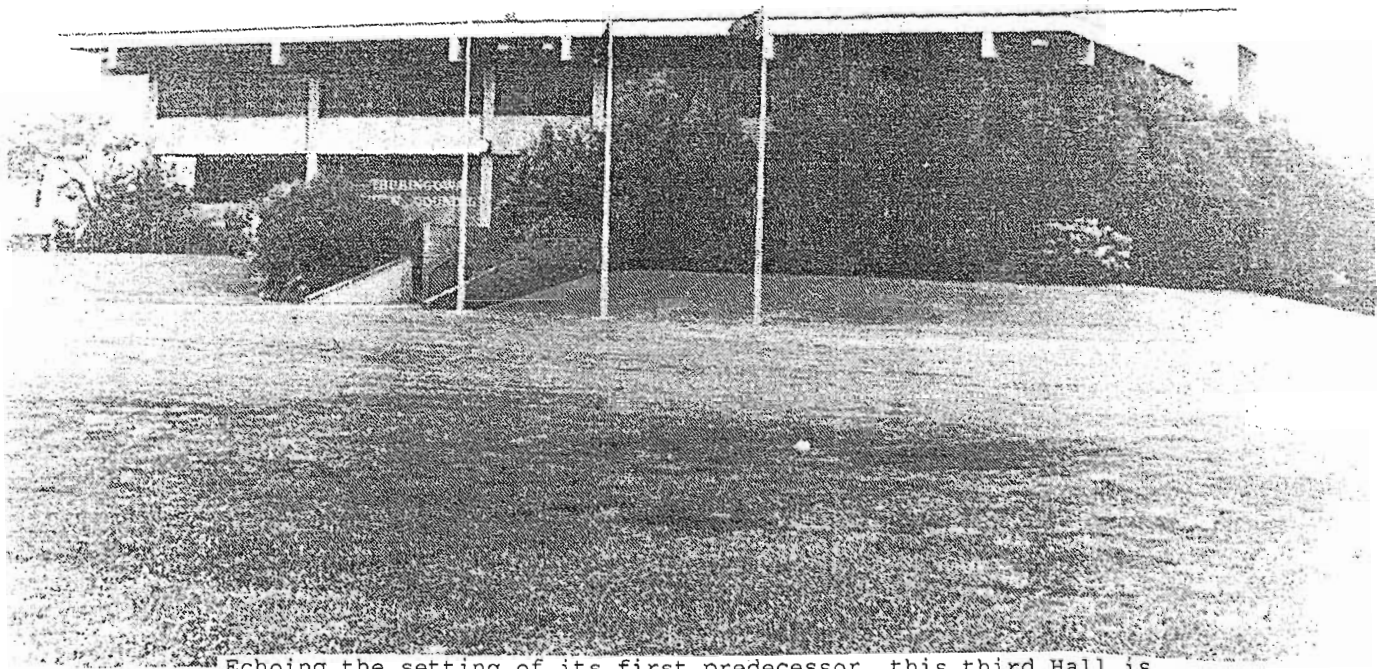
The second shire hall built in 1964, although small and now hemmed in rather ignominiously by the Townsville to Ingham railway line and set amongst ageing buildings, a timber yard and nearby railway yards, was nevertheless appropriate in size to the then operations of the Council and architecturally significant for the time with a flat roof, hopper windows and open cement brickwork a feature of the facade (see previous Photograph). Indeed, the editor of the local paper was convinced that the "splendid" new shire chambers were symbolic of the Council's success in its endeavour, "against great difficulty, to imbue the Shire with a modern progressive character".⁶³

The third shire administration building reflected Thuringowa Shire's latter-day wealth and urban sophistication (see Photograph next page). All the latest elements of cosmopolitan, architectural office design were incorporated into the facade and interior of

61 TH, 25 May 1889, p.15. Dalrymple Divisional Board requested a copy of the specifications as they intended building new offices and had heard "very favourable" comments of Thuringowa's chambers, Letter, 6 February 1891, Thuringowa Divisional Board, Correspondence Book, 1891 (James Cook University); hereafter Correspondence Book, 1891.

62 TH, 25 May 1889, p.15.

63 TDB, 22 February 1964, p.4.



Echoing the setting of its first predecessor, this third Hall is comfortable within its native environment. (*The Advertiser*, 21 March 1985, p.20).

a two storey, cement and glass-plated building. Relocated in the suburbs and set well back on a deliberately formed rise on Thuringowa Drive, the main suburban street in the Shire, the building echoes the graciousness of the first shire hall; Australia's growing acceptance of native environment is evident in the flora and landscaping of the hall's grounds. Instead of the isolated and stylised English fir trees in front of the 1960s hall, the latest shire chambers boast attractive clumps of various native shrubs; eucalypt trees stand sentinel in the grounds.

The very sites selected for the council chambers were to a large extent determined by the strength of Thuringowa's psychological, administrative and economic ties with Townsville. The choice of the first site in 1888-1889 was hailed as sensible and impressive - at the junction of the major arterial roads linking Townsville's main street with its hinterland.⁶⁴ However the site was also at the junction of the boundaries of Thuringowa Divisional Board and the municipality of Townsville; the 1918 boundary change actually left the shire's office outside the Shire. This anomaly, together with the progressive deterioration of the neighbourhood's amenities, eventually induced the Councillors in 1964 to look for another site. Since a new block of land would have cost money, however, the Council significantly chose to remain on the original site - outside Thuringowa. In contrast, under the Chairmen of the 1970s, deCourcey, Brabon and Gleeson, Thuringowa Shire increasingly asserted a sense of separate identity and independence. To build a new shire office on the old location seemed increasingly inappropriate. Although located close to the current Thuringowa-Townsville suburban border so that people wishing to conduct business with the shire office would not be inconvenienced by lack of transport

⁶⁴ TH, 14 January 1888, p.24; 25 February 1888, p.23; 24 March 1888, p.10; 25 May 1889, p.15.

facilities, at least the shire office had returned to the shire.

Apart from its administration buildings, there were of course other achievements of Thuringowa's local authorities that temporarily both stimulated and reflected the pride and acclaim of shire residents. These were invariably schemes for the economic development, not only of Thuringowa, but also of the wider region.

Two of Thuringowa Council's regional development projects were exceptional for a small rural local authority. One, the Ayr to Townsville railway, was an unqualified success; the other, the district's first aerodrome, was fraught with problems associated with the beginnings of air transportation in small towns.⁶⁵ The latter project was the more laudable as it was carried out during Thuringowa's worst years financially, coinciding with the loss of the western suburbs in 1918, the 1929 Depression and the consequent truncation of revenue. The projects showed that the responsibilities of local government were faced not only seriously but with *savoir-faire*. Without doubt, the establishment of these projects significantly focussed ratepayer pride in belonging to a local authority that appeared more progressive and concerned for the area's economic wellbeing than most other councils.

Thuringowa's Divisional Board was one of the chief protagonists in the building of the Townsville to Ayr railway. The Board played a crucial role although the terminus, and the growth directly associated, were outside the Division: in Townsville and Ayr. In fact,

⁶⁵ Other projects, including the Haughton River Tramway Extension Line (1921) and the Toonpan Dam (1935), were implemented to benefit the sugar and cattle industries respectively.

the line did not go through any of Thuringowa's small townships. Of course the Board considered that rail communication would have long term benefits justifying, even necessitating, its support. Hence, while the Ayr Divisional Board was responsible for one-fifth of the cost and the Townsville Municipal Council met two-fifths, Thuringowa's disproportional commitment was also two-fifths of the total cost of £78 000.⁶⁶

Besides feeling corporate responsibility for aiding the economic development of the area, Thuringowa ratepayers had the satisfaction of knowing that it was their Chairman, Joseph Hodel, who spearheaded agitation for acceptance of a local initiative - a rail connection between the port of Townsville and the sugar lands of Ayr - by the distant, centralist colonial government. Crystallising decades of dissatisfaction with existing transport facilities, it was Hodel at the monthly meeting of Thuringowa Divisional Board in July 1897 who first moved that the district's local bodies should guarantee the cost of a railway from Townsville to Ayr and that a committee be appointed to confer with the Townsville Municipal Council and Chamber of Commerce.⁶⁷ After two years of constant lobbying Thuringowa residents saw the Ayr Tramway Joint Board duly constituted on 12 September 1899 and construction commence in June 1900. Fittingly, Hodel was appointed President and retained that position until in 1911 the railway was sold to the Government for £85 000, a profit of £7 000 on the original cost.

Residents, still to experience the convenience of the motor car, no doubt felt that Thuringowa had heralded their interests. One description of this project as "testimony to the splendid public spirit" of the

⁶⁶ Minutes, 22 September 1897, Minutes, 8 March 1898 - 22 September 1897, 11 THU/D2; hereafter 11 THU/D2.

⁶⁷ Minutes, 12 July 1897, 11 THU/D2; C&C, August 1928, p.7; May 1934, p.63.

Thuringowa Board aptly reflected the pride this rail link evoked in Thuringowa residents.⁶⁸ Pride was intertwined with pleasure at the material rewards that flowed from the Board's adventurous spirit that took local government beyond mere roads and bridges. By 1910 it "reaped the handsome return of 15 and one third per cent" on its capital outlay: "the record for railways of the Commonwealth of Australia".⁶⁹

As we have seen, identification with Thuringowa occurred whenever the Shire Council went one step beyond the housekeeping tasks of local government to instigate schemes that raised its profile and/or benefited the economic livelihood of its residents. Besides the railway, another example was the Shire's construction of an aerodrome on Ross River Plains in 1930, despite the obvious economic sufferings that the Depression had caused for the Shire.⁷⁰ Willing to spend £370/11/10 on this construction when its rate arrears had risen to a high £2 353,⁷¹ the support given to the aerodrome by the rural-dominated Shire led by the grazier, Charles Wordsworth, was deservedly described by the Commonwealth Controller of Civil Aviation as a "progressive action".⁷² During the first year of operation in 1930, three planes operated a tri-weekly, return service to

68 Reprinted in C&C, December 1932, p.54.

69 President's Annual Report, Ayr Tramway Joint Board, 1910. By 1910, the Ayr Tramway's assets were four cattle yards at Ayr, Hodel, Brandon and Clevedon; sidings at Partington, Smyth, Minehan, Ching Do and Pioneer; a boat, boat shed and store shed at Brandon; a crane at Ayr; a windmill, footbridge and restroom at Cromarty; and the railway cars.

70 The aerodrome was situated on the site of the Murray Sports Complex opposite QME.

71 Returns of the Shire for 1929 and 1930, 11 THU/132.

72 E.C. Johnston, Controller of Civil Aviation, to Thuringowa Shire Council, 9 August 1934, No. AS9286, 11 THU/141.

Mackay, Rockhampton and Brisbane.⁷³ It was noted at the time that the Council had displayed a farsightedness in providing "a facility which permits aerial communication and assists commercial enterprise".⁷⁴

But even this most well-meaning project was doomed to difficulty. In 1934 the Council was faced with increasing aerodrome maintenance costs and inconsequential fees (£6/7/0) which had been very difficult to collect from the pilots using the field.⁷⁵ But the Shire struggled on. In the hope of alleviating its problems, in June 1935 it concluded a sound business deal with New England Airways, agreeing to lease the aerodrome for £26 per annum for five years paid quarterly in advance.⁷⁶ However, Thuringowa lost the aerodrome to the Townsville City Council in the 1937 boundary change. Proud though Thuringowa's involvement had been in this innovation, it was but short-lived. Although its residents had supported the Shire in this venture, a recurrent theme surfaced: one of the major factors countering residents' growth of identification with and

73 The two Avro 10's and Avro 5 were christened the *Star of Townsville*, *Star of Rockhampton* and *Star of Cairns* respectively. The fare to Brisbane was approximately £10 and aircraft departed Thuringowa at 6.00 a.m., arriving in Brisbane at 3.30 p.m. The carrier, Queensland Air Navigation Limited, ceased operations as a result of public disenchantment with this new form of transport following the fatal crash of the *Star of Cairns* at Bundaberg in 1931. QANTAS then operated into Townsville for a few weeks only and Tom MacDonald, with a Gypsy Moth, operated North Queensland Airways between Cairns, Townsville and Thursday Island. Both helped keep the infant airport open until in late 1934, New England Airways began a return, Brisbane to Townsville freight service which quickly grew to a three weekly service with feeder services to Cairns and Mt. Isa. "Townsville Airport", p.1.

74 Letter, 25 June 1935, Correspondence re Aerodrome at Ross River, 11 THU/144.

75 Letter, 29 August 1934, No. AS9286, 11 THU/141.

76 Letter, 25 June 1935, 11 THU/144.

pride in their local authority was the proximity of Townsville and developments promoted by its City Council.

The granting of city status to Thuringowa heralded greater identification with Thuringowa than any other political move by Thuringowa Councillors. Thuringowa became a City on 1 January 1986. Initially, the reaction to Thuringowa Council's petition to the Minister for Local Government was greeted by a number of residents and two Councillors with ridicule and disbelief that the Council would have the temerity to do this when the new city would contain no separate town but merely encompass some suburbs of Townsville and rural areas.⁷⁷ There was dismay, too, that the move was supported by the National Party mainly because the Government wished to curtail Labor's grip on the area. Gleeson asserted that one of the major aims of the call for city status was to "establish its identity".⁷⁸ At the time, it was generally thought that this could not eventuate because the change was just one in name and not in substance. However, although there is still a feeling by those in the suburbs that they are part of Townsville, a stronger sense of belonging to Thuringowa has developed. It is a "bi-cultural" or "bi-areal" identification.

The Council instigated various projects to enhance affiliation with Thuringowa. Cognisant of the fact that Thuringowa was missing from the names of organisations and firms, Gleeson was instrumental in having the mooted names for the Shire's first state high school dropped and

77 For instance, see Letter-to-the-Editor by Christine Salins who believes that the Councillors must have "a gigantic inferiority complex". She doubts if "Thuringowa Shire is a city in the true sense of the word"; TB 26 June 1985, p.17. Councillor Tyrell (who was elected Chairman in 1991) then believed that Thuringowa was behaving like "a spoilt child who wants to leave home"; TB, 2 July 1985. See Chapter 12 for more details.

78 *Advertiser*, 23 January 1986, p.16.

replaced by Thuringowa State High School. The postal address is officially Thuringowa (City) not Townsville; the first-day postal envelopes marking the birth of Thuringowa City were "snapped up".⁷⁹ Much money, publicity and effort has gone into promoting the tourist, industrial, commercial and tertiary potential of Townsville and Thuringowa as the Twin Cities of North Queensland. This is perhaps the most important factor in changing outside perceptions of Thuringowa's identity to one of greater significance.

Community-based events have produced a we-feeling, too. The New Year Eve festivities have proved extremely popular since one-third of Thuringowa's population attended the inaugural one which was combined with the celebration of city status.⁸⁰ They are promoted as a family night's entertainment in comparison with Townsville City Council's activities which, attended largely by those in their teens and twenties, have gained a more unsavoury reputation as they have been identified with heavy drinking and fighting.⁸¹ It is common for Townsville families to attend Thuringowa's celebrations and Thuringowa's teenagers to participate in Townsville's Mall revelry. The multicultural Oktoberfest (which attracts many Townsvilleans), Thuringowa Citizen of the Year and Junior and Senior Sports Awards and the Anzac procession along Thuringowa Drive (which relieves congestion of traffic in the city) have also helped

79 TB, 4 January 1986.

80 TB, 1 January 1986, p.1.

81 "More than 30 people were arrested...for public drunkenness, obscene language, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct", TB, 1 January 1989, p.1. 1987 seemed to be the exception as the police reported "a quiet night and well-behaved crowds in the lead up to 1987"; TB, 1 January 1987, p.1.

promote a sense of community identity.⁸² These community activities and incentives "contribute positively to the morale and industry of the people. Further, they contribute to civic pride and good citizenship".⁸³ Such Council-instigated functions have two major implications for the spillover-efficiency-amalgamation debate. Firstly, two neighbouring councils providing nearly the same activities with different foci are meeting the needs of disparate groups of people; this would not occur if there was only one council, mainly because of the costs involved. Secondly, as research indicates, such level of community self-awareness and community-based action decreases as a local authority increases in size.⁸⁴ However, these participatory factors were not as important in EARC's recommendation for amalgamation of Thuringowa and Townsville as the overall inter-dependence of Thuringowa's rural and suburban areas on the state and federal government offices, higher education campuses, commerce and port facilities domiciled in Townsville City.

Thuringowa Shire showed courage in its concern for the overall well-being of the region as evidenced in its involvement in ventures which benefited not only the residents of Thuringowa. These, together with the shire halls, justifiably attracted ratepayer support and a sense of pride in the Shire. However such identification with Thuringowa was short-lived due to the Shire's financial hardships, emasculation of local government power by the State Government, the uncertainty of

82 Evidence from Mr. Cutler (T1650), EARC, Vol.Two, p.288. In contrast, John Patrick believes that Thuringowa Council is "irrelevant as regards those matters which enrich our individual lives"; evidence (T1641), *ibid*.

83 Evidence from Mr. Cutler (T1650), EARC, Vol.Two, p.288.

84 See Chapter 7.

survival created through constant boundary changes, and the overpowering influence of Townsville, its affluent city neighbour. It is clear that Thuringowa Shire was usually seen merely as a political unit, there to administer local government services, rather than as the focus of local pride.

CHAPTER 10

The Character of Local Government in Thuringowa, 1879-1985

This chapter, which analyses the issue of "who governs", confirms that representativeness is not an especial value of local government existence. Additionally, as representation involves the participation of the elected and the voters, the participatory value in terms of who governed is also unconvincing as a justification of local government. Except for the 1979-1982 term, Thuringowa's councillors were predominantly male and from the more well-to-do employer class. Local government legislation and perceptions of who was appropriate to govern were deciding factors.

It is very difficult to obtain an impression of the way in which Thuringowa's future ratepayers viewed the prospect of becoming incorporated into a local government authority. There appeared to be neither enthusiasm for, nor opposition to, the *Divisional Boards Bill*; there were no letters to the editor, petitions to government or public meetings. This was in contrast to the anti-local government petitions from Mulgrave, Blackall and Bulimba, and the many criticisms from the "settled and farming districts". According to the Premier, "there was a lot of unfavouritism [sic] to the Bill".¹ Thuringowa residents displayed apathy, ignoring the Colonial Secretary's invitation to suggest boundaries, whether for the Divisional Board itself or for its internal sub-divisions.

The only public criticism from within the Thuringowa region came from the editor of Townsville's *Northern Standard* who contended that the rating system of the 1879

¹ QPD, 1879, Vol. XXX, p.2537; *The Queenslander*, 2 August 1879, p.134; 9 August 1879, p.167.

Act - on improved land - strengthened class divisions in society by penalising the poorer strata: the Act embodied

one of the most dangerous principles of legislative government, namely class legislation...it aims a direct blow at the selectors and small farmers of this colony on whose industry, capital and improvements it places a heavy imposition of taxation while it permits large squatters who made little or no improvements to go nearly scot-free.²

The editor reflected a common view of the class struggle which ranged the squatter living off the fat of the land against the struggling selector and farmer, Queensland's "bone, sinew and strength...the makers of a going state".³

Each local authority had the option to elect its own members, providing the government received a petition to that effect signed by 20 householders.⁴ A public meeting was held on 10 January 1880 at the Town Hall, Townsville, to nominate members to the Thuringowa Divisional Board. In this respect, Thuringowa residents were among the minority of interested Queenslanders as prospective ratepayers in only 26 local authority areas requested they be allowed to elect their own board members.⁵ From the well-attended meeting a list of nine nominations was compiled, as well as a second list of other men of status and wealth whose names had been inadvertently left off the roll. In February 1880 the Governor-in-Council ratified the nominations of the nine members drawn from

2 *Northern Standard*, 16 September 1879.

3 *Northern Standard*, 16 September, 1879.

4 *The Queenslander*, 18 October 1879, p.485.

5 In the event, only 11 Divisional Boards were fully elected; another 13 elected some members and had the remainder appointed by the Governor-in-General; all members in the remaining 50 divisions were appointed; Tucker, "Queensland Municipal and Shire Histories", pp.71,72.

both lists.⁶

These Board Members were entrusted with the responsibility of administering an area of some 2 939 3/4 sq. miles,

commencing at the southern mouth of the Burdekin River, bounded by that river upwards to confluence with Bowen River, then by a line west to the north east watershed of the Burdekin River thence by that watershed north westerly to the head of Saltwater Creek, intersecting Hinchinbrook No.2 Run; thence by that creek east to Halifax Bay and thence by the sea coast south-east to a point of commencement - exclusive of the Municipality of

6	<u>Members of the First Board</u>	
John Stieglitz	Surveyor & Selector, Reid River	Sub-division One
Robert Graham	Plantation Owner, Lillirsmere Station	
Charles Rowe	Grazier, Antill Plains;	
William Aplin	Freeholder, Reid River	Sub-division Two
Spencer Walker	Freeholder, Reid & Ross Rivers	
George Saunders	Selector, Bohle River;	
Edward Cunningham	Grazier, Woodhouse Station	Sub-division Three
William Kirk	Grazier, Haughton River	
John Carr	Manager, Woodstock Station.	

The men recommended at the 10 January 1880 public meeting but subsequently not ratified by the Governor-in-General were Thomas Marron, Selector, Stewarts Creek; Thomas Aitken, Dairyman and Selector, Ross River; Richard Davies, Selector, Stewarts Creek; and James Morris, Selector, Bohle River. Walker, Aplin, Kirk, Carr and Corveth (a grazier and coach operator of Ross River who was not ratified) were those inadvertently left off the list but considered "better suited to be members of the Board"; Chas Dicken to Colonial Secretary, 12 January 1880, Nomination Papers, WOR/N18.

Townsville.⁷

It was a prospect more daunting than inspiring.

Local government in Thuringowa was not a democratic grass-roots movement. It was imposed, as it was throughout Queensland, by legislative dictate of the colonial government. Whatever its beginnings, Purdie contends that "local government is the very stuff of democracy".⁸ Robbins states: "It is a long-standing belief of the Anglo-Saxon political tradition that local government and democracy are intimately and positively connected".⁹ Other theorists consider it illogical to categorise federal, state and local governments on "democratic gradings". Democracy, they argue, is derived from the cohesion and interrelatedness of all three, together with other avenues for the exercise of political liberty; in other words, democracy is a characteristic of a country as a whole.¹⁰

Nevertheless, they all uphold the popular contention that representative government is one of democracy's bulwarks. Although representation of an especial value of state and federal levels, rather than local government, it is nevertheless important, particularly as

7 *Queensland Government Gazette*, Vol.XXVII, No.11, 16 July 1880; hereafter QGG.

8 Purdie, *Local Government in Australia; Reformation or Regression*, p.25.

9 Robbins, "Localism and Local Government in South Australia", p.81. Also see R. Gates, "Local Government in a Dynamic Economy" in Department of Adult Education, *The Challenge of Change: The Economics of Local Government* (Sydney, 1970), p.7.

10 W. Thornhill, *The Growth and Reform of English Local Government* (London, 1971), pp.28-30; G. Langrod, "Local Government and Democracy", pp.25-33; Atkins, "Local Government", p.246; and Jones, *Local Government and the People*, pp.199-202.

it is closely linked to participation.¹¹ Jones further asserts that if local government is to fulfil this participatory criterion for democracy then it needs to ensure that all interests, not just the vocal or wealthy, are represented in the political process: that there is wide representation in a community such as Thuringowa, for example, where "community is not an undifferentiated average".¹²

According to such views local government in Thuringowa has been inadequate, for leadership has been the responsibility of a few, generally well-known and financially successful men who were graziers, farmers and/or businessmen. The lower middle class, white and blue collar workers, labourers, women and professionals have been very under-represented. This constant imbalance of class and gender in Thuringowa was characteristic of Australia from its earliest years of European settlement. Never classless, Australia was a patriarchal society, too.¹³ Thus ideas and actions concerning the most appropriate leaders in local government were based on the notion that certain men were born to rule; the proletariat, and women, for their part were content to have men of standing monopolise local government. Local government in Thuringowa was similarly

11 See Chapter 7.

12 M.A. Jones, *Organisation and Social Planning in Australian Local Government* (Richmond, Victoria, 1977), pp.92,104.

13 Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia* (Ringwood, 1975); Miriam Dixon, *The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia 1788-1975* (Ringwood, 1976); Ann Curthoys, "Historiography and Women's Liberation", *Arena*, 22 (1970), pp.35-40; Jane Lewis, "Women, Lost and Found: The Impact of Feminism on History" in D. Spender (ed.) *Men's Studies Modified: The Impact of Feminism on the Academic Disciplines* (Oxford, 1981), pp.55-72; Kay Daniels, "Women's History" in G. Osborne and W.F. Mandle (eds.) *New History: Studying Australia Today* (Sydney, 1982), pp.32-50.

conservative of existing privileges; it perpetuated and reinforced the class and gender structures of Australian society.

The members selected for Thuringowa's first Divisional Board were well-known men of substance.¹⁴ They represented directly the business, grazing, sugar, selector, rural and suburban sectors of Thuringowa. There were no representatives from the small, freehold owner-dwellers (Townsville's suburbs always overflowed into Thuringowa) nor of labouring groups. This pattern of representation held fairly constant through the decades. Of the nine Board Members in 1892, one was a town member with large interests in the suburbs, one had town and country interests, whilst the remaining seven were all rural property owners. In 1923, nine of the ten

14 Cunningham, Kirk and Carr had grazing interests in south-east Thuringowa. Edward Cunningham, one of Thuringowa's first settlers, had taken up Woodhouse Station in the early 1860s; William Kirk had worked for Black and Towns before branching out on his own into business and the pastoral industry, whereas John Carr managed Woodstock Station for the North Queensland Pastoral Company. Robert Graham had a sugar plantation in the Lower Burdekin and was a partner in the Burdekin Delta Sugar Company. One of the area's early settlers, George Saunders had a grazing and dairying selection on the Bohle River on the northern outskirts of suburban Thuringowa. John von Stieglitz, a surveyor for the Colonial Government, had numerous grazing properties with his head station at the foot of Mt. Stuart. Charles Rowe, one of the area's early pioneers, had property at Antill Plains and business interests in Townsville. Besides owning 80 acres devoted to market gardening on the banks of Ross River (near the present Aitkenvale Hotel) and grazing property at Reid River, Spencer Frederick Walker "was one of the keenest businessmen in the north" conducting a business of general importers and merchants and holding partnerships in several firms. William Aplin, who was elected Thuringowa's first Chairman, held interests in rural and suburban Thuringowa; he was also one of Townsville's leading businessmen and one of the pioneers of the district, having arrived in 1864.

Councillors lived outside suburban Thuringowa,¹⁵ the tenth had rural interests in Thuringowa though he lived in suburban Townsville. The interests of Councillors were confined to dairying, grazing or sugar, though one was also manager of the Alligator Creek Meatworks. All seven members of the 1955 Council had grazing or sugar interests and one Councillor combined grazing with mining (calcium). In 1970, six of the nine Councillors were primary producers and another was a carrier operating from the small sugarcane town of Giru.¹⁶

Such a pattern of representation was not surprising. Legislation prevented women from standing for election until 1920. Until 1920 a property franchise precluded involvement by the poorer classes:¹⁷ obviously this system of plural voting was weighted in favour of the wealthier landholders. As Mayne observed:

A property-based system of plural voting, linked with special property qualifications and the absence of payment for municipal office, generally limited active participation in local

15 Strictly speaking, a Shire cannot have suburbs; only a town can. However, to distinguish between the rural areas, small towns (e.g. Giru) and suburbs of Townsville situated in Thuringowa's local government area, I will refer to the last as "suburban Thuringowa".

16 Letter to the Under-Colonial Secretary, 21 October 1892, Correspondence Records on Local Government 1885-1914, COL/076; Letter, 9 April 1923, General Correspondence Books, January-July 1923, 11 THU/G8; hereafter COL/076 and 11 THU/G8; and Minute Book, 18 February 1955, 20 May 1955; TDB, 5 March, 6 April 1979, p.3.

17 All adults (Australian-born or naturalised and 21 years of age) who paid the rates were entitled to one vote if the capital value of their land was less than £500, two votes for values of £500 but less than £1 000 and three votes for values of £1 000 and over. Companies were allowed nine votes until 1910, when they were limited to three. Memorandum, 27 March 1926, No.02870, Local Authorities Elections, COL/210 (QSA). In 1896, for instance, Q.M.E. advised the Board that the company intended "exercising its voting powers, that is, the right of nine votes"; Letter, 10 November 1896, Thuringowa Divisional Board Correspondence, 1896-1898.

government to the wealthy...a most pernicious principle.¹⁸

Landholding meant power which could be utilised in local politics to reflect their interests.

The eight year battle to get adult suffrage legislated in 1920 reveals the conflicting values between class and constituency and participation at the local level of government power. Thuringowa Shire Council's stance on adult franchise was conservative and no different to that of other local authorities. This platform on adult franchise was predictable. The Council's members belonged to the propertied class and were reluctant to share the right to govern. Along with other conservatives in local and state politics,¹⁹ they argued that representation should be tied to taxation as it was the owner-landholder, not the "irresponsible... casual visitor, man in the street, loafer, criminal" or tenant, who had the permanent stake in the district. These "reckless nomad voters" should not be given the chance of imposing heavy loans and perpetual taxation on the owners; "the man who pays the piper should call the tune".²⁰ And, prior to 1920, he did.

The Council's opposition was couched in plain language. In 1915 the Council unanimously adopted the following motion:

That this Council as a body strongly protests against, and resents any extension of Local Government franchise as proposed by the Home Secretary, as it considers that the proposal is too hasty, and will materially interfere with

18 A.J.C. Mayne, "'A most pernicious principle': the local government franchise in nineteenth-century Sydney". *Politics*, XV, 2, July (1979), p.160.

19 Morrison, *The Influence of Party Politics on Local Government in Queensland 1910-1932*, pp.10,36a,37,40.

20 Moore's speech, *Hansard*, 1915-1916, p.2596; also see speeches by Tolmie, *Hansard*, 1915-1916, p.2588 and Appel, *QPD*, 1920, pp.346,347.

the good government of Local Authorities, and that a copy of this motion be forwarded to the Home Secretary, Local Authorities Association of Queensland and also to the members for Townsville and Mundingburra, urging them to vote against the proposal when the Amending bill is before the House.²¹

The Minutes reveal that Crowther's Council "strongly resented the drastic measure" and lobbied the Queensland Local Authorities Association (LAA) to extend its yearly conference by two days to discuss "this important issue".²² Thuringowa again sent a delegate to the 1918 LAA Conference for the same purpose.²³ The fact that these were the only two LAA Conferences that Thuringowa had attended since the Association's inception in 1896 attests the strength of the Council's convictions as to the propriety of local government leadership by the class of property owners and landholders.

Given the time, money and work constraints imposed on the wage earner, the fear that adult suffrage would replace sitting councillors and aldermen with the "feckless, unthinking non-property man" was unrealistic.²⁴ In the 1921 elections, the first after the granting of the adult franchise, there were no opposition candidates to the sitting Chairman, Councillor Cummins, none to the three sitting members for both Divisions 1 and 2, and only one, a man of property, in Division 3 where the three sitting Councillors were re-elected by a wide margin. At an extraordinary election in 1922, one seat in Division 3 was contested by only two nominees; Mr. Cordingley, the manager of the Alligator Creek Meatworks and a grazier, won by a margin of 151

21 Minute Book, 10 November 1915, 11 THU/D4.

22 Minute Book, 10 November 1915, 11 THU/D4.

23 *Local Government* 4, 12, October (1918), p.201. In 1920 the Council sent a telegram deploring the proposed Bill.

24 Appel's Speech, QPD, 1920, pp.346,347.

votes. In the 1924 elections, seven out of the 10 sitting members stood for re-election and only one was beaten. Of the four newly elected members, three were new to local government but all were well known graziers or cane farmers; the fourth had been a Councillor since 1919 and was a sanitary and small, road-construction contractor.²⁵ It was not until 1955 that the first employee gained office but he, too, owned property. Legislation to make democracy more representational did not attain its goal in Thuringowa, which reaffirms the omission of representativeness as a core value within the theory of local government existence.

Until the mid-20th century state legislation and local by-laws were influential in preventing virtually all representation of the lower middle and working classes - indeed, of anyone who was not self-employed. Firstly, there was a compulsory nomination fee; there was no payment, not even reimbursement for expenses. It was necessary to make frequent trips to inspect improvements to the Shire's roads and bridges, which wage earners could ill afford to pay out of their own pockets. As late as the 1950s Thuringowa Councillors were reimbursed for inspection visits only if these were sanctioned at a full Council meeting.²⁶ Secondly, Thuringowa's Boards and Councils adopted the practice of holding their meetings on a weekday; in 1985, Gleeson's Council still maintained the practice.²⁷ Wage earners could only with difficulty obtain time off work to attend, even if they

25 Minutes, 1916-1922, Minute Book, 12 April 1916 - 9 July 1919, 11 THU/D5 and Minute Book, 13 August 1919 - 15 November 1922, 11 THU/D6 (QSA); election nominations, 3 March 1924, General Correspondence, 11 THU/G9; hereafter 11 THU/D5, 11 THU/D6 and 11 THU/G9. See Appendix 4 for collation of councillors who lost.

26 TDB, 1950-1960.

27 In the 1980s, it took two full days, and often into the evenings, to deal with Council business.

could afford the reduction in wages that this entailed.²⁸ A prospective candidate contrasted the practice with the more democratic participatory priorities of a comparable rural-suburban shire:

How many ratepayers who might wish to stand for council could afford to take two days off work once a month to attend daytime meetings? Pioneer Shire [on the outskirts of Mackay] conducts its meetings at night so that people can participate... Thuringowa Shire Council should represent the voters, not just the influential minority.²⁹

Class inequalities were inherent in scheduling daytime meetings, fees and non-reimbursement of expenses, but this was rarely challenged.

Other factors conspired to preclude the election of lower middle and working class candidates. Lack of visibility to the voters was significant. Suburban workers or small business candidates were generally unknown to the majority of voters in their electorate. Their names did not appear regularly in the gossip columns or advertisements of the local newspapers, while those of Hodel, Cordingley, Cruickshank, Gordon, Gleeson or Ryan did.

The press supported monopolisation of local government by the propertied class; naturally any capitalist newspaper mirrored the dominant socio-economic interests of its advertisers. Thus, when W.H.A. Munro and T. Kelsall stood for Sub-division 1 in 1889, the editor of the *Townsville Herald* was horrified by their "presumption" because they were "not known by their

28 In 1952 Councillors were paid £2/10/0 per day for each sitting day; Minutes, 17 October 1952.

29 TDB, 1 February 1979, p.2. In 1985 another candidate disputed the claims that nighttime meetings would entail exorbitant costs as "rubbish". And even if that were not the case, "how do you put a price on effective and efficient representation"; TB, 2 March 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985.

public or business lives"; they would "draw upon themselves an effectual and wholesome snub" on polling day. In the editor's eyes the "crime" of belonging to the lower middle class was compounded by the parallel sin of so-called radicalism. Reform was only acceptable if it were instigated by men "known and tried"!³⁰ Yet Munro and Kelsall were neither radical nor politically naive. They stood as candidates for the Thuringowa Ratepayers' Association, an association that campaigned for a more equitable slice of the revenue to be expended in Thuringowa's most populous suburbs (situated in Sub-division 1). Even though the editor believed "our suburban population should long for a better order of things than it has been in the power of the board so far to create", he still insisted that

no reformation is required because when we have need of reformers we shall look for them among men who are known, and who at least have some pretensions to knowledge on the subject of the needful reformation".³¹

The voters apparently agreed: Monroe and Kelsall were soundly beaten. Notions of who was suitable to govern appeared inseparable from notions of class.

Also important in excluding Labor candidates from standing or winning election in Thuringowa was the absence of a Labor-oriented electoral division which would support and elect one of its own to office, as had occurred in Townsville in the 1890s. Townsville's South Ward was physically and, more importantly, socially compact, comprising the two predominantly working class suburbs of Railway Estate and South Townsville. The only similar suburbs in Thuringowa were centred on the Ross River Meatworks; their seasonal workers maintained a lively branch of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) during the Depression and war years. Indeed they poured most of

30 TH, 19 February 1889, p.12.

31 TH, 9 February 1889, p.12.

their energies into the arena of state political activity rather than the "no-win" situation of local government politics. If the Stewart Town ALP Branch in Thuringowa had nominated a local government candidate, he (the ALP was as gender-biased as the rest of society) would have been unable to muster enough votes to win as the working class suburbs were a numerically small portion of the larger electoral unit, Division 1, which, like all Thuringowa's Divisions, was both urban middle and working class, and rural. Though the sugar mill town of Giru was developing an urban worker base for Labor, the diversification of the rural electorate, Division 3, with its cane and grazing interests, prevented the election of working class candidates such as C.G.O. LeRoy, a Labor Party nominee, in 1943; Clyde Ferns, a fugal operator in the sugar mill, and Hubert Stockham, a labourer, both in 1973; and Douglas Cooper, a North Queensland Electricity Board employee in 1985.³² However, the conservatives were jolted in 1943 when LeRoy lost by only six votes and, again in 1970, when Lyle Ace, a railway employee, beat a sitting member. The workers' vote obviously contributed to Ace's win but it would not have been enough to swing the election in his favour without the support of the middle class. Ace's family were farmers.³³ Hence, the "right connections" were crucial in the latter's vote because their choice was clearly one of support for farmers versus graziers as the graziers, Arthur Buck (the sitting member) and C. Suttor, lost.

Labor candidates have contested the Chair on four occasions: J.J. Neville, grazier, ex-tobacco farmer and storekeeper of Woodstock, and Sydney Argaet, a motor mechanic, stood for the Chair against the graziers, E.W. Wordsworth and Jack Brabon in 1943 and 1970 respectively;

32 TDB, 3 May 1943, p.3; 3 March 1973, p.3;

33 TDB, 6 April 1970, Press Cuttings and Advertisements, July 1964 -.

Charles Moroney and David Benson hoped that their term as councillor would assist their chances against Dan Gleeson in 1982 and 1985 respectively. Not surprisingly, given the varied but still essentially conservative electorate, the four lost.³⁴ As expected, Neville, middle class and self-employed, rather than the working class nominees came closest to winning: Neville lost by 107 votes; Arguet by 459; Moroney by 1 596 and Benson by 1 469 votes.³⁵ Class was again the determining factor.

The main reason for Labor's failure to make any headway in Thuringowa is that its natural supporters were heavily outnumbered not only in the Shire as a whole but in each of the Divisions. Supplementary reasons include adherence to the practice of holding meetings during the day, making membership an aspiration all-but impossible for workers except those on shift; and, ironically, the success of Labor initiatives in Townsville also benefited Thuringowa residents who could buy cheaper electrical appliances, fruit, vegetables and meat from the City Council's stores in the 1940s.³⁶ They could use the City's library and, in the 1970s, attend the City's Civic Theatre or Sound Shell, leave their babies and toddlers at the City Council's Day Care Centre or send them to the Council Kindergarten and Preschool. Thuringowa's unemployed benefited from Townsville City Council's

34 TDB, 3 May 1943, p.2. William deCourcey, a retired businessman also stood in 1970 but lost to Brabon, a grazier; TDB, 5 March 1970, p.3; 29 March 1982, p.3; 1 April 1985, p.17. Dan Gleeson, Chairperson since 1976, had been a Labor Party member between 1936 to 1960 when he left "disenchanted with the 'leftwards' trend the party was taking". Whilst in the Labor Party he was secretary of the Mundingburra electorate executive committee, secretary of the Hermit Park branch, president of the Herbert federal divisional executive and campaign director for Herbert. *Thuringowa - Shire of the Future*, Supplement Advertiser, 21 March 1985, p.17.

35 TDB, 8 May 1943, p.2; 5 March 1970, p.3; TDB, 29 March 1982, p.3; TB, 1 April 1985, p.17.

36 Moles, *A Majority of One*, p.62.

welfare services. In sum, Thuringowa working class electors had few grievances; they were content with the *status quo*.

Until the 1970s Henry Sinnot was the only other man besides Alan Innes coming from lower middle or working class ranks ever elected to Thuringowa's local governing body. Sinnot was elected in 1915 by Division 1. Although designated "engineer" for the last seven years of his employment, Sinnot had been, in reality, Thuringowa's foreman of works for 26 years before retiring and standing for local government office.³⁷ His job separated him fairly permanently from ordinary workers but made him highly visible and well-known to his electorate. In addition, the voters presumed him to be knowledgeable in Council affairs and, as a retired person, with plenty of time to devote to local government. Innes worked for the Department of Civil Aviation as a shift worker. He served Division 1 from 1955 to 1967 and then from 1970 to 1973. Not surprisingly, Sinnot wholeheartedly supported the road, bridges, water and rubbish philosophy of local government held by the Councils on which he served. On the other hand, Innes adopted a noticeably radical stance in comparison with his fellow Councillors who were graziers, farmers and/or businessmen. Each year he placed motions or amendments to increase the conservative rate levied by the pro-rural Councils. He goaded Councils to see themselves as the providers of much more than rates, roads and rubbish and eventually swung votes to instigate a library service and a much-needed new Shire hall.³⁸ Again it is not unexpected that Innes and Ace (a railway employee who was elected in 1970) were more mindful than Sinnot of the worker in their council decisions. For instance, Innes and Ace voted against the introduction of

37 NQR, 18 January 1915, p.13.

38 See Chapters 9 and 14.

widespread restrictions on building flats in 60% of the residential land in the Upper Ross.³⁹ For them, the growing suburb should not be only for those with capital; the worker was just as entitled to live in this attractive suburb stretching along the meandering river.

Women have only been allowed to stand for local government office in Queensland since 1920 and, since then, have been very under-represented in Thuringowa. Indeed, to 1985, only six women, all married, have held office. Mrs. I. Fitzpatrick was appointed to fill a vacancy in 1924; Mrs. Ilse Ryan was elected in 1970 by a sizeable majority; Mrs. Anna Mellick was a Councillor from 1973-1976 and from 1979-1982; Joy Cooper served as Councillor from 1982-1988 whilst Karen Ehrmann lost after a term from 1982-1985.⁴⁰

Indeed, women have been generally under-represented on local councils in Australia - despite the influence of the Australian Local Government Women's Association (created in 1951) in promoting, amongst other things, the involvement of women in this arena of politics.⁴¹ Again the reasons for the under-representation are obvious; in

39 TDB, 18 November 1971, Press Clippings and Advertisements, July 1964 -.

40 Letter to Mrs. I. Fitzpatrick 10 January 1924, Inletters, 11 THU/G9; TDB, 10 April 1979, p.26; 2 July 1979, p.4; 29 March 1982, p.3; TB, 1 April 1985, p.17. Miss Mary Finlay, an Australian Workers' Union employee, was incorrectly hailed as the first woman alderman when she was appointed to the Mackay City Council in September 1937; *Australian Sugar Journal*, 10 September (1937), p.382. Between 1924 and 1937 Mrs. Margaret Murray was Chairperson of the Burke Shire Council, TDB, 27 July 1983, p.21.

41 A Townsville branch was formed in 1962 but it did not survive; A. Smith, *Survey of Women in Local Government in Australia*, 3rd edn. (NPD, 1973), pp.7,9,13. To 1973, only 84 women were elected to local government in Queensland; Chapman and Wood, *Australian Local Government: The Federal Dimension*, pp.50,51. Power, "Overview of Local Government in Australia", p.37.

addition to unsuitable council hours and inherent costs to the sitting member, local government has traditionally never been seen as an area for female participation. Purdie and Bowman focus the blame on women themselves who have been "reticent" and "diffident" about "thrusting themselves into public affairs".⁴² More accurately, society erected barriers to their participation. Societal values, socialisation and social structures led to narrow role perceptions. "The uniformity of family-centred ideologies created a climate of opinion hostile to women who want to move outside of the feminine stereotypes".⁴³ Women with political interests thus joined welfare organisations, the Queensland Country Women's Association, school Parents and Citizens groups, unions, or, in recent years, the Women's Electoral Lobby.

Inexplicably and out of character, but in order to win some acclaim for being hopefully the first Queensland shire to have a female councillor, Thuringowa Shire Council appointed Mrs. I. Fitzpatrick of Rollingsstone to fill a vacancy in Council in 1924.⁴⁴ Isabella Fitzpatrick was the publican of Rollingsstone Hotel in the

42 Purdie, *Local Government in Australia: Reformation or Regression*, p.30; Margaret Bowman, "Women Councillors in Victoria", *Public Administration* March (1972), pp.14-25; M. Bowman, *The Suburban Political Process*, Ph.D. Thesis, Monash University (1973).

43 P. Grimshaw, "Women and the Family in Australian History - A Reply to 'the Real Matilda'". *Historical Studies*, 18, 27, April (1979), p.421.

44 The Council wrote: "Provisions have been recently made in the Act for lady members of all local authorities which will, no doubt, be largely availed of at the next election throughout Queensland in a similar manner to the recent Parliamentary elections to the House of Commons in England where several lady members have been elected, some of whom have been mentioned for Ministerial rank in the new Cabinet. Several sitting Councillors hope you will kindly agree to accept the position. You will, I think, be the first appointed in the state"; Letters, 10 January, 14 January 1924, In letters, pp.629,640, 11 THU/G9. Mrs. Fitzpatrick was not the first female local government councillor.

early 1920s and before that of the Herbert Hotel in the commercial centre of Townsville which had been run by her husband who had taken over the license from Isabella's parents.⁴⁵ She was therefore known to the Councillors as a person with business ability and some social standing. Though her reasons for not nominating in the next election are unknown, family and business commitments and distance from the Shire Hall were assuredly significant. Mrs. Ilsa Ryan, who listed her occupation as housewife, was elected in 1970. She did not nominate for a second three-year term. It is probable that she may have become disillusioned with the internal politics of local government and the slowness of decision-making and execution of resolutions because of compromises, budget restrictions and the maze of local government legislation. Paternalistic patronisation from the male Councillors and professional staff may have been an added reason. Such an attitude was experienced by Anna Mellick, Joy Cooper and Karen Ehrmann;⁴⁶ a woman had to be "pretty tough" because "everytime she spoke out, what she said was ridiculed. Men didn't give women the courtesy of listening but talked over the top".⁴⁷

45 Her husband, John, was an executive of the Licensed Victuallers Racing Association in 1908 and licensee of the Herbert from 1907 to 1912; Isabella then operated the hotel from 1912 to 1914. There was a break of some six years before she took up the license of the Rollingstone Hotel in 1920. Her father, Charles Wyatt, son of a veterinary surgeon arrived in Bowen from Essex in 1861, and was licensee of the Court House, as the Herbert was originally named, from 1887 to 1904. His widow then ran the hotel until Isabella's husband took control in 1907. Dorothy M. Gibson-Wilde and Bruce C. Gibson-Wilde, *A Pattern of Pubs: Hotels of Townsville 1864-1914*, Studies in North Queensland History, No.9 (Townsville, 1988), pp.262,294.

46 Gauged from interviews with G.D., I.C. and A.H., members and past members of the Council, and D.F., on the permanent professional staff of Thuringowa Shire, 6 May 1983, 6 July 1987, 18 September 1991 and 18 July 1980, respectively; initials have been changed for anonymity.

47 Interviews with D.F. and A.H., 6 July 1987 and 18 September 1991, respectively.

The Council voted against Cooper attending the Women in Local Government Conference in June 1985 because men were not invited except for the key speaker and, therefore, the conference "did not involve true participation". According to Cooper, her male colleagues behaved like "kindergarten children".⁴⁸ They clearly did not understand feminism or the need for women to debate local government issues and find emotional and professional support in an area in which they really were still breaking new ground.

Mrs. Mellick operated a successful general haberdashery and hardware store in partnership with her husband in Giru. A well-known identity, proven business woman and, as secretary of the Giru and District Progress Association, committed worker for the area's development, Mrs. Mellick was seen as a worthwhile council representative by the electors Division 3 in 1973 and, with the added advantage of council experience, again in 1979.⁴⁹ Joy Cooper (Division 2) and Karen Ehrmann (Division 4) were also businesswomen: the former was a partner in a research laboratory and motel; the latter operated a small shop. Both were known to people in their respective areas, although Ehrmann had to conduct a door-knock campaign because of the greater number of constituents in suburban Division 4. It is significant, however, that all four were married, middle-aged (except for Ehrmann who was 29 at the time of her election) and

48 TB, 14 June 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985.

49 Mrs. Mellick received more votes (325) than her male Contestants: Lyle Ace (245) and Terence Duckworth (257), who were also elected, were cane farmers whilst Clyde Ferns (173), a fugal operator, and Hubert Stockham (189), a labourer, were Labor candidates.

from the wealthier socio-economic strata.⁵⁰ Class was the final determinant of eligibility.

In their local government concerns, the female Councillors were replicas of their male counterparts. Indeed, like a number of male Councillors over the years, Fitzpatrick's performance was unexceptional and her attendance at the monthly council meetings erratic, probably for the same reasons that stopped her nominating for re-election. Representing the embryonic suburban interests in Division 4, Ryan was, like most new Councillors, parochial in her concerns: the improvement of water reticulation services, the provision of a sewerage system and the upgrading of suburban roads. Mellick and Ehrmann were the most vocal of the four, and were often seen by the Shire's Councillors, even Ehrmann's fellow ALP members, and staff as an "outspoken annoyance" at Council meetings.⁵¹ But this was not the perception of Mellick's electorate who re-elected her in 1979; after all, she was protecting the interests of Giru.

Of the four women Councillors, Cooper and Ehrmann were the most conscious of the need for a women's perspective in local government. Into her second term, Joy Cooper acknowledged that "women see things differently in local government...and that this is beneficial for women in the Shire generally".⁵²

50 In her survey of women in local government in Australia, Smith found that most were mothers. This is not surprising as concern for the safety, health and recreation facilities for children provided by local government would have been of crucial concern; *Survey of Women in Local Government in Australia*, p.4.

51 Interview with G.D., I.C. and A.H., members and past members of the Council, and D.F., on the permanent professional staff of Thuringowa Shire, 6 May 1983, 6 July 1987, 18 September 1991 and 18 July 1980, respectively.

52 TB, 14 June 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985.

Cooper's male colleagues obviously felt she threatened the *status quo* and voted against her attending a women's only conference for local government politicians and professional staff.⁵³ Ehrmann promoted projects pigeonholed as the woman councillor's "portfolio". It took her one year of negotiation to persuade the Council to support a child care centre in Division 4. However, as in the past, Thuringowa's commitment to the welfare aspects of local government was hollow.⁵⁴ The Councillors only agreed because the Council was not financially committed; it was sponsorship in name only. Another issue, which combined women, welfare and class concerns, was expectedly unsuccessful. In her attempts to persuade the Council to reverse its rating "discrimination against the 779 single supporting parents in the Shire", Ehrmann contended the Council sat in moral judgement on a group who needed similar rate concessions to those granted the aged, invalids, graziers and owners of plant nurseries whom the Council deemed "deserving groups...so as not to cause them hardship".⁵⁵ Women's issues, or those that the male councillors saw as such, were deemed inappropriate in Thuringowa politics.

Members of the professional class seldom stood as candidates. Dr. Ahearne did in 1882 but was disqualified for some unknown reason. In 1894, H. R. Jones, an engineer, nominated but was not elected.⁵⁶ It was not until the 1970s that other professionals, Drs. Crossman and Murtha, scientists with the Australian Institute of Marine Science and the C.S.I.R.O. respectively, were

53 TB, 14 June 1985, Newspaper Clippings Book 1985.

54 See Chapter 14.

55 TB, 1 March 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985: in 1986, the Council maintained its 75% rebate to pensioners except those on a supporting or single mother's pension because they were "open to too much abuse"; TB, 9 January 1986, Newspaper Clipping Book 1986.

56 NQH, 31 January 1894, p.20.

elected. Dr. H. Sohn, an economist in the Department of Economics at James Cook University, was elected in 1979. As all three represented the growing urban Upper Ross suburbs, this highlighted the realisation that professional candidates, like Labor, needed an urban electoral base. However, in 1985 an architect was elected to represent Division 3 which comprised the small township of Giru and surrounding cane farms and grazing properties. A factor in Gazziola's success which may have circumvented the need for a large urban base was his affiliation with the sizeable Italian-Australian community. Certainly the professional class met the criteria of high public profile and the "right" socio-economic status for acceptability to local government office. Perhaps one major reason for their reluctance to nominate in a rural-suburban authority was a perceived lack of prestige and power commensurate with their status. In 1933 Morrison alluded to this as an explanation for the reluctance of professionals to assume leadership in local government.⁵⁷ *The Report of the Royal Commission on Local Government in Greater London* in 1960 also examined the relationship between local government representation and prestige, finding a high correlation between the size and scope of the authority and the socio-economic status of the councillors attracted: professionals are attracted to the arena that can display their talents, stimulate their capacities and satisfy their ambitions.⁵⁸ Thuringowa's concentration on bread and butter concerns certainly lacked the excitement and scope of state or federal politics.

The 1979 election was significant on four counts:

57 Morrison, *The Influence of Party Politics on Local Government in Queensland 1910-1932*, pp.27,28.

58 *Report of the Royal Commission on Local Government in Greater London, 1957-1960*, "Some General Considerations", Chapter VI (3 October 1960), p.63 cited in Thornhill, *The Growth and Reform of English Local Government*, p.256.

more women stood for election; there was an Aboriginal and an Asian candidate; Labor candidates were nominated in three of the four electorates; thus the candidates represented a more diverse range of interests than ever before.

The election attracted four women as candidates. The Labor Townsville City Council had boasted women as aldermen for a number of years. They, together with Thuringowa's female Councillors, Ryan and Mellick, were successful role models for women in Thuringowa. They provided the stimulus for women who desired to improve local government and who wanted to utilise their democratic rights and responsibilities by participating in local politics at the decision-making level. Anna Mellick was the only woman to win in 1979 and was elected over three men. However, unlike the other women, two of whom listed their occupation as housewife and the third as welfare worker, Mellick was a successful business woman and had already proven herself in local government, having served between 1973 and 1976.

For the first time in local government politics in Thuringowa Shire, two people from previously disadvantaged ethnic groups stood for the 1979 election: Cherie Imlah, an Aboriginal welfare worker, stood for Division 1; Dr. Hong Keun Sohn, a Korean-Australian and economist at James Cook University, stood for Division 4. Racism was a factor in the relationships between Aborigines and Asians, on the one hand, and Thuringowa's early inhabitants and Divisional Boards, on the other. Studies in the Townsville-Thuringowa region in the 1970s reveal that prejudice towards Aborigines still existed.⁵⁹ This may have been a factor in Imlah's failure to win election. She was also a welfare worker

⁵⁹ K. Larsen, *Discrimination against Aborigines and Islanders in North Queensland: the Case of Townsville* (Canberra, 1977).

and a woman standing in a predominantly rural electorate which also contained middle-class seaside villages and two tiny working class suburbs at the Bohle and Innes Estate. However, Imlah's electioneering was not based on women's or Aboriginal issues. It was focussed on class issues. She believed that "ordinary people" should be involved in local government so that there would be representation of the majority's view rather than "the interests of land speculators and the self-interested".⁶⁰ She also campaigned on traditional local government concerns highlighting the need for a better deal for her division, particularly for the Bohle and Saunders Beach areas. However, rural interests won in this electorate. On the other hand, Dr. Sohn mounted a vigorous, door-to-door campaign and was successful in suburban Division 4. He had a sound background in economics and urban planning which, many of his electors no doubt thought, would benefit the running of the Council.

Labor campaigned as a team, fielding candidates in three electorates and winning two of the four seats in Division 4. This was the first time party politics had raised its contentious head in Thuringowa's local elections.⁶¹ Political parties are unquestionably seen as part of democratic government, yet their intrusion into local government has generally been deplored not only by the electorate but also by the candidates who proudly proclaim their independence and by the media who

60 TDB, 28 February 1979, p.3.

61 In 1943 J.Neville stood as a Labor candidate for Chairman; however, neither he nor the Labor Party conducted any publicity in the press or election speech "rallies". Workers - C. LeRoy, a labourer, in 1943; Mrs. Angela Seymour, a clerk, in 1970; and C. Ferns, a fugal operator, and Hubert Stockham, a labourer, both in 1973 - stood as independents and not on a Labor Party platform. Dan Gleeson, Chairman since 1976, was a Labor Party member in the 1970s but campaigned as an independent.

champion so-called, non-party affiliations.⁶² Independent candidates are highly regarded. Jensen argues that this is because they are perceived as being free to vote on issues according to their own consciences.⁶³ It is also thought that candidates standing as Labor or Liberal Party teams enunciate policies and remedies which tie their hands.⁶⁴ On the other hand,

[t]he practice of electing individuals as shire councillors without policy commitments by candidates prevents any expression of will by the electorate; the shire councillor can claim no mandate on even major issues, other than that which resides on public faith in his reaction on issues as they arise at council meetings.⁶⁵

In the 1979 elections, Labor won seats only in the most urban electorate. This was again the case in 1982. However in 1985, the only Labor candidate to win was in Division 1 which had a growing suburban population.

The representational diversity of the 1979 candidates, both successful and unsuccessful, reflected the new character of the urban-rural Shire. Sugar and cattle interests were under-represented on the new Council in comparison with previous years. Women, professionals, shopkeepers, blue-collar workers and Labor

62 Chapman and Wood, *Australian Local Government: The Federal Dimension*, pp.52,53. Morrison, *Local Government in Queensland*, pp.81,82. TDB, 5 March 1970, p.2; 10 April 1979, pp.2,26.

63 R.C. Jensen, "Local Government in Queensland: A Need for Re-orientation", *Government Planner*, 17, 2 (1977), p.24.

64 N.T.G. Miles "Problems of Structure" in Department of Adult Education, *The Challenge of Change: The Economics of Local Government*, pp.38,39. Diane Menghetti, *The Red North*, p.132. Jones points out that party dogma may restrict freedom of thought on local matters Jones, *Local Government and the People*, p.220.

65 Jensen, "Local Government in Queensland: A Need for Re-orientation", p.24.

had a voice. The 1979 Council had a more democratic representation of most sectors of the Shire than any in 100 years. The monopolisation of local government power by sugar, cattle and business interests had been broken. But not for long.

In 1982, two females were elected: one for Division 1 and the other for Division 4; the latter, and another Division 4 candidate, a seaman's union representative, were the only ALP candidates to win; both women were business proprietors. The remainder of the Council comprised four graziers/farmers, one horse trainer and four business proprietors. The Council became more conservative and narrower in representativeness in 1985. Eleven Councillors were from the self-employed, more well-to-do middle class. The Council comprised four graziers/farmers, one horse trainer, five business proprietors, one retired real estate agent and a registered builder. One female was elected, a businesswoman and sitting member. Only one Councillor, the tradesman, was ALP. One ratepayer astutely encapsulated the character of Thuringowa Councils: they were "similar to a private club where membership was restricted because of club rules".⁶⁶

Three issues were relevant in the 1985 election. Firstly, so-called political independence in local government was an issue in the election: the unsuccessful ALP candidate for Chairperson believed that "the people of Thuringowa Shire had shown they do not want party politics in the shire...The fact that they (the other candidates) were disguised as independents helped them a

66 TB, 2 March 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985. The state representative for Townsville West (which included part of Thuringowa) headed his letter to the editor: "Clique goes the Shire"; TB, 22 August 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985.

lot".⁶⁷ Secondly, the election provided a warning to parties wishing to field local government teams: all team members must appeal to the cross section of voters over the entire electoral division because any weak candidates reflect on the whole team; they must also display a seriousness of purpose because they will be responsible for the voters' hard-won taxes. One ALP candidate admitted that the 1985 ALP team embodied these weaknesses which then made it easy for the opposition to mount an effective newspaper, radio, television and "nasty smear-tactics-around-the-pubs" campaign.⁶⁸ The candidate for the Chair did not have a high profile throughout the Shire, only having been a councillor for one term; more importantly, the "ALP did not field an experienced team" which included a busker, a supporting mother, a seaman's union representative, a railway worker and a welfare organiser.⁶⁹ They were probably seen as advocating socialist policies and, hence, more likely to reverse Thuringowa's century-old policy of spending taxation on the bread-and-butter necessities of local government to one akin to the Labor Townsville Council which funded welfare services.⁷⁰ This is underscored by the third point: the consolidation of the efficiency value as an important justification of local government by the electors. From the election results, it is obvious that the electors believed that local government should be run

67 TB, 1 April 1985, p.17. Cr. Tyrell admitted that there was "no secret [of the fact that] I am a member of the Liberal Party", but this was after he was successfully elected; TB, 17 April 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985.

68 Interview R.R., 8 April 1990; initials have been changed for anonymity.

69 TB, 2 March 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985.

70 Interview with a voter, D.H., 27 February 1985; also see letter to the editor, TB, 14 January 1986: "...people left Townsville City Council to live in Thuringowa because they saw the writing on the wall, and wanted no part in the grander plan of socialistic expenditure".

as a business. Of the 12 Councillors elected, all but one had a proven record in administering a business, farm or cattle property. Non-Labor had mounted a hard but successful campaign to discredit the ALP team's ability to manage local government: "The Labor party's policy...is a farce and a recipe for financial disaster". Would the ALP team be able to run a multi-million dollar business "dealing exclusively with ratepayers funds"?⁷¹ The electors obviously thought not.

Notions of who should rule were still, after 106 years, tied to class and business acumen. Thus representativeness was not an especial value of local government and nor was it a central characteristic in the participatory value. Different aspects of participation as a justification for local government existence are explored in the next two chapters.

⁷¹ Comments by the Deputy Chairperson, Cr. Tyrell, and Councillor Taylor, *TB*, 16 February 1985, p.15 and 2 March 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1984.

CHAPTER 11

The Extent of "Grass Roots Democracy": The Participatory Value of the Theory of Local Government Existence

An assessment of the degree of interest shown in elections and council affairs by the general public is perhaps the most obvious and useful measure of the effectiveness of participatory grass roots democracy in Australia. This chapter confirms that a characteristic of public interest in council elections was apathy. However, non-participation can express political alienation as well as imply satisfaction or rational abstention.¹ Hence, although the criteria of interest in elections and who governed (the focus of the last chapter) cannot lay serious claim as pivotal in the participatory value of the theory of existence of rural-urban local government, they still occupy a meaningful place. The next chapter explores the active involvement by Thuringowans in council affairs with respect to external threats to Thuringowa's territory, on the one hand, and internal polls and petitions for secession from Thuringowa Shire, on the other. Such overt action confirms the participatory value in the Thuringowa Model of local government as the right to secede or amalgamate with another division, internally or externally, is held to be "one of the most important single rights in local government".²

Australians have typically been ambivalent in their interest in local government. As Wilson says:

affairs of Local Government in this country seem to have the curious twin effects of inspiring in Australians profound apathy or generating considerable heat of controversy.³

1 This is discussed later in the Chapter.

2 Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, p.123.

3 Wilson, "Local Government", p.149.

Chapman, Radbone, Robbins, Morrison, Atkins and Purdie all agree; Purdie goes further by delineating apathy in terms of the lack of candidates willing to contest elections and the absence of ratepayers at local government meetings.⁴

Although grazing, sugar and business interests were always represented in Thuringowa, there was difficulty in finding candidates willing to stand for election - even from these sectors. In this respect Thuringowa residents reflected the same distinct lack of interest in local government elections that was characteristic of most other parts of Australia.⁵

Rarely were all Divisions contested in Thuringowa. Of the 54 elections for which records survive there were no contests at all in 13; in a further 18 there were contests in one Division only (see Appendix 4).⁶ Just eight elections were fully contested. In seven elections, six in the first decade, there were insufficient candidates: the Governor-in-Council had to appoint from one to five members to the Board.

Purdie contends that not simply apathy but disillusionment is a powerful reason for the dearth of contestants in local politics.⁷ To these factors must be added burdens of local government office. This became obvious in Thuringowa's first decade not only in the lack of contestants but in the turnover of Members and Chairmen and the resignation of Members before their terms expired. In 1883, for example, Thuringowa

4 Purdie, *Local Government in Australia: Reformation or Regression*, pp.3,34,35.

5 Purdie, *Local Government in Australia: Reformation or Regression*, p.35.

6 The records between 1898 and 1906 are not available.

7 Purdie, *Local Government in Australia: Reformation or Regression*, pp.35,36.

Divisional Board consisted of nine Members, only three of whom had held office previously and then by appointment by the Governor-in-Council.⁸ The passing parade of Chairmen was equally significant: the Board had seven different Chairmen in its first 10 years; one for as little as four months!⁹ The task of setting in motion the wheel of rural local government proved onerous and daunting.

Public criticism by the press about the type and quality of leadership given by Thuringowa's elected representatives was unrelenting. Newspaper articles could be quite vituperative; never more so than in the first decade. Members were told that "the past history of the Divisional Board of Thuringowa is anything but a pleasing topic for reflection";¹⁰ that "successive Board members [were] blunderers [lacking in] energy, wisdom, principle and business-like management and capability".¹¹ Yet many of Thuringowa's early Board Members had tamed Thuringowa's wilderness in the early squatting era and had helped Black develop a port with hard work, astuteness and business acumen. In fact most of Thuringowa's Board Members in the first decade were

8 Letter to Colonial Secretary, 6 February 1883, Letterbook, 11 THU/G1.

9 See Table 20.

10 TH, Editorial, 24 March 1888, p.10.

11 TH, 14 January 1888, p.24.

self-made men, part of Townsville's elite.¹² Unrestrained ridicule in the press undoubtedly explained many resignations in Thuringowa's first decade.

Another burden of local government office was distance. In the horse and buggy era, distances were great; a Divisional Board Meeting meant at least two days' absence from home for members like Edward Cunningham and John Carr who represented settlers in the far south-eastern corner. Both resigned for this reason. They had to travel to Townsville either by horse or Cobb & Co. coach via Woodstock Station, Nancarrow's Hotel and the Upper Ross, or by steamer from the landing at the Barrattas. After 1881, 1901 and 1921, the railway made things less irksome - at least for those members living near the lines that respectively reached Charters Towers, Ayr and Ingham. Even so, Council Members paid their own fares, attempts to obtain free passes from the Government failing.¹³ Depending on train timetables, further expenses might be incurred in the form of overnight stays. Not really until the 1960s did the motor car and road improvements finally make the distance factor obsolete.

Thuringowa was opened up piecemeal: from 1880 into the 1920s, Europeans struggled to "tame the land" and

12 Hon. Wm. Aplin (early settler, businessman, grazier), Charles S. Rowe (one of Black's partners and later, merchant), Edward Cunningham (owner/manager, Woodhouse Station), Spencer F. Walker (early settler, merchant, grazier), James Gordon (Police Magistrate), Robert Rollwagon (tinsmith) and Saunders (selector) were in Thuringowa and/or Townsville in the 1860s; Wm. Kirk (merchant and grazier), R.W. Graham (sugar planter), J.C. Von Stieglitz (grazier), John Carr (Manager, Woodstock Station), Patrick Hannon (grazier), Frederick Gordon (timber merchant), Thomas Gleeson (hotel proprietor and grazier), Thomas Lawrence (selector, Upper Ross and Five Head Creek), Joseph Hodel (hotel proprietor, businessman and grazier) were amongst those who arrived in the 1870s and carved out a career.

13 TDB, 12 June 1890; Letter, 22 February 1896, COL/076.

therefore had little time, inclination or money to devote to public affairs. After the first decade, Thuringowa's Councillors were mainly well-established farmers and selectors or members of such families. Indeed, serving the local community through the Shire Council became family traditions for the Marrons, Wordworths, Ryans, Kelsos, Gleesons, Meehans, Hannons and Burdells.

For the most part, however, there was little prestige and power in holding local government office. According to the *Townsville Herald*, "No very great honor [sic] is attached to membership of rural local government".¹⁴ During Thuringowa Shire's years of poverty and stagnation, 1927 to 1961, this was probably all the more so: not one of the 11 elections was fully contested (see Appendix 4).

Of course, this was not always the case. Specific events such as the redistribution of Thuringowa's internal divisional boundaries in 1918 (after Townsville took over the western suburbs) prompted an election that was fully and vigorously contested. A state-wide issue in 1920 - the granting of adult franchise and allowing for women's representation on council - did not provoke widespread interest until the lively 1924 election. It was only the second time that an election was fully contested in Thuringowa. There were 22 candidates for seven seats, including the Chair (see Appendix 4). The fact that only one Division was contested in 1921 had to do with a combination of satisfaction with the sitting members, general approval of the policy and practices of the Council and, for the predominantly rural conservative Thuringowa, a wariness of change. (Of course, the adult franchise and compulsory voting did have some impact in 1921 because an unprecedented 96% voted).¹⁵ Strong

14 TH, 9 February 1889, p.12.

15 See Appendix 4.

parochial concerns manifested themselves in the 1967 and, except for 1973, subsequent elections, for by then the character had begun to change from being a rural to a suburban-rural constituency. This transition, involving the assumption of more urban, local government functions in the late 1960s and 1970s, ensured greater participation on the part of new arrivals eager to take part in burgeoning growth and excitement in Thuringowa's politics. As Jones points out, development provides "interest and glamour which entice participation, but maintenance decisions, in contrast, are technical and dull" and confirm the *status quo*.¹⁶ Elections in 1979, 1982 and 1985 were hotly contested by a more representative cross-section of Thuringowa: women, professionals, Labor, non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic groups and the working class were standing alongside the traditional candidate, the primary producer and business proprietor.

According to Hill, the fact that there were no opposing candidates at election could mean that constituents were content with the incumbent's performances.¹⁷ Jones, Halligan and Gamson agree that non-participation in local government election campaigns may express satisfaction rather than political alienation.¹⁸ There is evidence that this was sometimes the case in Thuringowa. Nine elections were not contested.¹⁹ Voters in Division 3 seemed to have been

16 Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, p.210.

17 Dilys M. Hill, *Participating in Local Affairs* (London, 1979), p.68.

18 Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, p.209; J. Halligan, *Local Democracy in Victoria* (Melbourne, 1980), p.146; and F.W. Gamson, who argues that lack of contestants can mean "high trust", *Power and Discontent* (Homewood, 1968), p.46.

19 This does not include non-contested elections in which all the members had to be appointed. See Appendix 4.

more satisfied with their elected representatives than those in the other divisions: Division 3 was contested 17 times out of 53 elections compared with 25 and 24 times respectively for Divisions 1 and 2.²⁰ Other substantiation comes from examination of the election records of individual councillors. For instance, Daniel Meehan served Division 2 from the 1890s into the 1920s and was opposed on just nine occasions in 25 elections; Colin McAlister, who resigned in 1915 after being on the Council for 22 years, only had to contest his seat at four elections; Joseph Hodel was a Councillor for 29 years and Chairman for 22 of those years; McCloskey served for four consecutive three-year terms and was only challenged on the last of these in 1952; Charles Wordsworth and his son, William, were elected and re-elected Chairman for a total of 31 years from 1930 to 1960 inclusive and were only challenged five times.

Thus the lack of contestants in Thuringowa was attributable to much more than disillusionment with local politics. Purdie's explanation is far too general: it hides important social and political factors that are peculiar to grass roots situations. In Thuringowa's case, distance, the extent to which families had become "settled", a hypocritical press, the limited prestige that attached to local government office were all significant reasons why so few contestants offered themselves for election. There was also widespread satisfaction with many of the incumbents who were repeatedly re-elected to office.

On the other hand, there were undoubtedly many Thuringowa residents who were apathetic about voting in their local government elections. Appendix 4 highlights

20 A Division 4 was created in 1936 then abandoned when Thuringowa lost land to Townsville in 1937 and rezoned in 1970. During that time it was contested on six of seven elections. See Appendix 4.

the percentage of those voting and the differences in voting patterns before and after the introduction of compulsory voting and adult franchise qualifications in 1920.²¹ Not surprisingly, compulsory voting resulted in a larger turn-out of qualified voters: on average 75% voted after 1920 compared with 58% before that year. It has also to be remembered that it was 75% of eligible voters compared with 58% of property owners. The figures suggest that the Conservatives were correct to worry about changes to voting patterns when the adult franchise was legislated: the so-called "nomads; men, which [sic] in legal language, includes women - (laughter) - who have no interests in the community...and have never interested themselves in connection with any matter; who are a drag on the community" were more politically motivated than the owner-landholder who had "a permanent stake" in the Shire.²² The differences between the adult franchise elections of 1927 and 1933 and the 1930 election, which had reverted to a property franchise, support this hypothesis: there was an 11% drop in voter turnout from 1927 to 1930 and an average 16% increase in 1933 in votes cast, except for Division 2 (see Appendix 4). Even though the grazier and business proprietor continued to be elected to office, it would seem that a greater proportion of people from the lower classes voted than did those from the more financially well-off groups.

Although the average voter participation of 75% falls short of the State average of 85%, in the last few elections the turnout was equivalent to the State

21 For a more detailed examination of the relationship of the voting pattern and adult suffrage see previous chapter.

22 These were labels given by the conservatives to those without property in the debate on adult franchise; Speech by Hon. John Appel, a former Home Secretary in the Denham government, during parliamentary debate on the Local Authorities Acts Amendment Bill in 1920, QPD, 1920, pp.346-7.

average, and five percent to 11% higher in the 1967 and 1970 elections.²³ There is a dearth of comparable statistics that would enable a meaningful comparison between Thuringowa and its neighbours, Dalrymple, Hinchinbrook and Ayr Shires.²⁴ For what it is worth, in 1915 and 1918, the only two years with (fairly) complete records for all four Shires, Thuringowa had the second lowest average turnout in 1915 but the highest in 1918.²⁵ However, over the period from 1908 to 1933 when there are reasonably equivalent statistics available, Thuringowa had a satisfactory 74% participation rate compared with Hinchinbrook's low 59% turnout.²⁶ Maybe more people were satisfied with their Councillors in Hinchinbrook or perhaps it was the Italian-Australians'

23 Power, et.al., "Overview of Local Government in Australia", p.32. Compulsory voting in New South Wales averages a 67.5% turnout; The Advisory Council for Intergovernment Relations, *Local Government Franchise, Voting and Electoral Arrangements*, Discussion Paper No.5 (Hobart, 1981), p.9; Jones, *Local Government and the People*, p.204.

24 The Statistics of Queensland only gave local authority figures for four years, 1915-1918, for both the number who voted in each division and the number of voters on the roll in each division, but these were incomplete for Thuringowa and its neighbours. Although they sometimes gave the number of votes cast and the total number of voters on the roll, a valid comparison cannot be made because all divisions were not contested. Wegner's statistics have this main weakness; Hinchinbrook Shire, p.630. Local newspapers rarely gave numbers of eligible voters per division and often neglected to give the number of votes cast.

25 Comparison of Average Percentage Voting

Shire	1915	1918
Thuringowa	64%	73%
Dalrymple	61%	61%
Hinchinbrook	80%	33%
Ayr	74%	not given

Calculated from Statistics of Queensland, 1915 and 1918.

26 Calculated from certain years in Appendix and Wegner, Hinchinbrook Shire, p.630.

aversion to government.²⁷ As far as these years are concerned, greater overt participation in local government was displayed in Thuringowa than in its neighbouring Shires; nor did the Shire suffer in comparison with the rest of the State from the 1970s.

Nevertheless it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, in normal conditions, apathy was widespread among voters in Thuringowa. However to term low voting turnout apathy is simply to attach a label that explains little.

A number of non-voters belonged to what Gibbon has defined as a "spectator political culture":

In a developed stable polity, except in time of crisis, the spectator political culture may be the most prevalent. People are aware of the political system as a whole and of its input and output objectives. They do not however, see themselves as Participants [sic] either because they think there is nothing they could achieve (alienation) or because they see no need to try (apathy).²⁸

The public goods or public choice theory supports voter apathy.²⁹ Rational abstention³⁰ from political

27 See Henderson, *Italians in Hinchinbrook Shire, 1921-1939*, pp.278-280. "Scholars have always recognised the Italian family as the only fundamental institution in the country...In fact, the law, the State and society function only if they do not directly interfere with the family's supreme interests"; L. Barzini, *The Italians* (London, 1965), p.190.

28 D.S. Gibbon, "The Spectator Political Culture", *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, 9 (1971), p.33. Some political scientists argue that this is a rational view of the situation. Anthony Downs popularised the concept of "rational absenteeism" in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York, 1957).

29 See M. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, 1965); Massam, "Spatial Structure of the State: The Local State", pp.50-64; Archer, "Public choice paradigms in political geography", pp.73-90; D.C. Mueller, *Public Choice* (Cambridge, 1979).

30 Anthony Downs popularised this concept in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York, 1957).

activity assumes that individuals will act logically in their own and their family's interests. From the voter turnout figures (Appendix 4), it is clear that there were a number of people who felt powerless, believing that their one vote would not count or change things in Thuringowa. According to the "rational man paradigm",³¹ this was often a legitimate view of the situation. Participation required time, money and energy and therefore had to be of direct relevance to produce dividends to the self-interested voter. The well-informed voter still only had the same voting power as the uninformed. Rational abstention could also be due to voter satisfaction: Thuringowa's range of services for the rate charged was acceptable to the voter who felt little need to participate. There is evidence to show that this was probably the case in most Divisions between 1928 and 1949.³²

The *Townsville Herald* decried the seeming laziness of Thuringowa's ratepayers who willingly relinquished their responsibilities and privileges; the onus was squarely on them to be active in local government and advise the Board of their needs. In this way, the problems exacerbated by distance could be overcome:

The interest and co-operation of ratepayers is mandatory, and those in the less frequented localities will only have themselves to blame if they do not receive the attention expected. Ratepayers so situated must acknowledge that the members of the Board cannot always be peregrinating about the outskirts of the Division. They depend to a very great extent on the information supplied by ratepayers...who should, by vote, by letter and personal interview, make the members thoroughly

31 This is of central concern in the public choice theory; the basic behavioural premise is that "political man is an egoistic, rational, utility maximizer"; Mueller, *Public Choice*, p.1. Also see fn39.

32 See Chapter 13 Revenue.

conversant with their needs.³³

"Spectator alienation" was probably the major reason for the poor response in the polls of 1918 and 1936 to ascertain if particular suburbs should be lost to the Townsville City Council. In 1918 a mere 57.7% eligible ratepayers voted on their future, whilst in 1936 one voter in four did not record an opinion on this issue, even though this neglect exposed him/her to a financial penalty through increased rates.³⁴

The editors of the *Townsville Herald* and *North Queensland Herald* believed that the limited public interest shown in elections was tied both to postal voting and the general anticipation that nominated retiring members would be re-elected.³⁵ However postal voting, which meant conducting the entire poll by post,³⁶ may to the contrary have maximised the polls.³⁷ In 1967 Thuringowa Council decreed that the coming election would be by postal ballot with the express purpose of creating wider voting interest, particularly as the election was scheduled on the Saturday of a long weekend. (In similar elections in the past, many electors had been absent from the Shire on holidays and

33 TH, Editorial, 24 March 1888, p.10.

34 TDB, 16 March 1918, p.7; Letter to the Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, 22 August 1936, 11 THU/140.

35 TH, Editorial, 4 March 1891, p.10. One member for each sub-division retired annually in rotation in a three yearly cycle. See also 24 February 1892, p.10. and NQH, 21 February 1894, p.11.

36 This system was different to what is normally seen as "postal voting" which means a postal provision for voters absent from their electorate on polling day.

37 When MacIntyre Shire Council in New South Wales converted to postal voting, the poll dramatically increased from 11% to 49%. Power, et.al., "Overview of Local Government in Australia", p.33.

had failed to apply for postal votes).³⁸ On this occasion all Divisions and the Chairman's seat were contested, which had not happened since 1924. Voter participation was also unprecedented with 96% and 92% of the electors voting for Chairman and Divisional candidates, respectively.³⁹ The overwhelming response astounded the Shire.⁴⁰ Postal voting in 1967 had created greater grass roots involvement in local government than had been witnessed in Thuringowa for 43 years.

The newspapers' contention that voter absenteeism was due to the belief that the sitting member would be re-elected probably had more validity.⁴¹ As shown in Appendix 4 very few sitting members lost an election.

The lack of interest generally, whether from indifference, alienation or satisfaction, was also no doubt due to the fact that there was no press coverage of Thuringowa electioneering until the 1970s, except when a vocal pressure group such as the Thuringowa Ratepayers' Association, the Haughton River Farmers' League or the Giru and District Progress Association convened public meetings to support a specific nominee for an election. The 1888 election is an example of exceptional circumstances resulting in obvious interest.

38 TDB, 4 April 1967, p.3. There were two other reasons. Firstly, the Councillors anticipated a reduction in the cost of conducting the election and, secondly, they hoped to minimize "the possible incidence of error on the part of election personnel as did occur during the past election".

39 4% either voted informally or abstained from voting for candidates in the Division; Statistics of Queensland, 1967; TDB, 1 May 1967, p.1.

40 TDB, 2 May 1967, p.3.

41 Halligan argues that the low voter turn-out in local government elections in Victoria was due to unopposed councillors and, hence, the high proportion of non-contested elections; *Local Democracy in Victoria*, p.78.

Considerable attention was whipped up by letters to the editor during the February election expressing dissatisfaction with the efforts of Thuringowa Divisional Board Members.⁴² One of the retiring Divisional Board Members, William Healy, officially protested to the Returning Officer that his opponents, Frederick Johnson, William Lennon and Niels Petersen, were ineligible to stand for election as they had rates owing.⁴³ The charge was dismissed by the Board's solicitor, but the parallel press coverage via editorials, rebuttals by Lennon, Johnson and Petersen, and letters to the editor by a far-from-apatetic public elicited

a far greater amount of interest and excitement than have ever previously characterised a similar election in this district...between half-past four [when the counting of postal votes began] and seven o'clock a large crowd lingered in the vicinity of the office anxiously awaiting the result.⁴⁴

Healy and Petersen lost.

Except for the eight that were fully contested, elections in Thuringowa were much more like by-elections in the State and Federal spheres as only a portion of the Boards and Councils were contested.⁴⁵ This was bound to affect the electorate's behaviour and attitudes.

Electioneering by Thuringowa's candidates has been virtually non-existent until recently probably because it was not seen to be necessary: nominees were usually well-

42 TH, 25 February 1888, p.9.

43 It was argued that this precluded their nominating under Section 15 Sub-section 2 of the *Divisional Boards Act of 1887*. TH, 14 January 1888, p.24; 18 February 1888, p.24.

44 TH, Editorial, 25 February 1888, p.11.

45 Until 1920 one member for each Division retired annually in rotation in a three yearly cycle; after 1920, the whole council had to be elected every three years. In Thuringowa, between one and four Divisions often had the requisite number of candidates; see Appendix 4.

known in their respective Divisions. The few exceptions were attempts to focus a spotlight on relatively unknown nominees. For example, the Thuringowa Ratepayers' Association campaigned for their representative, W.H.A. Munro, who contested the ordinary and extra-ordinary elections for Sub-division 1 in 1889.⁴⁶ In 1894 Thomas McCormack, a small businessman, and H.R. Jones, an engineer, of Sub-division 1, set out their electoral promises in letters "to the Ratepayers of the Thuringowa Divisional Board" in the local newspaper.⁴⁷ It was not until the 1970s that electioneering by candidates in Division 4 and particularly for the position of Chairman became standard practice. The contests for Chairman between Brabon and deCourcey in the 1970s were subsequently remembered by people who did not even live in Thuringowa.⁴⁸ The reason was the dramatic increase in the 1970s in Thuringowa's suburban population (in Division 4). Such suburban development meant the presence of a compact group of electors with interests distinctly different from those of other parts of the Shire, which allowed the possibility of urban methods of campaigning - canvassing door-to-door and public meetings - that were hardly practicable in rural areas. As well, most of the electors were newcomers to the Shire to whom the past services and family connections of sitting Councillors meant nothing. Of course television and radio were also of incalculable importance in dispelling Thuringowa's traditional political apathy. It would appear that though the media helped produce the change through its coverage of electioneering activities in news programs, candidates such as Dan Gleeson now took advantage of facilities - campaign advertisements, contentious statements that would win free news coverage

46 TH, 20 July 1889, p.12. Munro was not elected.

47 NQH, 31 January 1894, p.20. Jones was not elected.

48 Interviews with V. Litster and M. Griffiths, 18 June 1984.

and "talk-back" sessions on radio - that had been available for some time in order to canvass the new electors' votes.

Women may not have been so willing to abdicate their democratic rights as men. There was a marked discrepancy between male and female voting patterns which is illustrated by the 1936 referendum on the proposed absorption by Townsville of suburbs in Thuringowa: 85.7% of the women who could vote did so, against only 68.5% of the men.⁴⁹ The reasons are probably linked to the differences in sex roles as the outcome of the referendum was of more direct concern to women. Perhaps the most important issue in the 1936 "secession" referendum was the realistic claim by residents and the Townsville City Council that articulated water and electricity would be connected more quickly by the Townsville City Council.⁵⁰ The Council also promised to upgrade sanitation and roads. The physical quality of life would thereby be enhanced, making the women's daily chores less onerous; the prospect of not having to make innumerable trips up and down steps to cart water from the tank stand for washing, cleaning, washing up and bathing was especially attractive.

Apathy was a feature of participation with respect to candidates willing to stand for election and voter turnout. However, apathy characterised a range of attitudes and practices and not just alienation, laziness or indifference. Rational judgement of the cost-effectiveness of participation, approbation of the encumbrant and satisfaction with the rating and service activities of the Councils were other obvious traits. Hence, apathy should not be seen as negating the

49 Correspondence re Shire Boundaries, Oonoomba and Stuart and Townsville City Council, 27 July 1936, 11 THU/140.

50 See Minutes, 17 April 1936.

participatory value as one of the three justifications for local government; its multi-faceted nature confirms its validity if not its centrality.

Purdie's assertion that non-attendance at council meetings by residents is a measure of disenchantment with local government cannot be proven with respect to Thuringowa, for the Boards and Councils made no provision for public attendance. Weekday meetings prevented attendance by housewives, employees, rural selectors and workers. Even if the meetings had been held in evenings or on weekends, Thuringowa's Shire offices, unlike Townsville's Town Hall, never included a spectator's gallery or area where interested people could sit as observers.⁵¹ Unlike some other Shire Councils, Thuringowa's governing body never promoted the public's attendance at meetings;⁵² rather, it followed the practice of inviting interested ratepayers or lobby groups (sometimes at their own request) to be present at

51 The new Shire Hall contains a visitors' gallery which seats eight to ten spectators in a single row.

52 Neither the newspapers nor Thuringowa's Minute Books mention public attendance at meetings. Thuringowa's Council meetings have never had question time from the public gallery as a feature of their agendas. On the other hand, Pine Rivers Shire, for example, has deliberately attempted to obtain citizen participation by allowing a half hour "public participation session" during its monthly, night meetings that usually attract from 30 to 60 interested, involved electors who sit in the Public Gallery observing and participating with the aid of a paper explaining the meeting's papers (copies of which are placed in the Gallery for perusal). As Tucker states:

[Since 1977] Pine Rivers has evolved, and is still evolving, a style of local government which for openness, accountability and opportunities for citizen participation [that is, democracy in action] is probably without equal anywhere in Queensland.

Tucker, "Queensland", pp.449,450.

particular meetings in order to present their own cases.⁵³ It was, however, a carefully controlled and rarely used process which gave ratepayers only limited access to Council.

Purdie is however correct to the extent that Thuringowa's residents never complained about the policy of *de facto* exclusion and the style of government which it exemplified. It was a conservative affirmation of the *status quo*. People with vested interest in government ruled, and the rest of the population saw nothing unusual in this state of affairs. In time, the scheduling of meetings during the working day became institutionalised; it was accepted as legitimate both by those making the decisions and those subject to them.⁵⁴ In a word, Thuringowans were reared on a tradition of closed government.

A legion of scholars has also argued that interest

53 For instance, in 1916, 1917 and 1918, either the Chairman or Secretary of the Haughton River Farmers' Association attended meetings to discuss the tramway, alienation of land for sale and road works; in 1921 a private citizen, J. Stanbrook, was present to discuss the state of roads and applications for licensed gates at Woodstock; two delegates from the Aitkenvale Progress Association talked to the Council about a trafficable road between Ewan Mining Field (beyond Paluma) and Townsville in 1923; in 1952 Thuringowa Shire Councillors asked the Manager of the Queensland Meat Export Company to explain, personally, matters concerning the Hervey Range Stock Route. Minute Book, 11 October 1916, 14 November 1917, 13 February 1918, 19 January 1921, 17 October 1952, 11 THU/D5 and 11 THU/D6; In letters, 10 January 1923, 11 THU/J19; TDB, 4 August 1959.

54 For a discussion on legitimisation of decision making see D. Edgar, *Introduction to Australian Society: A Sociological Perspective* (Sydney, 1980), pp.92,93.

in local government is topical and intermittent.⁵⁵
 Purdie, for example, expressed this widespread notion
 that only

when some especially controversial topic is
 brought before the council does the general
 public or perhaps some interested local group
 bestir itself and display an interest - usually
 by then a highly critical interest - in the
 activities of the city fathers.⁵⁶

Purdie could be describing Thuringowa: among "especially controversial" topics were secession from Thuringowa (the focus of the next chapter); bridges over the Causeway and Ross River; articulated water during the 1880s, 1890s, and again in the 1970s. These and many other issues led to considerable controversy, overt minority action and widespread interest.

However Purdie and the others tend to undervalue the quieter types of ratepayer participation in local government. Thuringowa's Minute Books and Inwards Correspondence, for example, refer to a constant stream of letters concerning the provision of services. The letters came from all corners of the Shire, and there were only a few prolific complainants. For instance, in 1891, the Council received complaints from 177 residents about a variety of matters whilst in 1910, 102 people wrote or petitioned the Council about the state of the

55 For instance: Purdie, *Local Government in Australia*; Bowman, *Local Government in the Australian States*; Chapman, "Local Authorities and Responsible Government"; I Radbone and R. Robbins, "Australian Local Government and Responsibility"; Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, pp.210,211.

56 Purdie, *Local Government in Australia*, p.3.

roads.⁵⁷ That is, at least 13% and 7% of ratepayers in 1891 and 1910, respectively, demonstrated an overt interest in those of the Divisional Board's activities which directly affected them.

In the first four or so decades complaints and requests of any significance had to be in the form of a petition signed by a number of ratepayers and/or residents. The petition was then presented to the council meeting by one of the Councillors who usually supported his constituents' requests. Petitioners would have had to canvass door-to-door, at the bus stables and probably in Flinders Street (the main street of Townsville) for signatures. This would have roused interest, particularly through over-the-fence neighbourhood gossip.

As ownership of telephones and cars increased so too did the volume of telephone and personal calls to the Shire's Councillors and Council office. Wegner argues that if contact with a council is mainly through the office then "the services of the local authority are no closer to the citizen than many provided by the State and Federal governments: education, mail and tele-

6

	Letters from Individuals		Petitions Numbers		Signatures	
	1890	1910	1890	1910	1890	1910
Roads	48	25	1	6	45	77
Drainage	5					
Pollution	2		1		40	
Bridge			1		23	
Rates	2					
Water	1					
Goats	1					
Footbridge	1					
Repositioning Railway			1		9	
	60	25	4	6	117	77

Inwards Correspondence Book 1891 and InLetters 1910.

communications, and the police". Thus local government cannot claim to be the most democratic form of government.⁵⁸ Of course she misses the point that it is virtually only at the local government level that the citizen will be able not merely to influence but also personally to observe the direct outcome of his or her own democratic exertions.

Ratepayer participation was also evinced in terms of approval of council actions, particularly its works programs. Random examples spanning the century approved the Council's business capabilities, the provision of services and the extent of ratepayers' taxation. One ratepayer believed that equity in the provision of services was also a matter for approving comment in February 1889:

For some time past...the Board's affairs have been managed with shrewdness, a fair amount of business acumen and...with the desire on the part of the members to spend ratepayers' money to the advantage of the division at large.⁵⁹

At public meetings before the Royal Commission on Local Authorities' Boundaries in 1928 and in petitions opposing severance in 1936, ratepayers in the suburbs of Idalia, Fairfield and Stuart stressed "emphatically" that they were satisfied with the works provided in relation to their realistic rating tax of 4d. in the £. Indeed they proclaimed that

the present attention to our works under the Thuringowa Shire Council is far better than what we could expect from the Greater City. As examples, our sanitary system is satisfactory, and is as good, if not more efficient, than the

58 Wegner, Hinchinbrook Shire, Chapter 1.

59 TH, 9 February 1889, p.10; also see TH, 23 December 1888, pp.10,14.

city service.⁶⁰

Though few, public expressions of satisfaction were strong.

District progress associations were minority pressure groups which lobbied their local, state and federal parliamentarians, Chamber of Commerce, Railway Department and other public utilities. Most consistently, however, they lobbied their local authority. At one time or another during Thuringowa's first century, various districts formed a ratepayers' or progress association refusing, as Thuringowa's Council phrased it, to allow "the Council to go to sleep on their needs".⁶¹

Membership of ratepayers' groups was another form of participatory democracy. Thuringowa's first progress association, the Thuringowa Ratepayers' Association (formed in 1888), had long ago expressed the *raison d'être* for such organisations. Residents and freeholders of the Divisional Board's most populous suburbs, Hermit Park and Hyde Park, unanimously agreed that a ratepayer's protection association was necessary to promote their area's welfare and interests, believing that it would be in no way antagonistic to the Divisional Board. "The one should help the other" and work "harmoniously together". The Association would provide "great assistance in pointing out the requirements of the Division and helping the Board in discovering where money most required spending".⁶² This ideal was still strong in 1957 when

60 Letters to Hon. Bruce M.L.A. and J. Nash M.L.A., 15 and 30 March 1928 respectively; J. Dash M.L.A. from Stuart Town Progress Association, 29 February 1928; evidence to Royal Commission on Local Authorities 1928, COL/224, p.994. Thuringowa Shire Council from Idalia and Fairfield Progress Association, 14 July 1936.

61 TDB, ? 1956, Press Clipping Book.

62 TH, 25 August 1888, p.24.

the Chairman, Cr. Wordsworth, and Cr. Kelso represented the Council at the November meeting of the Paluma Development Association.⁶³

On the indicators that we have looked at so far - representation, voting, support or criticism of Council activities - overt participation in local government in Thuringowa was not overly high. Measured by participation in progress associations, however, political involvement and commitment were stronger: no fewer than 19 such associations played a pertinent, interested and active role in Thuringowa's local government.⁶⁴ Many individual constituents, instead of going direct to the Council, channelled their complaints and requests through their local progress association thereby hoping that their representations would have more clout. As well (assuming the numbers who attended inaugural and annual general meetings and who paid membership subscriptions to be a reliable barometer of support), the progress associations had a wider, almost

63 Minutes, 1 November 1957. Another example is the relationship between the Giru and District Progress Association and the Council in 1953. The Secretary, Mrs. A. Mellick, who later became a councillor, wrote appreciatively thanking Wordsworth's Council for advising the Association of the proposed visit by the Health Inspector from the State Health Department; letter, 11 March 1953, General Correspondence Miscellaneous 1946-1961, 11 THU/155 (QSA); hereafter 11 THU/155.

64 These were the Thuringowa Ratepayers' Association, the Thuringowa Ratepayers and Residents Association, the Fairfield and Idalia Progress Association, the Haughton River Farmers' League, the Major Creek Development Association, the Bohle River Progress League, the Rollingstone Progress Association, the Stuart Town Progress Association, the Woodstock Growers' Association, the Ross River-Hervey Range Progress Association, the Kirwan Estate Progress Association, the Mutarnee Settlers Association, the Wilkie Gray Progress Association, the Paluma and District Development Association, the Toomulla and Beechmont Progress Association, the Balgal Progress Association, the Bluewater and District Progress Association which lapsed and became the Toolakea Progress Association, and the Giru and District Progress Association.

popular, appeal. For example, the Thuringowa Ratepayers' Association attracted 50 regular members in 1888.⁶⁵ Although documentation of other associations is thin, none would have matched the Giru and District Progress Association in terms of membership and longevity: in 1950 there were 64 members which accounted for approximately one third of the adults in the district and though the membership fluctuated, the Association maintained a steady level of activity for 25 years.⁶⁶ There was certainly substantial commitment to participatory democracy at the informal community level if not at the more formal level of local government.

Although interest and active involvement may have been strong, it endured typically only for a limited time. Most progress associations came into being as a rule to push a particular barrow and then faded into inactivity. This usually occurred when the number of residences grew to the point of outstripping the provision of local amenities. Interested residents in the 1960s in the then outer suburb of Kirwan, for instance, ardently lobbied to be provided with articulated water and connected to the town electricity supply.⁶⁷ With its major needs met, the Kirwan Progress Association quietly died.⁶⁸ Others were formed to

65 TH, 25 August 1888, p.24.

66 Minutes, Giru and District Progress Association, 1950; TDB, 17 August 1956, Press Clippings and Advertisements, July 1964 -. Interview Mr. H. Guldbransen, 18 May 1979.

67 D. Hannah on behalf Kirwan Estate Progress Association, TDB, 19 November 1966, Press Clippings and Advertisements, July 1964 -.

68 Interview, D.J. Hannah, 29 September 1982. In 1964 the Paluma Progress Association's greatest concern was the palatability of the water supplied from the new weir built by the Council as the aim of the Association was "to make the area an even better place in which to live or spend a holiday"; TDB, 18 April 1964, Press Clippings Book.

protect the quality of life in their suburb.

Contrary to Townsville's experience where associations seem to have come into existence for the express purpose of providing "non-party conservative" backing for particular tickets or "teams" of candidates at election time,⁶⁹ only three associations appeared to have become involved in electioneering in Thuringowa. Thuringowa's Ratepayers' Association held public meetings and ensured that the proceedings were reported in minute detail in the paper in their attempt to obtain the election of their nominee in 1889.⁷⁰ The Giru and District Progress Association successfully fielded candidates in the 1960s and 1970s: Henry Guldbransen, the Association's secretary, was elected for three consecutive terms and when he decided not to stand for a fourth in 1973, Mrs. Mellick, Guldbransen's successor as secretary, was nominated.⁷¹ The Thuringowa Ratepayers and Residents Association, which, though not aligned with any party, contained a number of members who belonged to the Labor Party, and supported the Labor "team" in the 1979 elections, hoping to throw out long established Councillors.

Membership of the progress association was not confined to any particular class. The ordinary citizen

69 For details of the Townsville Citizens Association and the Association of Civic Development see Anne Smith, *Roberts Leu & North: A Centennial History*, Studies in North Queensland History: No.8 (Townsville, 1986), Chapter 5.

70 TH, 19 February 1889, p.12; 20 July 1889, p.12.

71 Henry Guldbransen, a carrier, was elected unopposed in 1964; in 1967 he received 49 more votes than his nearest rival, a canefarmer; in the 1970 elections, although he was 14 votes behind the top poller, a canefarmer, he comfortably beat another canefarmer and a grazier. Giru residents were obviously voting for a representative who was one of them and would, therefore, lobby for their needs more than farmers and graziers.

who felt sufficiently concerned to take some action to improve his or her environment through public participation came from all walks of life. The progress associations in Thuringowa were not aligned with political parties though individual members may have been.⁷²

Buncie ignores the involvement of women in these organisations⁷³ for the obvious reason that participation in the democratic institutions of government was for so long seen as the prerogative of men. In Thuringowa, participation by women did not in fact become significant until after World War II. Nevertheless, women were very active in the Giru and District Progress Association, comprising 23% of the membership in 1950. Mrs. Mellick, who became a Councillor in the 1970s, was secretary. Such a high involvement by women in this sort of political activity is not totally surprising on two counts. Firstly, of the 15 financial, female members, 13 were wives - probably not an unexpected quota in a small, rural community where women, traditionally, had nearly as much involvement as the male in the daily activities of the family farm or business. Secondly, if the 1936 referendum is suggestive (see above), then women were active in political activities that directly affected their family's amenities. Progress associations lobbied for such improvements as curbing and channelling, libraries, potable water, mown footpaths, street lighting, mosquito eradication, parks and recreation facilities.⁷⁴ This essentially "caring" or welfare character of a progress

72 See N. Buncie, *The Liberal Vacuum in Local Government* (Adelaide, 1973), p.5. Some members of the Thuringowa Ratepayers and Residents Association belonged to the Labor Party.

73 Buncie, *The Liberal Vacuum in Local Government*.

74 For example see Minutes, Giru and District Progress Association.

association was seen to be in keeping with women's roles⁷⁵ - vis-a-vis the "hard business" character of the area's sugar cane growers' association from whose executives women were absent.⁷⁶

Progress associations generated "excitement and fun: important motivations for public involvement in politics".⁷⁷ Not bound by the legal restrictions imposed on the local authority, the action groups had more flexibility and, in Thuringowa, attracted more women than were typically found in local government.

In Thuringowa, the accusation of apathy, spectator participation and alienation cannot be denied. These behaviours were particularly evident at elections with respect to the number of possible votes cast and people willing to contest elections. However, the charge is perhaps too sweeping and harsh in terms of the many residents whose critical interest, participation and satisfaction were manifest. As well, in many respects, it was distance from the centre of local government control which inhibited participation.

75 One exemplar of the welfare role is the request that the road to the Giru State Primary School be attended to promptly and the drainage solution be permanent because the road is under water for the wet season and this "offers no inducement to teachers to remain"; letter from Secretary (Mrs. A. Mellick), Giru and District Progress Association to the Council, 11 March 1953, General Correspondence - miscellaneous 1946-61; 11 THU/155.

76 L Henderson, *Italians in the Hinchinbrook Shire, 1921-1939*, Chapters 5,6.

77 Jones, *Local Government and the People*, p.239.

CHAPTER 12

Local Government and Separatism: "The Very Stuff of Democracy"¹

Last century, cries for separation were often heard throughout North Queensland. Dalton describes the phenomenon as "the oldest, most persistent and most widely supported political movement in North Queensland before federation of the Australian colonies".² His usage of the term "separation", which is the most typical, refers to recurrent clamourings made amongst various groups for the creation of a new northern colony quite independent of the rest of Queensland. For a diversity of reasons this interest in colonial autonomy was particularly strong within the Townsville and Thuringowa local government areas. However, within the latter, the term "separation" also connoted a different, but related, sentiment; separatist aspirations which, from time to time, saw districts within Thuringowa proposing separation or secession from Thuringowa's authority. Both separation movements were to some extent outcomes of the demands of local citizens to have their opinions on all kinds of issues heard and counted; it was a desire for greater participation. Moles argues that in general, separation movements, "the chosen political expedient of regionalism, have always been part of a genuine democratic spirit...governed by a deeply-rooted sense of genuine political frustration".³ Morrison, an authority on local government in Queensland, maintains that it is "because of the incompleteness of local

1 Purdie, *Local Government in Australia: Reformation or Regression*, p.25.

2 B.J. Dalton in Doran, *Separatism in Townsville*, Foreword.

3 I. Moles, *A Brief History of the Separatist Movements in North Queensland: A Particular Study in Australian Regionalism*, B.A. Hons. Penultimate Thesis, University of Queensland (1955), pp.i,iv.

authority that separatism has remained".⁴

Separatism is not only an issue in the efficiency debate; it is also an exercise in the participatory value of local government as it illustrates a working towards local autonomy. This was true in North Queensland at the Colonial (later State) level as well as at the local government level. Separatists who argued for participation and justice in the broader framework of Queensland politics could also be, at the same time, anti-separatists bitterly opposing secession as unnecessary in the area of local government. Similarly the Queensland Government argued against a separate northern colony or state while validating identical arguments for secession in local government, through, for example, the numerous redrawings of Thuringowa's boundaries and the creation of more Divisional Boards and Shires since 1879 and 1902 respectively.

Naturally the early secession movements cannot be seen in isolation. As we will see, the reasons for and counter-arguments against separation in Thuringowa were virtually identical to those used by the protagonists for a separate Northern colony and the anti-separatist Queensland government respectively. The demands for the creation of a new northern colony quite independent of the rest of Queensland were particularly vocal in Townsville and Thuringowa.⁵

Among Thuringowa Divisional Board Members there were those whose personal, economic and political interests could be expected to benefit from North Queensland separation. The strength of their commitment is surprising, however, given their bitter antagonism to

4 Morrison, *Local Government in Queensland*, p.2. The previous two chapters examined different aspects of the "incompleteness" of local government.

5 See Chapter 5.

local government separatist moves. Many Members were influential executives of the North Queensland and Townsville Separation Leagues such as Walker, Rowe, Cunningham, Aplin and Kirk, all foundation members of Thuringowa Divisional Board. Later members included Gordon, Rollwagen, Hodel, Lennon, John Lowry and W.H.A. Munro. William Kirk had held office as the first president of the North Queensland Separation League.⁶ The Hon. William Aplin believed North Queensland separation was the only redress to the 1892 cuts in local government endowment.⁷ James Gordon echoed the region's firm belief that only "Territorial Separation" could stop Brisbane's "robbery of the north".⁸ William Lennon, well known for his work with the separation movement, was asked by ratepayers to stand for re-election to Thuringowa Divisional Board in 1888.⁹ Separationist feeling did, in fact, influence voting in both colonial and local elections though there is no evidence in Thuringowa of a candidate's actually losing because of anti-separatist beliefs - as occurred to a sitting Alderman and former Mayor of the Townsville Municipal Council, Mr. Hubert, who lost to an "untried" but pro-separatist candidate.¹⁰

All members of Thuringowa Divisional Board, again and again, were unanimous in their support for North Queensland separation. At a meeting held on 5 May 1886 the Divisional Board carried a motion affirming the desirability of separation.¹¹ In August 1889 a

6 TH, 4 May 1892, p.15; NQH, 8 May 1899, p.14. Lowry was sometimes spelt Lowrie.

7 NQH, 14 October 1892.

8 NQH, 1 June 1892, p.13.

9 TH, 22 December 1888, p.10.

10 TH, 11 February 1888, p.19.

11 Letterbook, p.392, 11 THU/G1.

certified extract from Thuringowa Divisional Board minutes was forwarded to the Townsville Separation League:

this Board heartily approves of the steps being taken to secure separation for North Queensland and firmly believes that proper justice to the North can never be obtained from any Government sitting in Brisbane.¹²

All Thuringowa Board Members took part officially in the procession to make the Separation Carnival of 1890 a success.¹³ Official support was again given to both the North Queensland and Townsville Separation Leagues in 1892.¹⁴ Also in 1892, Joseph Hodel, as Chairman of Thuringowa Divisional Board, in conjunction with the Mayor of Townsville, C.F.A. Sparre, wrote Robert Philp, the area's parliamentary representative, that Thuringowa and Townsville unanimously favoured territorial separation and not Griffith's proposal for provincial decentralisation. If the provincial scheme were forced on the North, the letter continued, it would only be accepted as a step towards separation, not as a final settlement.¹⁵

Other instances of Thuringowa Divisional Board's commitment to separation were its wholehearted support, in attendance and voting, at the 1892 North Queensland Local Authorities' Conference which heard many separationist speeches, proposals and motions;¹⁶ and its appointment of delegates, at ratepayers' expense, to a

12 Minutes, 9 August 1889, Reports Book 1889-1891.

13 Minutes, 9 August 1889, Reports Book 1889-1891.

14 *NQH*, 10 June 1892.

15 *NQH*, 17 August 1892. Philp and the region's other parliamentary representative, W.V. Brown, supported Premier Griffith's compromise. Thuringowa and Townsville separationists felt betrayed; Doran, *Separatism in Townsville*, pp.12,13.

16 *NQH*, 25 May 1892, p.24; 1 June 1892, p.17.

separation conference in Mackay in 1889.¹⁷ The extent of support for North Queensland separation can be gauged by the reaction from the residents of Thuringowa to this unprecedented action. There was not one letter of protest to the local newspapers or to the Board. On all counts, residents appeared to echo the sentiments of one of their fellow settlers who emphasised that "an immediate decision should be pressed for...as North Queensland by an immense majority, has over and over demanded separation".¹⁸

Thuringowa Divisional Board apparently saw no contradiction between its overwhelming support for North Queensland separation and a new state, on the one hand, and its unequivocal stance against most secessionist threats to the integrity of its own borders, on the other. To the Board, Brisbane was over 800 miles from Townsville; by comparison, the distance from Thuringowa's administrative centre to its borders was insignificant. Thus, whilst North Queensland had a case to argue, Thuringowa ratepayers had none. Southern and Central Queensland could operate satisfactorily without North Queensland but Thuringowa Divisional Board, particularly during the depression of the 1890s, would be seriously impaired by the loss of any of its own territory. Members remained selectively blind to the similarities between the two movements. In fact, Thuringowa's Board discussed the idea of sending all details of the 1892-1893 excision of the Haughton River-Mt. Elliott-Woodstock area to Ayr Divisional Board¹⁹ to the London Separation League as an instance of southern mismanagement and injustice. The Board further commented ingenuously:

17 Minutes in *TH*, 16 November 1889, p.10.

18 Letter-to-the-Editor, Joseph Donnel Nelson of Alligator Creek, *TH*, 14 December 1892, p.5.

19 See Appendix 3.

"surely there must be honest men somewhere".²⁰

Others were not so blind. It was noted in the Colonial Secretary's Office that North Queensland separatist views influenced the 1892-1893 Haughton River-Mt. Elliott-Woodstock secession claims, "a somewhat similar movement".²¹ E.W. Haberecht, a Thuringowa ratepayer at Woodstock, pointed out that the rationales for both North Queensland separation and discontented Thuringowa ratepayers were the same: both were aggrieved at the perceived injustice meted out by their central authority who neither understood nor met their needs:

the outside localities [of Thuringowa] are treated in the same way as the Brisbane Ministry treated the North, viz., the Board gets as much as they can and give us as little as possible in return. We are simply looked upon as the milking cow for Townsville and suburbs and the maintenance of an expensive staff.²²

There was of course one important difference between North Queensland separatist claims and those of Thuringowa's various ratepayers. Doran has shown that the separation demands for North Queensland separation were for autonomy, for a new northern state.²³ On the other hand, except in 1884 with regard to the creation of Ayr Divisional Board out of the excision of land between the Haughton and Burdekin Rivers and in 1886 when some residents in the eastern suburbs of Thuringowa wished to form a new board, the local secessionist petitions were not for independence. Rather, the petitioners mainly argued for the transfer from one existing authority to

20 NQH, Christmas Number, 24 December 1892, p.77.

21 Written in red by "H.T." of the Colonial Secretary's Department on telegram sent by Thuringowa Divisional Board to Colonial Secretary, 19 November 1892, COL/076.

22 NQH, 22 February 1892, p.13.

23 Doran, *Separatism in Townsville*, Chapter 2.

another.²⁴

Some separationists used secession as a means of extracting concessions from the Government. Although for many ratepayers this was the result of their lobbying, for others it was used as a threat, a counter to bargain their valued rateable land both with Thuringowa and with the neighbouring Board or Council to which they said they wished to belong.²⁵ They were often conspicuously successful. For example, suburban Thuringowa gained reticulated water, better footpaths, roads, drainage, lighting, sanitation facilities and a recreation park within a decade from the time of their first clamourings for secession from Thuringowa Divisional Board in 1886. Probably a clearer example of this opportunism was the Woodstock-Mt. Elliott-Haughton River area's secession in 1893 and its successful petition to be accepted back after seceding from Ayr Shire Council in 1916.

As Doran contends, imperial resistance, southern opposition, northern disunity and "an inappropriate, misdirected and, hence, unproductive *modus operandi*" were undoubtedly the major reasons for the waning of North Queensland separationist sentiment and for the failure of overt action in the Townsville region in the 1890s.²⁶ Griffith's decentralisation measures were also relevant, and they may have some small correlation with the local government "bargain" victories which achieved either secession or improved amenities for many separation followers throughout Thuringowa and the Townsville area.

Given the extent of popular support for North

24 See Appendix 3.

25 Of course, the parallel possibility should not be overlooked that some North Queensland separationists used secession as a means for extracting concessions from Brisbane.

26 Doran, *Separatism in Townsville*, pp.84,85.

Queensland separatism, it is not surprising that the rhetoric of separation²⁷ and the predisposition to agitate for secession were internalised within Thuringowa local government. Clamourings for secession were incessant; in the 116 years 1879 to 1985, there were 67 secession movements and calls for boundary changes (see Appendix 3). After a period of growing dissatisfaction, each secession movement erupted in vocal and often highly political manoeuvres for separation, shaking numerous voters out of their apathy. The rationale for severance from Thuringowa echoed that of the wider North Queensland movement for separation which was based in Townsville, the physical, social, trading and commercial centre of Thuringowa.

For the protagonists of both movements, a major complaint pertained to distance from the locus of power and neglect resulting from distance. The North Queensland separationists seemed to have a valid claim as Brisbane was 879 miles (1 463 kms) away. Yet distance, as Blainey reminds us, is relative.²⁸ On a map, there appeared to be no significant geographical barrier between Thuringowa's contiguous suburbs of Ross Island (now Railway Estate and South Townsville) and Hermit Park. Yet Ross Island was nearly as effectively isolated from Thuringowa as the distant Lower Burdekin: separated by tidal creeks and saltpans, Ross Island's only access to Thuringowa was through Townsville and then via ferry from Townsville's business sector to that of Ross Island. Hence discontent with the provision of works by Thuringowa (and probably a belief that a bridge over Ross Creek would be more likely under Townsville Municipal control) motivated the petition drawn up by Ross Island ratepayers on 22 March 1882 demanding that their suburbs

27 See Chapter 5 for details.

28 Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History* (Melbourne, 1966).

become part of the Townsville Municipal area.²⁹ Similarly, later that year, 30 Lower Burdekin householders and ratepayers petitioned the Governor of Queensland for severance from Thuringowa and inclusion in some other administration on the basis that distance from Thuringowa's Board chambers and works' depot resulted in neglect and unfair works' expenditure and programs; roads, bridges and other works were "not in a good state for traffic and were wholly neglected".³⁰ The ratepayers of the Haughton River-Mt. Elliott-Woodstock areas in 1892-1893 also alleged neglect as one of their reasons for severance, emotively stating that they were being bled to enrich the suburbs of Townsville.³¹ According to the *Townsville Herald*, the ratepayers in the suburbs of Townsville contributed the greatest proportion of rates, and therefore had

the balance of power, and it is not the nature of things that they will calmly permit their revenue or their credit to be expended in works by which the convenience of but a very small percentage of the whole population of the Division is served; nor do the latter class regard with complacency the large expenditure of revenue in one locality, no matter how reasonable such may appear to be on the basis of population proportion of rates contributed - thus the... hopelessness of any other remedy for the grievances inherent to the present condition of affairs but severance.³²

As North Queensland separatists and Thuringowa secessionists saw it, one of the tyrannies of distance was the abuse of power through the re-appropriation of monies earned in one area to another.

High taxation was blamed for causing secessionist agitation in Thuringowa and North Queensland. In

29 QGG, July-December 1882, p.742; July-December 1883, p.1587. The petition contained 72 names.

30 Letter, 1 December 1882, WOR/N18.

31 Letter, 9 September 1892, COL/076.

32 TH, Editorial, 13 October 1888, p.11.

Thuringowa secessionists demanded the dissolution of the Shire or the transference of their area to another Shire because of dissatisfaction with the rates charged. Cheaper rates in Ayr Division was one of the reasons for the 1892-1893 petition for severance of the Haughton River-Mt. Elliott-Woodstock area. Seventy years later, ratepayers in Division 1 complained of the 66% increase in rates in August 1968; they called for the Minister for Local Government to investigate and disband the Council if necessary. The possible dissolution of the Shire and its division among its local authority neighbours was not dismissed either.³³

The poverty of the Shire in the 1930s and 1940s and its inability to provide adequate services were other reasons for secessionist agitation. In the 1930s two non-ratepayer groups, the Townsville branch of the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ) and the Townsville District Development Association went so far as to call for the total abolition of the Shire. According to the petitioners, Thuringowa Shire Council was in a "state of stagnation" and had virtually "closed down and could not carry on".³⁴ This state of affairs had improved very little by 1950 as far as some Giru residents were concerned. They argued that Thuringowa Shire Council was unable to cope with the needs of their predominantly sugar region on the south-east outskirts of Thuringowa because it was "poor and backward" with "insufficient plant, no competent and highly trained Shire Engineer, no Health Officer, no Medical Officer, no works program and no loan program".³⁵ In common with the wider North

33 TDB, 30 August 1968, 16 May 1969.

34 Petition, Haughton Tramway Ledger Account, 1922-35, 11 THU/135; hereafter 11 THU/135.

35 Honorary Secretary, Giru and District Progress Association to their lawyer L.E.D. Tomlins, Esq., Ayr, 26 June 1950, Correspondence Giru and District Progress Association.

Queensland and other local separationist groups, petitioners usually exaggerated the facts in order to support their arguments, although in this case Thuringowa was poorly serviced: a doctor was employed casually as both medical and health officer, an engineer was called in as consultant in some situations and, even though, there were works and loan programs, they were minimal.

Related to these arguments was the allegation of inadequate representation advanced by both North Queensland separatists and groups of discontented ratepayers in Thuringowa. This was the primary concern of Thuringowa's Lower Burdekin inhabitants in their 1882 petition to the Colonial Governor.³⁶ As Thuringowa's administration centre was in Townsville and as a significant proportion of Townsville's suburbia lay within Thuringowa, some groups regarded the Thuringowa Divisional Board as being too remote from their rural constituents. This was certainly behind the Haughton River-Mt. Elliott-Woodstock area's extremely vocal and political demands for annexation to Ayr Divisional Board in 1892-1893. They looked upon Thuringowa as substantially "a town suburban Division whose members' interests centred on or near Townsville".³⁷ This lack of "community of interest" was also claimed by Giru residents and its Progress Association in their 11 attempts to break away from Thuringowa Shire Council between 1928 and 1985.³⁸

Conversely, the Townsville Municipal Council often assumed that it was more in touch with the needs of suburban Townsville than the rural-suburban Thuringowa could ever be. Supporting the attempt by Kelvin Grove

36 Letter, 1 December 1882, WOR/N18.

37 Letter, 9 September 1892, COL/076.

38 Minutes, Giru and District Progress Association; Appendix 3.

Estate and Hermit Park residents to be annexed to the Municipality in 1888, the editor of the *Townsville Herald* stated unequivocally that

under existing circumstances we can hardly expect the owners of allotments in the suburban estates to coincide with the views of settlers in the vicinity of Mt. Elliott... Beyond being ratepayers to the same Board, these two classes have nothing in common. The suburban ratepayers have, however, strong reasons for the establishment of an alliance with the Municipality, for one and that same character of work is required to be done about their properties as is done in the outskirts of town. Their interests lies more with the town than with the country, and it is apparent that immediate advantages would accrue.³⁹

In 1928 Townsville also argued that it needed the outer suburbs of Oonoomba, Fairfield, Idalia Estate and Stewart Town, as well as the area stretching along Ross River to Five Head Creek, for its future development and water supply.⁴⁰ In 1936, 1958, 1964 and 1967 Townsville successfully extended its boundaries to include suburban land, Magnetic Island and the road to the television stations on Mt. Stuart. In 1902, 1928, 1935, 1938, 1955, 1957, 1960, 1973, 1978 and 1985 the City's attempts to "land grab from Thuringowa"⁴¹ failed. Hence, the suburban-rural nature of Thuringowa and its proximity to the growing port of Townsville constituted a persistent dilemma for the Shire's Councillors who were trying to satisfy all their people all of the time.

The problem of interjurisdictional spillovers was an important factor in calls to redraw Thuringowa's boundary with Townsville. Worries about the duplication of

39 *TH*, Editorial, 13 October 1888, p.11.

40 Evidence by Townsville City Council Aldermen to Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries, 1928, pp.971-976, COL/224.

41 These words were used by the editor of the *TB*, 10 April 1982, p.4, in his call for Townsville to extend its boundaries north and west.

resources by two local authorities whose councils and major work depots existed virtually side-by-side were voiced by some of Thuringowa's suburban constituents in the 1880s and periodically by Townsville City Council and its constituents in 1918 through to 1985. Agitation was most pronounced by the last two groups in the 1980s. Economies of scale was an important issue in Australian business then, with a proliferation of mergers, takeovers and conglomerations occurring. Such macro economic forces prevalent in the Western world affected thinking about local government. State and federal governments, especially in Britain, Canada, Sweden and the United States, thought bigger was better and amalgamations of local authorities proceeded; a review of local government boundaries also occurred in Victoria.⁴² Imbued with the thinking of cost-effectiveness, individuals and groups urged a rationalisation of the boundary between Thuringowa and Townsville in order to stop "the civic wastefulness inherent in the duplication of works, administrations, services and general resources in two areas which are demographically...indistinguishable".⁴³ The editor of the local paper and the Townsville City Council believed the burden lay on Townsville's shoulders for it had to provide the infrastructure for Thuringowa residents without direct compensation.⁴⁴

How Thuringowa as the governing body reacted to these secessionist sentiments often paralleled Brisbane's opposition to North Queensland secession. Both resisted the secessionist movements not only because of the loss of revenue that would be incurred but also on the grounds of past development that each had promoted. This was certainly uppermost in Thuringowa's mind when Townsville wished to move its boundary 10 chains south in early

42 See Chapter 7.

43 Editorial, *TDB* 10 April 1984, p.4.

44 For example, see *TB* 16 February 1985.

1882, a shift calculated to take the boundary line just past the Causeway and the Toll Gate on Flinders Street West; Thuringowa

objected to the proposed extension of the Municipal boundary unless the Municipality compensate to £1 000 for expenditure on the roadwork already incurred and loss of revenue from the collection of tolls.⁴⁵

Similarly, Thuringowa was worried in 1888 when Kelvin Grove Estate and Hermit Park attempted to join Townsville, for such an occurrence would mean the loss of "a wealthy, prosperous, progressive" and hence revenue-rich area.⁴⁶

Thuringowa, like Brisbane, felt that many movements had little basis for discontent; indeed they frequently ignored the positive aspects of past rule. For example, when Lower Burdekin ratepayers alleged that works programs were inadequate in their area in 1882, Thuringowa could boast that it did in fact have a work party for each major area of the Division, including the Lower Burdekin; as well, the Board had, three months previously, endeavoured to ensure that the Lower Burdekin would not suffer from its isolation from Townsville by making funds available for road repair in the area.⁴⁷

Thuringowa also contended that it could not be blamed for the disproportionately low number of representatives coming from isolated areas to serve as Members of the Board. For example, it was difficult to understand the 1882 petition for secession from the Lower Burdekin which mentioned first amongst its complaints,

45 Letterbook March 1880-February 1888, p.150, 11 THU/G1. Thuringowa's Tollgate was situated across Flinders Street West near the present Midtown Hotel and tapped the many travellers to Townsville via the Dalrymple and Georgetown Roads (see Map 4).

46 TH, Editorial, 13 October 1888, p.11.

47 Letter, 12 December 1882, 11 THU/G1.

non-representation on the Board. In 1880 and 1881, this area had in fact been represented by Edward Cunningham of Woodhouse Station, Robert William Graham of Lillirsmere Station, Burdekin, and John Carr of Woodstock Station.⁴⁸

Thuringowa had always been aware of the limitations which distance placed upon wide representation within the Division. As we have seen, nominations from settlers in isolated areas had not been readily forthcoming; consequently the Governor-in-Council had appointed members to the Board from 1881-1885 inclusive.⁴⁹ In an attempt to overcome the problem, the Board had abolished Thuringowa's Sub-divisions in 1881 so that members could be drawn from anywhere within the Division, but this led to persistent complaints of uneven representation and favoured treatment of Members' home areas from those ratepayers who did not have a local representative. Accordingly Sub-divisions were reinstated in 1883, but within a year due to the same problem, Thuringowa was again seeking their abolition - this time unsuccessfully.⁵⁰

Failure to identify with the needs of its far-flung electors was an allegation which Thuringowa Divisional Board also found difficult to comprehend. The charge was laid by residents of the Haughton River-Mt. Elliott-Woodstock area in 1892-1893; the Board could only reply that out of nine Board Members, one was a town member with large interests in the suburbs, and the remaining eight were all country members with predominantly rural

48 Letters, 14, 26 January 1881, WOR/N18.

49 Department of Posts, Works and Mines, 1 March 1882, No.82.457; 31 January 1881, No.81.333; 30 July 1884, No. 84.932; Thuringowa Divisional Board to Minister for Lands, 15 March 1884, No.84.948; WOR/N18.

50 Letter, 15 March 1884, No.84.384, WOR/N18.

interests.⁵¹ Thuringowa's Board was certainly defensive about its ability to embrace its electorate's diversity, but it pointed out to these petitioners the great value of Townsville as a port - something for which they should be grateful and an ample reason for identification with Thuringowa rather than with the inferior facilities of the Ayr Division.⁵² Proximity to Townsville was not totally negative and, whenever they could, Thuringowa's Members certainly used it to their advantage.

The 1892-1893 secession also illustrates the powerful economic interests that were at work in local government decision-making and how coercive they could be. Initially Thuringowa's Divisional Board naively felt that Government in Brisbane was too far removed to be aware of inconsistencies involved in the petition for severance. The Board therefore took particular care to advise Brisbane that though the petition was signed by 28 people, only six of them were residents of the secessionist area. Moreover, when the Board organised a 117 signature petition to counter this move for severance, it was found that three ratepayers had actually signed both.⁵³ The Colonial Government seemed reluctant to acknowledge that the North Australian Pastoral Company was behind the proposal for the separation of this area (Haughton River-Mt. Elliott-Woodstock) from Thuringowa. Thuringowa explained that, even though North Australian Pastoral Company signatures were not actually on the original petition, it was nevertheless at the Company's instigation that "this

51 Thuringowa Divisional Board to Under Colonial Secretary, 21 October 1892, COL/076.

52 Thuringowa Divisional Board pointed out that the main road to Ayr detoured via Clare from December to April - the area's wet season - thus adding 18 miles to the journey.

53 Thuringowa Divisional Board to Colonial Secretary, 7 January 1893, COL/076.

proposed severance has been brought forward". The small land owners around Woodstock were partly dependent on the Company; "not signing would be an interference with their daily labor[sic]".⁵⁴ Brisbane ignored the complaints and the Board had to acknowledge the realities of "big business" manipulation. Self-interest and the misuse of parliamentary power were also alluded to by Thuringowa's Chairman who intimated that Sir Thomas McIlwraith, one of the co-owners of the North Queensland Pastoral Company; was probably influenced by the considerable savings that could eventuate when the area went to the Ayr Divisional Board as that Board had a lower rate than Thuringowa.⁵⁵ More direct evidence came from the Company's Manager, also a Thuringowa Board Member, who advised his fellow Board Members that it would be

a waste of time and expense to petition against the severance as his company had sufficient influence within the Ministry and out of it to get what they wanted.⁵⁶

Thuringowa Divisional Board believed that the whole issue, including the unjust allocation of expenses, had the "appearance of a dun show"; from the beginning the Colonial Secretary's department had intended to allow the severance "come what may".⁵⁷ Wealthy pastoral interests with substantial direct parliamentary influence proved more than a match for the parochial Divisional Board which had to operate through time consuming, bureaucratic, local government procedures.

A number of counterarguments was presented by

54 Thuringowa Divisional Board to Principal Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Office, 28 July 1894, No.94.4070, COL/076.

55 NQR, Christmas Number, 24 December 1892, p.77.

56 Thuringowa Divisional Board to Colonial Secretary, 7 January 1893; to Principal Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Office, 28 July 1894, No.94.4070, COL/076.

57 Thuringowa Divisional Board to Colonial Secretary, 28 July 1894, No.94.4070, COL/076, p.2.

Thuringowa in rebuttal to the duplication of services, interjurisdictional spillover case. They covered aspects of the functions of local government and the efficiency, participatory and liberty values in the theories of the division of government powers and existence, respectively.

One contention supported the neo-Marxist interpretation of the *raison d'être* of Western local government: one of the major functions of local government is to promote capital accumulation by providing favourable conditions for economic stability and growth.⁵⁸ In the 1980s Thuringowa's growth rate at 16.5% per annum was one of the highest in Queensland, but it still experienced difficulties in attracting commerce and industry.⁵⁹ Gleeson "had pushed for Thuringowa to become a city after it [the Council] became aware of the difficulties in promoting a shire as a viable location to set up new industries and as a tourist destination".⁶⁰ The editor of the local paper advocated the move for city status on the basis that it would promote the development of the area, without increased costs to ratepayers.⁶¹ In his support of Gleeson's case, Joh Bjelke Petersen asserted that Townsville "wants the best developing areas of the Shire to cover up their own negative image, which has frightened developers out of Townsville".⁶² For a

58 In Communist or Western societies, the role of the local state is "to advance and protect the mode of production"; thus, in Western societies within the constraints set for it by central government, it has to maintain conditions in which private production and capital accumulation can take place; Johnston, *Geography and the State: An Essay in Political Geography*, p.194. Also see Saunders, *Urban Politics*, pp.147,148,188.

59 Calculated from Statistics of Queensland, 1980-1985; TB 26 December 1985.

60 TB, 2 January 1986.

61 Editorial, TB, 22 November 1985, p.4.

62 TB, 17 August 1985.

National Party Government, the Labor Townsville City Council's advocacy of environmental studies on development permits and its creation of Townsville as a nuclear-free zone, were seen as anti-development. On the other hand, Thuringowa was reliable and therefore worthy of patronage under the conservative Gleeson, whose casting vote approved not only the rezoning of grazing land below the 50 year flood level of the adjacent Bohle River to allow Kern Grazing Pty. Ltd. to develop rural-residential allotments⁶³ but also the political interference by the Minister of Local Government who unilaterally reversed Thuringowa's and Townsville's joint refusal to rezone land for extractive purposes to enable Pioneer Concrete Queensland Pty. Ltd. to extend its quarry.⁶⁴ The crucial role of the state, local and central, in shaping the environment through rezoning and boundary allocations to match the needs of private capital accumulation was more important in the outcomes of the efficiency spillover debate in the 1980s than duplication of resources and quality of life considerations.

In the second counterargument, liberty factors were prominent. One justification given for maintaining the integrity of the current 1980s city-shire boundary was self-preservation. Thuringowa's Council was adamant that the effects of any transference of land to Townsville in the 1980s would parallel those of past amalgamations.⁶⁵ The "annexation of the developed areas of the Shire has had a very detrimental and drastic effect on the residents, and the remainder of the Shire [the rural areas] was denuded of its rate base...[We cannot allow Thuringowa] once again to be bludgeoned to its knees,

63 Minutes in *TDB*, 14 December 1982.

64 *TB*, 15 January 1985.

65 See below for details.

almost into oblivion as in the past".⁶⁶ Excision of the suburbs would mean "the removal of 56% of the Shire's revenue and 60% of its population" which would entail a steep rise in administrative costs and the doubling of rates and charges.⁶⁷ This argument prevailed in the 1896 and 1928 Royal Commissions and did so again with the Government in 1985 when it proclaimed Thuringowa a city. In a somewhat ironic statement given his dictatorial interference in local government matters, Bjelke-Petersen called Townsville's objections and call to abolish the Shire as "nothing more than lust for power at the expense of the rights of people living in Thuringowa Shire".⁶⁸ Self-protection is an exemplar in the fluctuations of the liberty value between local authorities: in these three instances (1896, 1928 and 1985), Thuringowa's liberty to maintain its own identity was protected *vis-a-vis* the right of Townsville to agitate for consideration of boundary changes that would cater for its changing local government needs at the expense of Thuringowa's integrity.

Public-choice theory was utilised in the third counterargument to support "fragmentation" - the proliferation of small authorities - in the efficiency spillover debate. As originally developed by Tiebout (1956), each local authority produces a different bundle of public goods among which voters may choose. Thus the Thuringowa-Townsville case reflected a situation which promotes competition between neighbouring councils that, in turn, produces efficient and sensitive administration

66 Letter-to-the-Editor from Cr. Dan Gleeson, Chairperson, Thuringowa Shire Council, *TB*, 27 June 1985.

67 Statement by Gleeson, *TDB*, 14 April 1982. EARC's 1991 examination of the boundary between Thuringowa and Townsville comprehended the inability of Thuringowa to operate effectively without its lucrative suburban rateable land and recommended its division among its neighbouring local authorities; EARC, pp.304,305.

68 *TB*, 17 August 1985.

and provision of services. Central to the theory is the idea that by having a number of local authorities in a city, householders, commerce and industry can settle in that jurisdiction which provides services closest to its needs.⁶⁹ One ratepayer gave testimony to this theory about her circle of friends and acquaintances: she argued that transference of Thuringowa's residential areas to Townsville would be a "blatant sellout of the people that have left Townsville City Council to live in Thuringowa because they saw the writing on the wall, and wanted no part in the grander plan of socialist expenditure".⁷⁰ Gleeson highlighted the public choice differences between the two local authorities: there was a wider choice of living environments and land costs in the Shire - suburban, rural-residential, mountain and seaside villages, farmlets, farms and grazing properties.⁷¹ Further support for the Tiebout theory was given in the

69 C.M. Tiebout, "A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures". *Journal of Political Economy*, 64, pp.416-424; Taylor, *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality*, p.217; Jones, *Managing Local Government: Leadership for the 21st Century*, pp.28-31, argues that in the late 1980s and 1990s, Tiebout's public-choice theory is "well-tuned to current fashions for deregulation...It promotes diversity...and the use of competition and choice in the public sector".

70 Letter-to-the-Editor from Margaret Srebnaik, *TB*, 14 January 1986. One of the valid criticisms of Tiebolt's theory is that such consumers can effectively disenfranchise the poor by using their voting power to enforce zoning and the delivery of public service goods that advantage their groups. Also the poor have no real choice; they cannot "vote by their feet" because they do not have the resources to move. Additionally, people can use their participatory options to protect the character of their environment even if their action is selfish and discriminatory. For instance, Kirwan residents objected to siting an accommodation unit by the Sub-Normal Children's Welfare Association in their suburb because the 10 adults could "endanger other residents"; *TDB*, 22 July 1978. The home was resited; *TDB*, 16 November 1978. Clark, "Democracy and the Capitalist State: A Critique of the Tiebout Hypothesis", pp.111-128; Archer, "Public Choice Paradigms in Political Geography", p.81.

71 *TDB*, 14, April, 1982; *TB*, 26 December, 1985.

large number of public submissions (for example, S372, S401, S409, S426 and S672) to EARC stating that residents had made "a deliberate decision" to live in Thuringowa City rather than Townsville City because, firstly, they desired a different rural-residential lifestyle and, secondly, they perceived "greater efficiency and responsiveness of Thuringowa City".⁷² Jones argues that if participation and liberty are to have meaning in local government then consumer/voter choice between the philosophies, policies and practices of differing local authorities is integral.⁷³

A fourth reason advanced to counteract the duplication of services argument was that economies of scale had to take account of participatory factors.⁷⁴ It was argued, with some credibility, that "the larger the organisation, the less control residents would have over the bureaucracy".⁷⁵

The fifth justification that was under-utilised by both Thuringowa and Townsville concerned the differential effectiveness of the local authorities in terms of the common measure of efficiency: administrative expenses to rate revenue. Townsville had a smaller ratio of administrative costs to rate revenue than Thuringowa but Thuringowa had a higher and faster growth rate and it was by no means wasteful of its resources. In fact, after an examination of 29 local authorities from Mackay north, Chapter 13 demonstrates that, "in terms of the efficiency debate within the theory of local government existence, Thuringowa's viability as an efficient administration unit was confirmed".

72 EARC, Vol. Two, p.286.

73 Jones, *Managing Local Government: Leadership for the 21st Century*, pp.28-31.

74 See Chapter 7.

75 TB, 18 December 1985.

Proving that the costs of interjurisdictional spillovers were more equitably shared than Townsville's claims of one-sided hardship was the sixth strategy used by Thuringowa. The chapter on roads explores the financial hardships suffered by Thuringowa in its attempts to provide decent highways for the use by Townsvilleans. Firstly, the State Government's refusal before World War Two to designate Thuringowa's roads as highways left the provision wholly to Thuringowa. Secondly, after the War the increasing costs apportioned to the local authority for maintenance of highways became nearly impossible to bear when neighbouring councils were no longer required to contribute to their spillover usage of main roads. Thuringowa's tourist amenities were not on a user-pays system, their initial or maintenance costs were not proportionally reimbursed by Townsville City Councils and nor were such costs seen as balancing the use of Townsville's facilities by Thuringowans. Indeed, EARC placed greater emphasis on Townsville City Council's calculation that the spillover of Thuringowa's use of the city's amenities was \$1.3m.⁷⁶ It did not deduct the costs to Thuringowa of the use of Thuringowa's facilities by Townsville residents. With respect to another spillover case, water reticulation, Thuringowa was the local authority that was the more disadvantaged, not Townsville. Thuringowa paid steep prices, until fairer costs were adjudicated by Brisbane in the late 1970s, for its own water as the two major water sources (Ross River and Mt. Spec) lay in Thuringowa but under Townsville City Council's jurisdiction. Townsville consistently refused to allow Thuringowa's seaside and rural communities to be connected to its Mt. Spec water system although it permitted rural Thuringowa industries to do so. The City's water policy was seen as a deliberate manoeuvre to force a boundary realignment: the City Council "is

76 EARC, p.279.

starving us [of water] so as to get their hands on us".⁷⁷ It was asserted that the Minister of Local Government, the Hon. Russell Hinze, issued a threat: "...if the City Council did not make water available [to Thuringowa] he would look at changing the boundaries", and intimated that it would be in Thuringowa's favour.⁷⁸ The former claim concerning Townsville's water policy could be interpreted as Thuringowa's paranoia though, in this case, understandable given the numerous petitions, successful and unsuccessful, to redraw Thuringowa's boundary with Townsville; the latter, as a National Party attempt, whatever the excuse, to reduce Labor's hold on politics in Townsville at the local, state and federal levels.

Gleeson's wily political stratagem to countermand Townsville's further "rape of Thuringowa" raised many people's ire.⁷⁹ Within six months of Gleeson's initial request to State Government, Thuringowa was proclaimed a city on 1 January 1986. Thuringowa fulfilled the necessary criteria to become a city: its population was greater than 15 000.⁸⁰ Gleeson was viewed as laughably parochial and the decision to proclaim a rural-suburban shire "without a main street [a city]...as defying commonsense".⁸¹ Jokes and political cartoons became commonplace. For instance, a newspaper article advised that "Claytons City" had been rejected as a possible name for North Queensland's newest city.⁸² One cartoon

77 Comment by Cr. Innes, 6 September 1973, Press Cuttings and Advertisements, July 1964 - .

78 TB, 1 March 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985.

79 Letter-to-the-Editor from Cr. Dan Gleeson, Chairperson, Thuringowa Shire Council, TB 27 June 1985.

80 See Local Government Act 1936-1985; TB, 26 December 1985.

81 TB, 9 August 1985, p.5.

82 TB, 16 October 1985, p.13.

Cartoon about New City Status for Thuringowa.



Jokes and cartoons like this one were commonplace when on 1 January 1986, Thuringowa was awarded city status. In this cartoon, the wall represents Thuringowa's desire to create an identity separate from that of Townsville as well as the tensions and divisiveness that existed between the two councils. (Feb, *Townsville Bulletin*, 19 December 1985. p. 2)

depicted a signwriter asking a man pulling a cow out of a waterhole: "I suppose you're finding it difficult to adapt to the hustle and bustle of city life!?"⁸³ (See next page for another typical example). What was ignored was Gleeson's astute exploitation of the National Party Government's increasing manipulation of local government affairs and its paranoia of Labor. The issue also stimulated the most ardent participation among Thuringowa's and Townsville's constituents than any other local government issue.

Thuringowa resisted most secessionist movements but not all. Though always protective of its dignity, Thuringowa sometimes faced severance with commonsense acceptance. The latter stance revealed an understanding of economies of scale. This was certainly the case in 1884. Thuringowa had successfully opposed separation of the northern part of the Lower Burdekin only three years before, but changed its mind in 1884. It now sought separation of all that part of the Division's area between the Haughton and the Burdekin (known as Sub-division 2):

The nearest portion of the Lower Burdekin is distant some 40 or 50 miles from Townsville...the Board sitting in Townsville cannot exercise proper control over our works in that neighbourhood and members if elected will not travel such long distances to attend meetings, but in reality the ratepayers of Sub Division No.2 seemed to take so little interest in the matter that they did not even nominate a member at the last annual election. Further...disputes about roads frequently arise in No.2 Sub Division and Members of the Board cannot decide these disputes in a satisfactory manner owing to the want of knowledge of localities. Under these circumstances the board is of opinion [sic] that the Thuringowa Division should comprise the area of Sub

83 Cartoon by Heb, *Advertiser*, 28 November 1985.

Division 1 only.⁸⁴

The Divisional Board saw nothing ironic in using the same secessionist arguments as its own discontented ratepayers in the Lower Burdekin!

The change in Thuringowa's position on this occasion reflected the Board's growing maturity. With its experience in financial matters and its daily concern with the provision of adequate works programs to all of its far-flung areas, Thuringowa had become more realistically aware of its capabilities. Gone was some of the original zeal that had prompted it to attempt more than it could reasonably accomplish with its restricted resources. This recognition of its limitations was again emphasised in 1885. Ratepayers residing on the outskirts of Thuringowa petitioned to join Thuringowa Divisional Board because of "dissatisfaction with the gross... neglect" by their own local authorities, Dalrymple and Hinchinbrook.⁸⁵ Thuringowa advised the Secretary of Works and Mines that it would "strongly object to being saddled with an additional 200 miles of main road; besides the district was too removed from proper

84 Thuringowa Divisional Board to Minister for Lands, 15 March 1884, No.948, WOR/N18. See also letter to A. Masterton, Pioneer, 14 March 1884, p.278, 11 THU/G1.

85 W. Aplin to Secretary, Works and Mines, 28 March 1885, 18 May 1885, COL/076.

control".⁸⁶ Thuringowa Shire Council gave the same answer to similar petitions in 1956 and 1961. Roads, particularly in the remoter areas of Thuringowa and its neighbouring Shires had not improved to the extent that, if Thuringowa had taken on these new areas, road workers could have travelled to and from the Shire's depot to fix such roads in a day. It would still have entailed camps with road gangs and a cook, as in the olden days.⁸⁷ The increases in expenditure that this would involve, to say nothing of the many other problems associated with it, simply could not be contemplated.

As Appendix 3 reveals, the results of these frequent campaigns for severance from Thuringowa Division varied. Some petitioners were successful, departing from Thuringowa to form their own Division/Shire or to attach themselves to the administrative areas of neighbouring Councils. The northern end of the Lower Burdekin (between the Haughton and the Burdekin) parted company with Thuringowa in 1888 to form the Ayr Divisional Board; the Haughton, Major Creek and Woodstock areas were annexed by Ayr Division in 1893. But Thuringowa's greatest losses were to the Townsville municipal authority. Ross Island was lost in 1883; the most valuable and populous areas, the western suburbs of Townsville (Mundingburra, Rosslea, Aitkenvale, Pimlico,

86 W. Aplin to Secretary, Works and Mines, 28 March 1885, COL/076. One district extended along the Etheridge Road from the top of Hervey's Range to Copperfield River. The petitioners were: John Fulford, Lyndhurst Station; F. Barker, Carpenteria Downs; E.B. Barker, Rosella Plains; C. and T. Collins, Spring Creek; William Lyall for Gill and Lyall, Greenvale; and Francis Gill, Christmas Creek Station. The other district included properties situated in the Haughton Valley, Mingela and Cardington area on the border with Ayr Shire. The petitioners were J. Foot, Cardington; R. and J. Griffiths, Square Post; G. Penna, Mingela; H. Webb, Reid River; M. Murphy and E. Harrington, Haughton Valley. Thuringowa Councillors believed an additional reason for the latter petition was their Shire's lower rates; TDB, 16 September 1961.

87 See Chapter 15, for more details.

Hermit and Hyde Parks and West End Estate), in 1918. In 1937 Oonoomba, Stuart, Fairfield and Idalia Estate became part of "greater Townsville". Thuringowa lost more land to Townsville in 1958, 1964 and 1967. To Thuringowa, Townsville had indeed been aptly named the "octopus" of the North.

The 1918 severance provides an interesting case-study of this overshadowing presence of Townsville, the essential port and service centre for the Shire. The first intimation of a movement for secession came during Thuringowa Shire Council's meeting of 11 July 1917: the Chairman drew attention to a newspaper account of a motion passed by the Townsville City Council advocating the formation of a "Greater Townsville" by incorporating Thuringowa's Sub-division 1. After considerable discussion, Thuringowa Shire Council unanimously carried a motion of protest to the Government adding that "the time was not opportune" and requesting that "a vote of the ratepayers be first taken".⁸⁸ A Committee of five Councillors was appointed by Thuringowa's Council to prepare a full statement of objections for the Home Secretary.⁸⁹ The ratepayers of Division 1 petitioned Thuringowa Shire Council

protesting against the said Sub-Division being taken from the Shire's area and given to Townsville City Council...and asking for a poll to be taken of ratepayers.⁹⁰

The Thuringowa Shire Council promptly sent this petition of support to the Home Secretary. A poll was granted and held on 9 February 1918. Of 1 554 on Thuringowa's roll, 897 voted: 338 for severance, 439 against, and 120 informal. Only 692 out of 2 740 on Townsville's roll

88 Minutes, 11 July 1917, 11 THU/D5.

89 Minutes, 11 September 1917, 11 THU/D5.

90 Minutes, 11 September 1917, 11 THU/D5.

voted with 426 in favour and 266 against.⁹¹ According to Chairman Ireland it had not been a clean fight: the city roll had contained "a large number of married ladies names entered as owners and their husbands as occupiers of dwellings",⁹² but despite its arguments and evidence of possible foul play, Thuringowa lost.⁹³ It also shows the Council's naivety as it is likely that Thuringowa would have eventually lost her western suburbs no matter what the outcome of the poll. The Ryan government in Brisbane had been extending the boundaries of a number of its provincial cities by executive action since 1916.⁹⁴ The process was dubbed the "Greater City Scheme".

Though Thuringowa lost various lands, the reverse sometimes happened too. In 1916 an order-in-council reinstated the Haughton River as its boundary with Ayr, thus returning an area excised in 1893. The Haughton River Farmers Association, a very vocal and active group, lobbied constantly for its area's needs; its influence had been significant in instigating a petition for re-annexation by Thuringowa Shire Council. Apparently the Ayr Shire Council offered no objections to the change; it was probably relieved to be rid of an area distant from Ayr and separated from it by the flood-prone Haughton River.⁹⁵ To 1985, Ayr Shire Council has consistently refused demands by Giru residents to be re-allocated to

91 The voting was close: 764 for and 705 against. Reprint of letter from William Ireland, Chairman, Thuringowa Shire Council to Home Secretary in *TDB*, 16 March 1918, p.7

92 *TDB*, 16 March 1918, p.7.

93 Minutes, 10 April 1918, 11 THU/D5.

94 Tucker, "Queensland", p.382. Ipswich, Toowoomba, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Rockhampton and Charters Towers were also enlarged in this period, 1916-1918. See Chapter 8.

95 Minutes, 10 May 1916, 11 THU/D5.

the Ayr local authority.⁹⁶ Such opportunism by the Haughton River settlers displayed a sophisticated manipulation of their participatory rights in the working politics of local government.

Morrison and Tucker believe that the Queensland parliament was often intimidated by "rampant parochialism".⁹⁷ The contention is probably too strong in regard to Thuringowa, at least until the 1970s. The Thuringowa-Townsville border issue is an apt illustration of "rampant parochialism" only if the local realities of distance and finance, and their effects on effective provision of works, are ignored.

Two Royal Commissions on local authorities in 1896 and 1928 left intact the Thuringowa-Townsville border, thereby permitting the continued existence of a municipal authority containing only part of Townsville alongside a rural shire which governed the remaining suburbs. Needless to say, the Townsville Council appeared quite capable of administering the whole of the town. This anomaly in the Thuringowa-Townsville relationship, highlighted in a letter to the editor, pointed out the duplicity of governing bodies and works programs:

What is badly needed is less dispersion and more concentration of local government...the interests of a port, its town, and districts are interdependent, and a powerful body having charge of all three (i.e. local government, water and road works, and the Harbour Board) would produce better results than a number of small bodies with limited powers.⁹⁸

Any alteration to the Thuringowa-Townsville boundary was probably not considered in 1896 by the Royal Commission

96 With one exception; see Appendix 3.

97 Morrison, *Local Government in Queensland*, p.86; Tucker, "Queensland", pp.380-385.

98 NQR, letter to the Editor, "Local Governments", 15 April 1896, p.29.

and hence by the Colonial Government because those interviewed were more interested in endowment and rates. More significantly, Councillor Hodel, the Chairman of Thuringowa Divisional Board, was also a Commissioner on the Royal Commission; though there is no evidence to suggest that he and the other Commissioners displayed partiality towards Thuringowa, it would have been strange indeed if a Commissioner's own territory had been attacked. More likely the Commission realised that any further change to Thuringowa would have been debilitating so soon after losing a sizeable area to Ayr in 1893. Indeed, if Thuringowa's suburbs were given to Townsville, the territory left to Thuringowa would scarcely have been viable and, in the horse and buggy era, it was highly unlikely that Ayr, Dalrymple and Hinchinbrook Divisional Boards would consent to being burdened with additional distant territory if Thuringowa were abolished and apportioned between them.

The same basic factors of distance, finance and community of interest determined the relevant recommendations of the 1928 Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries. Thuringowa could not stand financially without its suburban areas. It would be ironic to reverse the *status quo* and have Townsville take over Thuringowa and become a municipal/rural Council, and administratively it would be as unwise to do this as to apportion Thuringowa between Townsville, Hinchinbrook, Dalrymple and Ayr.⁹⁹

Researchers can misconstrue the situation and interpret boundary changes as "rampant parochialism" by not accessing all evidence. For instance, Tucker finds it easy to brand Thuringowa as insular in the 1892-1893 secession of the Haughton River-Mt. Elliott-Woodstock area to Ayr Divisional Board because he based his case

⁹⁹ Report of the Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries, 1928, pp.15-20, COL/225; hereafter COL/225.

only on evidence presented at the Royal Commission into Local Government in 1896.¹⁰⁰ To Tucker, the Government was "probably justified" in condoning the original petitioners' (28) request for secession over the counterpetition (117 signatures) instigated by the Thuringowa Divisional Board as the former had "made out a good case"¹⁰¹...[and] the threat of boundary changes... keeps local government in a defensive position".¹⁰² As detailed earlier, Thuringowa's Correspondence and Minutes exposed the major reasons to be parliamentary corruption and economic influence by big business. It was not a case of central Government's global objectivity countering Thuringowa's blinkered provincialism.

The importance of central government in the outcomes of the petitions for secession or boundary changes cannot be overlooked. Brisbane was, of course, the final arbiter. However the central government's view of what was good for local government was not always consistent or objective. Certainly Thuringowa believed that decisions of Colonial, then State, government over local authority affairs were often too partisan or too affected by distance to comprehend local nuances and contingencies fairly. This was certainly the case in 1884, 1892-1893, 1958 and (as far as Thuringowa was concerned) in 1918. Because the effects of the 1892-1893 and 1918 excisions, as well as those of 1937, nearly crippled the Shire, Thuringowa's accusations had some validity. On the other hand, many of the battles to maintain Thuringowa's

100 See Royal Commission into Local Government, *Minutes of Evidence* (Brisbane, 1896), p.53.

101 Tucker, "Queensland Municipal and Shire Histories: In the Context of Crucial Developments in the State's Local Government System", p.76.

102 Tucker used this argument by Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, p.123, to support his contention; Tucker, "Queensland Municipal and Shire Histories: In the Context of Crucial Developments in the State's Local Government System", p.76.

borders, though bitter and even tainted by unfair manipulation of local government legislation, ended successfully - and it was still the same distant government that had made the decisions in both instances.

The 1985 proclamation of city status as an exercise in halting boundary changes provides a clear example of the extent of State Government's arbitrary orchestration of local government affairs. Previous attempts to stifle Labor in Townsville, such as the instigation of a ward system with gerrymandered internal electoral boundaries, were unsuccessful. It was obvious that the ease with which the Shire's application was approved was another attempt to diminish Labor in Townsville and strengthen the "pro-Joh" hold on Thuringowa. As in the 1892-1893 and 1918 boundary re-alignments in which Thuringowa was the loser, participatory democracy was circumscribed, if not a charade. Officially only one month was allowed for objections, although people were already discussing and instigating petitions prior to the insertion of the objection notice in the local paper by the Minister for Local Government.¹⁰³ Statements by Parliamentarians revealed that the Government's decision was a *fait d'accompli*: Hinze, the Minister for Local Government, stated that "State Cabinet would make Thuringowa Shire a city almost immediately after the objection period closed [as] Cabinet was very favourably disposed"; it was Katter's "strong opinion that State Government would give the go-ahead...I cannot see one single reason why the

103 TB, 27 July 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985. Unfortunately, the sources for the following discussion rely on newspapers. The file, the Mayor's File, containing correspondence, petitions, etc., was unable to be located for my consultation. The Minutes, June 1985-January 1986, only contain the motion to approve city status, activities and finance for the "birthday" celebrations.

application should be opposed";¹⁰⁴ McElligot, the local ALP representative, declared that Hinze had told him that "he [Hinze] had not read any of the objections".¹⁰⁵

The Government amended the Local Government Act to allow Thuringowa to continue governing with 13 elected representatives until the next election; a city can only have 11 members plus the mayor. The move to save one Thuringowa Shire Councillor from being sacked was seen as "political chicanery",¹⁰⁶ "legislation by stealth",¹⁰⁷ the Shire whose "tail wags the Queensland dog"¹⁰⁸ and by the editor of the local paper who had supported city status, as "blatant political opportunism or inefficiency on a truly noble scale".¹⁰⁹ It would seem that liberty is held to be an important value by a local authority when its council is being disadvantaged by central government decisions but when it is being advantaged and another disabled, the favoured local authority finds it easy to ignore the worth of the values which justify the existence of local government.

The boundary changes meant a number of things to Thuringowa. Not all were mere changes in physical size or welcome reprieves from the burden of providing services at a distance.

104 Katter belonged to the National Party; *TB*, 17 August 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985.

105 *TB*, 12 September 1985. The Government received 548 objections to city status; of these, 520 were contained on a single petition; others were from the Townsville City Council and the Member for Townsville; *TB*, 11 September 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985.

106 *TB*, 21 November 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985.

107 Statement by Mike Reynolds, Mayor of Townsville, *TB* 22 November 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985.

108 Editorial, *TB*, 22 November 1985, p.4, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985.

109 Editorial, *TB*, 22 November 1985, p.4.

Most excisions proved financially damaging. The rateable value of land depended upon the tenure on which it was held (which, in turn, reflected the use to which it was put), not simply upon its area.¹¹⁰ Consequently, changes in boundaries could bring losses of revenue out of all proportion to the area lost. This would presumably be particularly marked in relation to suburban areas, but would also be true of sugar areas lost to Ayr. Loss of revenue curtailed the Boards' and Councils' ability to meet demands for services, and could not be readily made up by increasing rates unduly since ratepayers were very conscious of the level of rates in adjoining local government areas and reluctant to pay more. The loss of revenue proved a blow in 1888, 1893 and a particularly far-reaching one in 1918.

When Thuringowa lost the Lower Burdekin area in 1888, the estimated capital value of selections, homesteads and pastoral leases, on the one hand, and freehold land, on the other, dropped by £11 200 and £125 840 respectively. Examples of rateable property lost include three hotels (one each at Ayr, Brandon and Clare); at least seven stores and two wharves, numerous houses, cottages and huts; and the three sugar mills with adjoining house, huts, sheds, yards and cultivated land belonging to Young Bros., Drysdale Bros. and the Burdekin Delta Company respectively.¹¹¹ When Thuringowa lost the Haughton River-Mt. Elliott-Woodstock region in 1893, freehold values dropped by approximately £44 000 and selections, homesteads and pastoral leases by £21 680, that is, a drop of 25%, 17% and 19% on land values for Sub-division 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Rates showed an

110 Freehold, occupational licence, pastoral holdings, agricultural farms, perpetual lease selections, settlement farm lease, grazing farms, crown land, reserves and non-useable land, eg. much of Mt. Elliott.

111 Valuation Register of Rateable Properties, 1887, 11 THU/D2.

even greater "shrinkage of 36%".¹¹² This was not the end of it. In 1893 endowment money paid by the government had decreased and would be diminished further as it was subsidised £1 for every £1 the Divisional Board raised in rates. (The endowment decreased each year till it was completely phased out in 1903). To recoup some of its lost revenue, Thuringowa Divisional Board had to increase its rates in 1894 which was tolerated though unpopular. Even so, the Board still had to terminate its permanent overseer.¹¹³

The most dramatic loss in the capital value of land occurred with the 1918 boundary change when Thuringowa lost her populous eastern suburbs to Townsville: with 790 fewer dwellings to be rated, the estimated capital value of freehold land dropped by an enormous £200 000, with an equivalent £4 400 loss in receipts and a £3 000 drop in expenditure. The gain in the estimated capital value of selections and homesteads (£49 000) and pastoral leases (£10 000) with the re-admittance to Thuringowa Shire of the Haughton River-Mt. Elliott-Woodstock area in 1916 did not come near to offsetting the 1918 losses.¹¹⁴ Debilitated by this significant loss in the rateable income of 1918, Thuringowa had to dismiss staff and sell plant made redundant by the severance.¹¹⁵

112 Statistics of Queensland, 1888, 1893 and 1894; *NQR*, 14 February 1894, p.20.

113 *NQR*, 14 February 1894, p.20.

114 Statistics of Queensland, 1915-1920 inclusive.

115 Its overseer and junior clerk typist were given one month's notice from April 1918 whilst, at the request of Townsville's Mayor, the workers on the approaches to Ross River Bridge were dispensed with. So incensed was Thuringowa that it also seriously considered moving its office from the Causeway to Stewart Town; the Committee (Councillors Ireland, Spotswood and Meehan) appointed to inspect the site reported unfavourably. Thuringowa's administrative centre remained in the Causeway office outside Thuringowa's boundaries until 1980. Minutes, 24 April, 21 May, 16 July 1918, 11 THU/D5.

Losing its prosperous suburban area meant that Thuringowa became "a very poor shire"¹¹⁶ comprising as it did the meat and sugar working-class suburbs of Oonoomba, Fairfield, Idalia Estate and Stewart Town and, except for the wealthier sugar lands to the south and north, "generally poor grazing country as the area and meagre rateable value indicated".¹¹⁷ Indeed, after examining all local authorities in Queensland, the 1928 Royal Commission made special mention of Thuringowa's poverty and unlikely prospects of improvement.¹¹⁸ Thuringowa Shire Councillors and ratepayers were firmly convinced that an increase in rates was out of the question as it would compel seasonal workers and graziers to abandon their rented premises or holdings where they were struggling to make a livelihood. As a consequence it

has not had much money at its credit...and is too poor to provide proper (road) plant. It has a horse plant only. Thus...the poverty of the Shire of Thuringowa restrain them from giving any aid or assistance to the Main Roads Commission to provide good roads...suitable for the motor car.¹¹⁹

Not only were Thuringowa's Councils faced with an uphill financial battle, but Thuringowa residents left within its narrowing boundaries also suffered the consequences of partisan, grass-roots democracy. Utilisation of the participatory value sometimes curtailed the liberty value.

116 Evidence to Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries 1928, p.1194, COL/224.

117 Report of the Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries 1928, p.207, COL/225. In 1927 and 1928 the estimated capital value of land was £286 875 and £287 468 respectively, Reports for 1927 and 1928, 11 THU/132.

118 Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries, 1928, COL/224.

119 Evidence to Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries 1928, pp.989-991,994,1194, COL/224.

The loss of its valuable suburban land in 1918 was compounded by the depressed cattle industry and the Great Depression. Thuringowa became more and more conservative and "unprogressive" in its works programs until the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ) and the Townsville and District Development Association demanded the total abolition of the Shire in 1935. Thuringowa, it was alleged, was "holding up the progress of the City of Townsville" by refusing to aid the Main Roads Commission in upgrading Townsville's main arterial roads, using the constant litany that they "had no funds available".¹²⁰ Although Townsville had taken land from Thuringowa, resulting in financial hardship, it was Thuringowa which was now being blamed for the consequences of the State's decision to create a "Greater Townsville"! Nevertheless, in a poll taken in August 1936, 233 or two-thirds of the eligible residents between Ross River and Stewart's Creek who voted did so in favour of severance from the Shire whilst 142 voted against it. Although the Shire Council reduced its rate in a bid to win constituent support, it offered no public objections to the excision providing satisfactory financial arrangements were made in its favour.¹²¹ The freehold capital value of Thuringowa land dropped by £15 765, and both receipts and expenditure by nearly £4 000 each.¹²² The situation was so bad that the Council advised its road ganger that he was not to repair the road over the railway crossing at the Bohle even if it were in "bad condition" as there was no finance available; the repairs would have cost

120 Evidence from a deputation representing the RACQ and the Townsville and District Development Association to the Minister for Transport on his visit to Townsville, 9 March 1935, pp.1,2, 11 THU/135.

121 Thuringowa Shire Council to Department of Health and Home Affairs, 27 July 1936, 11 THU/144. This area between Ross River and Stewart's Creek was annexed by Townsville City Council on 31 December 1936.

122 Statistics of Queensland, 1936-1938.

£1/5/0!¹²³ The loss of the suburbs of Oonoomba, Stuart and Fairfield in 1936 ensured that Thuringowa remained financially poor.

The situation did not improve by the 1940s. There is some poignancy in the Council's offer of its truck for World War II defence works as the Council "had not operated its vehicle (Chevrolet Truck, Q244-660) for some time because it was unable to afford to do so".¹²⁴ Thuringowa's financial state was again a matter for politicians and government in 1946 when Tom Aikens, MLA and Deputy Major of Townsville, requested that the Minister responsible for local government investigate the Council's lax and inadequately funded works programs:

where a shire fails to face up to it's [sic] civic responsibilities, then I contend that it is the duty of the Government to assist it to do so. I have written to the Thuringowa Shire on the matter but frankly I am doubtful of anything concrete being done, not that the Councillors individually might be unsympathetic, but simply because of the chronically impecunious state of their finances.¹²⁵

In 1955 the Council had difficulty in securing a loan for a new grader: the Commonwealth Trading Bank and the National Mutual Life Association of Australia Ltd. were not prepared to grant a £6 000 debenture loan.¹²⁶ The culminating effect was the feeling within the Council chambers in 1956 that Thuringowa Shire was "doomed"; though it was not the Councillors' wish to have "the

123 Shire Clerk to L.H. Vesterman, Ganger, 2 May 1937, General Correspondence, October 1932 - March 1944, 11 THU/J33.

124 Shire Clerk to Queensland Government Producer Gas Committee, 20 September 1942, General Correspondence, October 1932 - March 1944, 11 THU/J21.

125 Letter from T. Aikens, MLA, 21 February 1946, No.09101, EDU/Z1037; his underlining.

126 TDB, 14 March 1956; Minutes, 14 October 1955, Press Clippings Book, 1955-1964. Eventually the State Government Insurance Office guaranteed the loan.

Shire area split up", there was "a distinct possibility" that the area would be transferred to other authorities.¹²⁷

Economies of scale in the provision of services meant that there was a minimum level of revenue which justified, or even made possible, a Shire, and that the accumulative losses Thuringowa suffered from the 1888, 1893, 1918 and 1937 excisions reduced its revenue close to that critical level. Thuringowa's various Councils faced increasing financial hardships and low morale by acknowledging the democratic right of secession in local government. Brisbane was perhaps very wise to protect the economic wellbeing of the rest of the colony by not allowing North Queensland separation in the 1880s and 1890s.

In local government territorial campaigns can be seen the clearest examples of political involvement by Thuringowa citizens - campaigns in which many citizens showed they were interested in local government, and were prepared to influence its structure and the nature of its responsibilities. "The right of groups of disaffected citizens to secede from their local authority is one of the most important single rights in local government".¹²⁸ Thuringowa residents utilised their democratic rights with sophistication. There were 67 campaigns for or against secession from Thuringowa. Participation - grass roots democracy - was healthy in this area of local (and colonial) politics.

Involvement in local government has been the focus of the last three chapters. It is appropriate that attention is now turned to the performance of those who

127 Minutes in TDB, 24 March 1956, Press Clippings Book, 1955-1964.

128 Jones, *Local Government and the People*, p.123.

were elected to office. Revenue was the bane of life for the various Boards and Councils. Fluctuations in its availability was one of the major factors determining the potential efficiency of their works programs. Hence, it now warrants close examination.

CHAPTER 13

Revenue

For much the greater part of its first 100 years, the Shire operated under severe financial constraints. The only periods of which this is not true are the 1880s, a false dawn, and from the 1970s which really does seem to mark the beginning of a new era. This was attributable to a particular Council's timidity or misjudgment in regard to striking the rate or raising a loan. In many cases, though, the reasons were outside its control: the general, low rateable value of land and repeated boundary changes which often excised the most highly rateable areas in the Shire were vital factors. So, too, were the limitations placed on local government finance by State government. Local government was expected to assume a wide range of responsibilities from an inflexible financial base which comprised rates, loans, charges and government assistance in various forms.¹ An examination of the nature of each of these sources of revenue and the extent to which each contributed to Thuringowa's finances will show the narrow and rigid financial basis on which Councils had to mould their works programs. In addition, such an analysis allows further insights into one local authority's idiosyncratic interpretations and implementations of local government legislation. It therefore examines the philosophies, priorities and practices of Thuringowa's various Councils in their endeavours to gain revenue.

In doing so, this chapter tests the worth of the

1 See C.P. Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, for a description of each of these since 1859, pp.31-75. Jensen argues that the State Government has shown scant interest "in strengthening local government financially, and has in fact resisted attempts to reduce the financial dependence and subservience of local government to the state", "Local Government in Queensland: A Need for Re-orientation", p.24.

theory of rural-urban local government. It explores how elements of the theory of the division of powers influenced the inputs, conversion and outputs process in the systems analysis paradigm. Within the former theory, significant emphasis is given to its areal-spatial-time dimensions, the sharing-exclusivity division of responsibility for the function of revenue raising and the impact of non-local economic forces. With respect to the latter theory of action, the validity of the instrumentalist and pluralist theories is examined. In the final analysis, it is on its application that the Thuringowan model must be evaluated.

Rates, the "central feature" of local government finance,² were "essentially a tax on land, which underlies the philosophy that local government is local money spent on local works".³ Until the *Valuations Act* of 1890, rates were based on the improved value of land which was differentially assessed according to its classification: freehold, conditional purchase, lease or pastoral; Crown and government land, mines and land for religious, educational and charitable purposes were exempt from local government taxation. Thuringowa Divisional Board and other local authorities argued that the tax on improved land would either penalise those trying to improve properties or retard progress.⁴ Such criticism resulted in a re-organisation of the valuation system in the Acts of 1887 and 1890. The new principle of calculating the rate on the unimproved capital value of land has continued to this day. Property was classified as either town and suburban or country land, the latter further sub-classified as grazing or

2 Laverty, "Historical Survey", p.98.

3 Wegner, Hinchinbrook Shire, p.47.

4 Thuringowa Divisional Board to Under-Secretary Public Works, 11 April 1884, 11 THU/G1; *Queenslander*, 17 January 1880.

agricultural.⁵ The land was then differentially valued according to the classification. For instance, in 1942 the valuation of Thuringowa's grazing land varied from 2/6 per acre to £1 per acre whilst land suitable for dairying or farming was valued between £1 and £2 per acre.⁶ The value placed on a local authority's land was decisive in the revenue gained from general rating.

Every local authority was required to appoint a valuer to make periodic valuations, which had to be within a prescribed minimum and maximum limit. These became triennial under the 1890 *Valuation and Rating Act*, extended to five years by the 1936 *Local Government Act*. As there was a wide variation in the valuation rate between different shires, many ratepayers and councils demanded uniform valuations.⁷ Thuringowa does not appear to have been one of these. Dissatisfaction with the valuations seems to have been minimal in Thuringowa, as there were only three to twenty yearly objections by ratepayers and no complaints by the Council to the valuer's figures.⁸ The one major exception seems to have been in 1968 when the local ALP member for Townsville North queried the inconsistent valuations in Thuringowa. A full enquiry took place one month later and revealed

5 Town and suburban land was "assessed on the principle of annual value - two-thirds of the estimated annual rent in the case of occupied land" and eight per cent to 10% of the "fair capital value of unimproved or unoccupied land...The capital value of country land was estimated at the fair average value of unimproved land of the same quality in the neighbourhood", Laverty, "Historical Survey", pp.81,82,84.

6 Letter to Fitzroy Shire Clerk, 29 August 1942, General Correspondence, 11 THU/J20. Ratepayers could appeal against the valuation of their property.

7 *Queenslander*, 13 April 1903, p.855.

8 Minutes, 1880-1944.

"no impriority".⁹ The Labor Party tried to introduce standard valuations from 1916 and finally succeeded in 1947 when the Government established a central valuating authority for local government rating¹⁰ but, hampered by the size of the task, Thuringowa was directed until the mid 1960s to appoint its own valuer.

The following Table (for selected years) shows substantial variation in the classification of Thuringowa's land. It is difficult to believe that land was transferred from one category to another as capriciously and as rapidly as these figures seem to indicate happened. The figures could be incorrect as the compiler - usually the clerk - may have haphazardly filled in Thuringowa's annual statistical returns. This probably occurred in 1888 as it seems highly unlikely that the valuer did not know how to classify property worth £76 000, particularly in the year that a more exact valuation would have been undertaken for the purpose of the creation of Ayr Divisional Board.

The changes in the various categories for 1883, 1884 and 1885 are particularly exemplary. There were no boundary changes to account for the fluctuations during these years; nor were the rates increased by dropping the freehold value and raising that of "Selections and Homesteads" in 1884. In fact the small rate revenue increase of £130 merely reflected the general overall expansion in land values from £229 490 in 1883 to £306 940 in 1884. However, rates increased dramatically by £2 100 with the reversion to a truer reflection of residential freehold title within the Division in 1885.

9 TDB, 25 September 1968, 16 October 1968, 12 December 1968, Press Clippings and Advertisements, July 1964 -.

10 The 1928 Royal commission had recommended this measure. The authority was set up in 1944 but because of World War II, it did not begin valuations until 1947. See Chapter 8.

TABLE 7
Selected Land Values and Classification¹¹

Year	Freehold	Selection and Homestead	Lands leased Pastoral Purposes	Other	Total
1883	£134 300	£ 65 070	£ 30 120	£ -	£229 490
1884	118 340	169 610	14 360	4 630	306 940
1885	256 590	91 740	16 380	-	364 710
1888	320 040	23 250	2 770	76 440	422 500
1890	298 490	119 720	-	-	417 210
1895	247 805	93 191	8 127	-	349 123
1901	184 210	121 950	-	-	306 160
1902	184 210	120 220	1 730	-	306 160
1910	227 277	27 902	-	5	255 184

Freehold dwellings had increased by 130 over the two years 1883-1885.¹²

By 1890 the valuer had decided that most of the land categorised as "Other", together with "Lands Leased for Pastoral Purposes" and approximately £16 000 of previously classified "Freehold" property, should now be categorised as "Selections and Homesteads". In 1902, land with a capital value of £1 730 was taken from "Selections and Homesteads" and reclassified as "Lands Leased for Pastoral Purposes". By 1910, however, the latter category was again unused and much of the "Selections and Homesteads" land was now thought to be "Freehold". Yet the Statistics of Queensland show that

11 Statistics of Queensland 1883 to 1910.

12 Statistics of Queensland, 1883-1885. The land records do not show any significant change in land tenure title.

though the number of ratepayers in Thuringowa had increased by 170, the number of freehold dwellings had decreased. The figures show a sudden drop of 300 from 1909 to 1910 in the number of dwellings.¹³ As this seems exorbitant, it is likely that the figures are incorrect. As there was a census approaching in 1911, the Shire might have been more careful in its estimates so as to avoid a huge discrepancy with the statistics compiled by the census. Such changes in valuations meant that the various Boards and Councils could not predict with any accuracy the coming year's rates and, hence, income and expenditure. This resulted in yearly rather than long term planning.

The following Table gives the total capital valuations of land for most years. Because of the relationship between land valuation and rates, an examination of these yearly valuations gives a realistic picture of the Council's financial status and provides a simple guide to when the Shire should have been financially sound. Naturally, loans, arrears, bank balances, assets, liabilities, expenditure, subsidies and the actual rate struck would need to be taken into account for an accurate assessment.

Six points can be made. Firstly, the valuations for the first two decades and the last decade and a half were high, reflecting the substantial growths in valuable, urban freehold land. Even with two land excisions in the first decade, land values quadrupled. The eight-fold increase in seven years, 1970-1977, reflected an increase in land values determined by the Valuer-General, extensive conversion of land to residential use - the suburban population increased from 306 in 1971 to 10 000

13 Statistics of Queensland, 1901 - 1911.

TABLE 8
Capital Value of Land in Thuringowa¹⁴

Year	Value	Year	Value	Year	Value
1880	£	1916#	373 140	1952	139 461
1881*	130 470	1917	373 748	1953	139 975
1882	142 980	1918*	236 967	1954	139 975
1883	229 490	1919	238 116	1955	128 794
1884	349 203	1920	240 557	1956	277 856
1885	349 123	1921	237 375	1957	271 927
1886	443 210	1922	252 308	1958*	272 928
1887	559 540	1923	263 968	1959	272 928
1888*	422 500	1924	235 035	1960	285 928
1889	411 900	1925	281 195	1961	282 110
1890	417 210	1926	282 367	1962	285 270
1891	497 716	1927	286 875	1963	314 849
1892	471 394	1928	287 468	1964*	682 837
1893*	350 779	1929	289 234	1965	682 837
1894	349 203	1930	287 146		\$
1895	349 123	1931	289 014	1966	1 380 956
1896	443 210	1932	221 221	1967	1 575 749
1897	425 234	1933	149 924	1968	1 576 000
1898	316 476	1934	148 904	1969	1 576 000
1899	311 477	1935	150 316	1970	6 592 000
1900	314 422	1936	155 201	1971	7 213 000
1901	306 160	1937*	155 201	1972	8 133 000
1902	306 999	1938	137 658	1973	8 849 000
1903	308 000	1939	138 611	1974	9 319 000
1904	311 000	1940	138 167	1975	10 104 000
1905	279 334	1941	137 714	1976	11 062 000
1906	274 502	1942	136 891	1977	49 603 010
1907	269 910	1943	137 689	1978	58 266 000
1908	273 184	1944	137 350	1979	58 267 000
1909	266 096	1945	137 873	1980	58 153 000
1910	255 184	1946	138 133	1981	59 710 000
1911	254 270	1947	138 478	1982	-
1912	306 999	1948	138 126	1983	94 099 000
1913	276 583	1949	137 589	1984	96 928 000
1914	277 573	1950	140 353	1985	100 576 000
1915	296 343	1951	138 862		

* Land excisions

Woodstock-Mt. Elliott-Haughton area returned to Thuringowa.

14 WOR/N18; Statistics of Queensland; Censuses; Minutes; Local Authority Areas Statistical Summary, Queensland.

in 1977¹⁵ - and inflation. It was not surprising that particularly vigorous works programs were implemented in these decades.

Secondly, the huge increase in the valuation of land classified as "Other than Urban" accounted for most of the fourfold increase in the total capital value of land between 1969 and 1970. Rural land values were increased but the main increment came from land now used for industrial purposes, such as the Yabulu Nickel plant.

Thirdly, the decrease between 1898 and 1912 from £316 476 to £238 283, a total overall loss of nearly £78 000, covers a period at least a third of which would have been affected by the 1890s Depression followed by the tick plague and the worst of all droughts¹⁶. There was a steady collapse in Thuringowa's agricultural enterprises, too.¹⁷ These factors would have produced a fall in the market value of land, which was reflected in the capital value. It may have taken until 1905 when there was a sizeable £80 000 drop in the valuation of "Selections and Homesteads" for the full effects to be felt.

Fourthly, it is evident that there was no change in the basis of valuation over long periods - 1918 to 1932 and 1938 to 1954, for example. On the other hand, quantum jumps like 1955-1956, 1963-1964 and 1976-1977 were accounted for mainly by new valuations. The population increases were nil, 10 and 1 000 respectively. Of course, inflation and an increase in the freehold conversion of rural land were also factors in the 1976-1977 five-fold increase.

15 Census, 1971 and 1976; Statistics of Queensland, 1970-1979.

16 See Chapter 2.

17 See Chapter 3.

Fifthly, capital values during the 45 year period, 1918 to 1963, when there was neither industrial nor suburban development of significance, underlines the low value of rural land in Thuringowa and its limited potential as a basis for revenue.¹⁸ The Great Depression and the continuing effects of the 1921 crash in the beef industry¹⁹ were reflected in the sharp drop from 1932 to 1933. But the facts that values did not climb back to the 1918 figure until 1956, following sustained high inflation in the early 1950s, that they did so by one convulsive leap in 1956, and that there was no significant change at all from 1938 to 1954 demonstrate that some kind of standard formula was being followed, that is, that capital value certainly was nowhere near current market value.

Sixthly, independently of any external factors, it does seem that from 1898 until the 1960s the Boards and Councils held a view of local government that valued a diminished tax burden on ratepayers.²⁰ Although it was illegal to increase valuations in order to increase revenue or to decrease valuations so that the burden on ratepayers would be less, there does seem to have been a conscious decision to determine land values within the lower limits set by legislation. Well into the 1950s,²¹ Thuringowa's valuers were appointed by the Councils

18 For representative comments see Report of the Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries 1928, p.20, COL/225.

19 Beef prices did not pick up until 1939. Transcript of Hearing into Applications for Financial Assistance by the Northern Regional Organisation Commonwealth Grants Commission, 1974, pp.25,33.

20 The Wordsworths served from 1930 to 1960, but the relevant period here, is from World War II to 1954.

21 Even though the Valuer-General's department was instigated in 1944, the Department could not cope with valuing every property in Queensland at once, hence, some local authorities were instructed to appoint their own valuer.

because they were cognisant of the Councils' philosophies: as long as the basic, major necessities of local government were provided, consideration should be given to the taxpayer who was struggling to earn a living and make a profit. Linked with this altruistic aim was a more self protective objective: most of the Councillors had cattle or sugar interests; the others were self employed businessmen.²² Though comparatively well-off, they, too, did not welcome heavier taxation. During Depressions and other economic crises, this was justifiable as merely recognising that the incomes of ratepayers (and therefore their ability to pay) had been drastically reduced. However, with increases in suburban freehold to 1918 (Table 8) as well as the upturn in the cattle and sugar industries caused by World War II and the 1950s boom,²³ the practice was less defensible.

Certain lands under the 1890 and subsequent Acts were exempt from rating, particularly Commonwealth and State Government properties.²⁴ By 1977, the Council was unable to rate land valued at \$4 222 780.²⁵ Like other local authorities, Thuringowa was prevented from obtaining its maximum revenue because of rating exemptions.

Valuing the various categories of land was obviously

22 See Chapters 10.

23 See Chapters 2 and 4.

24 Land exempt from rates included Crown and government land, mines, commons, lands not exceeding 50 acres in area used exclusively for public worship and education, orphanages, mechanic's institutes, school of arts, technical schools, libraries and cemeteries. By the early 1980s, there were at least 10 000 government properties in the six states with a valuation of over \$2 000 million that were exempt. Lavery, "Historical Survey", p.77.

25 Thuringowa Shire Council, *Thuringowa*. Brochure (Townsville, 1977), n.p.

the first step in obtaining revenue and the value that Thuringowa's valuer or the Valuer General placed on these categories crucial to the net result. The next step was to strike a rate calculated on the valuations. Clearly, the amount received from general rates depended on the rate struck. Government set the minimum and maximum rate that local authorities could charge ratepayers. The maximum rate was 1/- in the £ until the *Valuation and Rating Act* of 1890. The new valuation scheme calculated on the unimproved capital value of land stipulated a General Rate between 1/2d. and 1½d. in the £.²⁶ Though this new rating scheme should have net the same or more receipts compared with the old valuation Act, the effect on Thuringowa's receipts was noticeable and inexplicably the reverse: receipts dropped by £1 516 even though the number of rateable dwellings had increased by 20.²⁷ The minimum and maximum rates were periodically increased by Government in an attempt to keep pace with inflation. Thus 2½d., 1½d. and 1d. in the £ for Divisions 1, 2 and 3 respectively in 1910 grew to 4d., 3d. and 4½d. in 1926 and by 1941 to 7½d., 8d. and 8d (see following Table).²⁸ Although Parliament abolished rate ceilings after World War II, local government finance benefited little. In the first place, since rates have been calculated on the basis of the unimproved capital value of land, which has always been below market value, it has been impossible for rates to keep abreast of inflation. In the second place, revenue from the general rate has not been able to

26 See Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, pp.31-38 for details of the Valuation Act.

27 There appears to be no mistake in the figures as receipts kept falling even before the 1893 excision.

28 Minutes, 1910, 1921; 1941 Thuringowa Auditor's Report, Auditor General's Department, Local Auditors' Reports 1926-1955, AUD/S41; hereafter AUD/S1-S334. Although these were neither the maximum nor minimum rates, the increases still reflect the effects of inflation.

TABLE 9
Rates in the £/\$²⁹

Year	Division			Year	Division			Year	Division		
	1	2	3		1	2	3		1	2	3
	d. in the £				d. in the £				d. in the £		
1880	3¼	all divs		1916	4	1½	1	1952	11½	10	1½
1881	1/-	all divs		1917	4	1½	1¼	1953	11½	10	1½
1882		ditto		1918	2	2	2	1954	11½	10	1½
1883		ditto		1919	2	2	2	1955	1/6	1/3	1/6
1884		ditto		1920	1½	1½	1	1956			
1885		ditto		1921	3	1½	2	1957	9	7	1/3½
1886		ditto		1922	3		3	1958	10½	7	1/3½
1887		ditto		1923	2½		2½	1959	11½	7	1/3½
1888		ditto		1924	3	2	3¼	1960	1/-	7	1/3½
1889		ditto		1925	4	3	4¼	1961	1/-	11½	1/9
1890		ditto		1926	4	3	4¼	1962	1/7	1/5	2/2
1891	1½	all divs		1927	4	3	4¼	1963	1/7	1/5	2/2
1892	1½	all divs		1928	4	3	4¼	1964	1/3	all divs	
1893	1½	1¼	¼	1929	4	3	4¼	1965	1/4½	all divs	
1894	1½			1930	4	3	4¼		c. in the \$		
1895	1½	1¼		1931	4	3	4¼	1966	7.05	all divs	
1896	1½	1¼	1¼	1932	6	4¼	6	1967	8.05	all divs	
1897	1½	1¼	1¼	1933	7½	6	8	1968	2.75	all divs	
1898	1½	1¼	1¼	1934	7½	6	8	1969	2.75	all divs	
1899				1935	7½	6	8	1970	2.75	all divs	
1900	1½	1¼	1¼	1936	7½	6	8	1971	3.13	all divs	
1901	1½	1¼	1¼	1937	3¼	3	4	1972	3.13	all divs	
1902	3	2	2	1938	7½	6	8	1973	3.83	all divs	
1903	3	2	2	1939		ditto		1974	5.17	all divs	
1904	2¼	1	1	1940		ditto		1975	6.99	all divs	
1905	2¼	1¼	1¼	1941		ditto		1976	7.77	all divs	
1906	2½	1½	1½	1942		ditto		1977	2.08	all divs	
1907	2½	1½	1½	1943		ditto		1978	2.18	all divs	
1908	2½	1½	1½	1944		ditto		1979	2.65	all divs	
1909	2½	1½	1½	1945		ditto		1980	3.00	all divs	
1910	2½	1½	1½	1946		ditto		1981	4.02	all divs	
1911	2	1	1	1947		ditto		1982	5.05	all divs	
1912	2	1	1	1948		ditto			urban	rural	
1913	3	1	1	1949	8	8	8	1983	4.50		4.00
1914	4	2	1½	1950	8½	8	9	1984	4.09		4.09
1915	4	1½	1	1951	10½	9	11½	1985	4.09		4.09

29 WOR/N18; Statistics of Queensland; Minutes; Aud/S1-S334; 11 THU/20-127; Local Authority Areas Statistical Summary, Queensland.

cover the expansion of local government functions imposed on local authorities by both State and Federal Governments - even with substantial grants and subsidies - and the result has been a wide gulf between function and finance.³⁰ In the third place, the ability to increase rates is restricted by the fact that the same land is also taxed by the State Government. Though local authorities were dissatisfied with the inadequacies of rating, the discontinuation of rating in favour of other ways of being funded, for example, direct payment out of federal taxation, was never seriously considered. The power to raise revenue through taxation was generally considered "a prerequisite for any independence in government".³¹

Even so, Harris describes the general rate as:
 an inefficient and inequitable tax with respect to its appropriateness for yielding additional tax revenue [and] distributing the burden of taxation.³²

It is inequitable because rating does not distinguish between a house and a block of flats on land of identical unimproved value, or between poor and wealthy property owners: rates are levelled (effectively) on the capital

30 See J.I. Crockett, "Can Local Government fulfil its role without change in its financial structure?" *Local Government Administration*, 15, 5, October 1970), pp.139-140; M. Bowman, "The Changing Pattern of Local Government", *Local Government Administration*, 16, 3, June (1971), p.73; and Laverty, "Historical Survey", p.93. Responsibilities with respect to social welfare and tourism would be two such examples of imposed functions.

31 Bowman, *Local Government in the Australian States*, p.3. Also see N. Thomson, "The revenue raising capacity of local government: the ratepayers on their property". *The Australian Quarterly*, Spring (1981), pp.343-351; Gates in "Local and Regional Government: Roles and Structure" states: "Financial responsibility...is a necessary guarantor of local discretion", p.46.

32 Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, p.45. Also see Jones, *Local Government and the People*, pp.124-133.

value of real property irrespective of the income from which they must be paid. Canefarmers are liable for the same rates in a given year whether they have a bumper crop or lose the lot to adverse weather. Similarly, a householder incurs the same liability whether he/she is in full employment, jobless or retired. Also, rates can vary widely from one local authority to the next according to the dominant industry and proportion of non-rateable property. In 1934, at least ostensibly in the interests of greater equity, councils were authorised to strike a rural rate less than the normal general rates applying to suburban and urban areas in their shire.³³ This obviously favoured pastoralists. In 1978 the Local Government Act widened the range of options for distributing tax burdens among ratepayers to include a rural residential rate and differential urban rate. As a result, rating became more flexible, equitable and effective in raising revenue.³⁴ In fact, for most of the century since 1893, Thuringowa's Councils had achieved similar results by striking different rates for the Divisions, an internal areal division of powers. The broad effect was that those ratepayers who were called upon to pay for services and works were those who received most benefit from them. This was politically essential: perceived inequalities soon produced calls for secession from aggrieved sections of the community.

The Divisional Boards Act of 1879 also allowed a special rate to be levied for construction and maintenance; the maximum rate charged was initially set at 1d. in the £. When works benefited a particular part of the Shire, the separate rates was struck only for that Division. As further responsibilities were allocated to

33 Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, p.45.

34 Tucker, "Queensland", p.519. Brisbane City Council does not have the power to levy rates other than a general rate and a rural rate.

local government other rates were allowed, such as special cleansing rates for sewerage and rubbish services. In such cases those in the area served had to pay, whether they personally availed themselves of the service or not. Thus certain Thuringowa residents paid extra for the provision of water, bridges, sanitation, stock routes, the Haughton River Tramway and flood mitigation on the Haughton River. A hospital levy was imposed in 1931 and 1932;³⁵ in 1978 all ratepayers were again charged a special rate to help fund the new Shire Council administration building.³⁶ Such special purpose rating provided minimal revenue. The income derived from a particular levy was used to pay off the loan raised for the provision of that particular service, or to offset the running expenses incurred. For instance, in 1920 Thuringowa struck a special rate of 1d. in the £ for Division 3 in order to defray the cost of bridge reconstruction in that Division;³⁷ in the same year the Shire's sanitary cleansing rate was 42/- per service per annum.³⁸ Revenue from the latter covered the services of the private sanitary contractor, the fees of the health inspector (usually a local doctor) and maintenance of the sanitary depot. Special purpose rating and charges were obviously an invaluable component of local government finance allowing specific works to be undertaken and general rating revenue to be spent on common facilities.

Generally speaking, councils struck a rate each year

35 Valuation Registers for 1923 to 1956, 11 THU/78 to 11 THU/127.

36 TDB, 16 August 1978, p.2.

37 Statistics of Queensland, 1920.

38 This rate was not the highest charged: Mt. Mulligan and Mt. Molloy residents were charged £5.4.0 by the Woothakata Shire; the lowest Shire rate was 28/- per service per annum charged by Stephens Shire. Statistics of Queensland, 1920.

calculated to cover estimated expenditure when added to other revenue (mainly loans and grants). However funding arrangements applying broadly to local government throughout Australia provided little scope for even medium-term planning, as is often pointed out; what limited scope was available in Thuringowa was not utilised effectively, at least until the last decade and a half. There was seldom any attempt to raise enough to repay loans at an accelerated pace so as to reduce the burden of interest payments, for instance. The relationship between rates and expenditure was never simple. When Thuringowa set its annual expenditure budget, the Boards and Councils had to take account of several factors: of works, boundary changes, the cattle lobby, the endowment and the 1893 and 1929 world depressions.

The most important local factor affecting the Shire's ability to raise revenue in the form of rates was the location of its boundaries. Until its boundaries were substantially altered in 1893 the Board was financially sound. On two subsequent occasions when the spread of Townsville's suburbs into the Shire looked like restoring financial strength, further losses of territory followed: in 1918 and 1937. Not until the 1960s did a further stage of the same urban sprawl put the Shire in the healthy financial condition of its first dozen years. During the fifty years, 1918-1964, the Shire was virtually moribund as a result of "the chronically impecunious state" of its finances.³⁹ In August 1963 the Chairman, Cr. Brabon, told his colleagues that if the Shire Council had not "pulled itself together", the Department of Local Government would have "put in a receiver".⁴⁰

39 Letter from Tom Aikens, MLA, 21 February 1946, No. 09101, EDU/Z1037.

40 Minutes in *TDB*, 31 August 1963, Press Clippings Book, 1955 - 1964.

Whenever Thuringowa lost land, the rate was increased, albeit minimally (see Tables 8 and 9) because the remaining ratepayers could ill-afford substantial increases and nor should they be expected to bear the brunt of the effects of participation in action in Thuringowa finances. Even the slight rate increases helped counteract depleted receipts even though a reduced works programs followed the land excisions.⁴¹ This practice of juggling the rate struck in accordance with the increases or decreases in land valuations provides a clear example of the principle of homeostasis in operation. When the Shire lost the Haughton River-Mt. Elliott-Woodstock area in 1893, the rate was increased in 1894 to a uniform 1½d. in the £ for all Sub-divisions in 1894 (see Table 9). Even so, receipts were £2 750 less than in the previous year; the 1892 figure (£5 078) was not reached again until 1915, 22 years later!⁴² After the 1918 excision of Townsville's suburbs, except for Oonoomba, Idalia and Stuart, the Council increased its rural rate to a uniform 2d. in the £ (see Table 9), but the 1917 receipts were not equalled until 18 years later. For the entirely rural shire remaining after 1937, the Council thought it inappropriate to increase the rate; again, receipts took 18 years to recover to the pre-excision level.⁴³ It was not until 1955 - 66 years later - that the figure for revenue reached the level of 1889.⁴⁴ Of course the effects of inflation over this period meant that revenue in 1955, though nominally the same as in 1889, was much less in real terms than in the earlier year. Thuringowa's Chairman in 1891, Frederick

41 The exceptions were 1881 and 1888, but the rate could not be increased as Thuringowa was charging the highest rate possible.

42 Obviously, expenditure was decreased also.

43 Statistics of Queensland; Census; AUD/S1 to AUD/S334.

44 1889 was the year before the *Valuation and Rating Act of 1890* brought in the new valuation and rating bill and reduced the endowment.

Johnson, aptly predicted the effects of the 1893 boundary change: "It was the beginning of the very big end".⁴⁵

The second factor influencing the Council in striking a rate was the dominance of cattle interests, evident since the loss of suburban areas in 1918 and more particularly since the "great crash" in the beef industry in 1920-1921. This period, 1918-1962, in council decision making can be described as the local instrumentalist theory in action because cattle interests were influential in determining rating policies and work priorities.

The drop in the rate struck in 1923 was probably directly linked to the effects of the cattle slump in Thuringowa. The rate increases in 1932 and 1933 were attempts to keep revenue stable after the respective £60 000 and £72 000 drops in capital land values⁴⁶ but the outcome meant that the grazier and other ratepayers were not really faced with onerous, increased rate payments.

Not only grazier interests figured in the Council's deliberations: in 1928 it was thought that any rate increase would exacerbate the financial plight of the seasonal meatworkers in the working class suburbs of Stuart Town, Oonoomba, Cluden, Fairfield and Idalia Estate, possible leading to bankruptcies and the abandonment of properties.⁴⁷ The Stuart Town Progress Association warned that raising the rate to the level of Townsville's would affect the "cost of living by 4/- per week extra" and "disintegrate the progress of our little town"; a rate rise amounting to £700 extra per year for the meatworks's premises and the dwellings rented to

45 TH, 11 March 1891, p.3.

46 See Table 8.

47 Letter 3 March 1928, COL/220.

employees "may ultimately result in the closing of the meatworks" and "huge unemployment".⁴⁸ Depression in the meat industry remained such that in 1936, 270 or "90% of the allotments in the Cluden area and approximately 100 allotments in Stuart Town" were three years in arrears on their rates.⁴⁹

For only three years (1938-1940 inclusive) between 1918 and 1945 was Thuringowa's rate levy higher than its neighbour, Hinchinbrook Shire. The difference ranged from 2d. in 1918 to 8d. in 1945.⁵⁰ Thuringowa's major economic reliance on a depressed cattle market rather than, in Hinchinbrook's case, a long-established and profitable sugar industry was the major reason for the considerably lower rate levy. The low rates in the cattle shire of Dalrymple and the high rates in the sugar shire of Pioneer confirm this.⁵¹ However from 1940 when Thuringowa's economy was on the upturn, Hinchinbrook's substantial rate levy indicates that Hinchinbrook's rural interests did not dominate council rate decisions to the same extent that the cattle lobby did in Thuringowa.

In 1956, as in the past, the Shire's cattle interests were responsible for maintaining the *status quo*. A new land valuation assessment schedule resulted in the doubling of Thuringowa's capital land value. The strength of the cattle lobby can be seen in the substantial reduction in the 1956 rate: in the predominantly cattle Divisions, 1 and 2, the rate was

48 Letter 10 March 1928, COL/220 and evidence from John Parker, Chairman, Stuart Town Progress Association, p.994, COL/224.

49 Letter attached to petition by residents of Cluden objecting to the secession of the south eastern suburbs to Townsville, 11 THU/140.

50 See Table 9 for Thuringowa's rate levy and Wegner, Hinchinbrook Shire, Appendix 3, p.631 for Hinchinbrook's.

51 Statistics of Queensland, 1918-1945.

virtually halved whereas there was only a 3d. reduction in the sugar Division (see Table 9). The reduction in the rate struck counteracted the increased land valuations. The effects of the principle of homeostasis in action were clear. Councillor Innes unsuccessfully supported an increase in general rates because the small townships and beach resorts needed more roads, culverts and sanitation:

It was a defeat. It was regrettable the cattlemen had won the day...the Council is legislating for a few large landholders against the majority of the ratepayers...there would be less for roads than last year!⁵²

In August 1959 the Council decided to spend a £6 425 road grant under the Commonwealth Aid Road Act on upgrading the Shire's rural roads as "primary producers' roads were essential, more so than tourist roads to the coast".⁵³ For 40 years, the cattle lobby influenced the Shire's rate and works programs.

From 1962 the dominance of cattle interests within the Councils diminished except, perhaps, for the grazier Brabon's first term as Chairman (1964-1967). Not only was the rate increased nine times between 1962 and 1976, but the range was from a not insubstantial nine% increase to an enormous 66% increase.⁵⁴ The protagonists, the Townsville branch of the United Graziers Association, angrily protested that the rate increases presented a greater threat to the Shire's grazing industry and overall development than the coastal cattle disease known as botulism. The grazier would be bankrupted.⁵⁵ Cr.

52 Minutes, 24 August 1956.

53 Minutes, TDB, ? August 1959, Press Clippings Book.

54 Percentages are calculated from rates in Table 9; TDB, 25 August 1962, p.5; 31 July 1965, p.3; 2 August 1966, p.5; 13 September 1968, p.1; 31 July 1971, p.6; and 29 August 1974, p.9; Minutes, 1975-1976.

55 TDB, 25 August 1962, p.5.

Webb, a grazier, warned his fellow Councillors that any rate increase would be "rough" as some men on the land with families were "hard put making a living, particularly when they had to contend with bush fires and drought".⁵⁶ The cattle lobby mounted a vigorous attack in 1968 on the 66% rise in rates;⁵⁷ it was the main instigator behind the Thuringowa Rate Protest Committee which organised a series of protest meetings held in the various Divisions and a petition signed by 77% of the electors who called, not for a reduction in rates, but the dissolution of the Shire!⁵⁸ Throughout, the Councils stood firm.

The local newspaper saw the first rate increase in 1962 as a turning point in Thuringowa's local government priorities. It also reflects the significant change from a local instrumentalist to a local pluralist theory of local government action. The Councils' decision making became less dominated by one section of the community and more attuned to the plurality of competing groups that constituted its local authority. The needs of close, suburban settlement - roads, health and professional expertise - were being given long-overdue precedence:

The rate increase was a bold bid to finance road-making plant, retain the services of a part-time health inspector and employ a qualified foreman and more men on road construction.⁵⁹

56 Minutes, *TDB*, 31 July 1965, p.3.

57 This percentage is the overall increase of rate charges and includes other charges besides general rates; it was also calculated on the effects of the rise in land valuation.

58 *TDB*, 30 August 1968, p.6; 13 September 1968, p.1; 16 May 1969, p.3; *The Ayr Advocate*, 4 December 1968, p.1.

59 *TDB*, 2 August 1962, p.3.

The protesters were seen as "selfish agitators"⁶⁰ and the graziers as "impracticable";⁶¹ the increases were needed to put the Shire on "a sound footing".⁶² Under Wordsworth's cattle-dominated Councils, the Shire had been "the lowest rated Shire in Queensland - the rates were ridiculously low".⁶³ Not surprisingly, Thuringowa became "a local authority backwater".⁶⁴ As the Chairman succinctly explained: "We can go forward or sink back".⁶⁵ At least two ratepayers saw it this way too: they wrote letters praising the rate increase on the grounds that "it brought Thuringowa into the 20th century...the peppercorn rates the cattlemen were paying was a joke".⁶⁶ Since the early 1960s, grazing interests have been only one of several factional influences brought to bear on rating decisions.

A third factor influencing Council decisions on the rate to be struck was land valuations. In the previous analysis of the first and second factors affecting the rate struck, the rate was increased with the loss in revenue caused by boundary changes and decreased when increases in land valuations caused consternation with

60 TDB, 13 September 1968, p.1.

61 The graziers had recommended "that 162 miles of unconstructed roads be left as are; even if Thuringowa's rates compared favourably, we should not look over our shoulder; the council should content itself to meeting commitments to the Main Roads Department and cease other works"; TDB, 23 October 1968, Press Clippings and Advertisements, July 1964 -.

62 Minutes, TDB, 29 August 1974, p.9.

63 23 September 1968, p.6. Thuringowa did not have the lowest rates from the 1930s to the 1960s but it certainly was amongst the lowest rating shires in Queensland; Statistics of Queensland.

64 Minutes, TDB, 2 August 1966, p.5.

65 Minutes, TDB, 2 August 1966, p.5.

66 Minutes, TDB, 23 September 1968, Press Clippings and Advertisements, July 1964 -.

the Shire's cattle interests. Because it affected the Councillors chances of re-election and, of course, their own pockets, the reactions of all ratepayers to rates and its links with land valuations was a consideration. In 1977 the staggering 73% reduction in rates only makes sense when it is matched against the dramatic increase in land valuations which caused an enormous 348% increase in the capital value of land (see Table 8). The effects on the ratepayer of the rise in land valuations were partially offset by the drop in rate charges. The one dollar drop in the rate struck in 1983 is another instance of containing the effect of increased land valuations. It is obvious that Councils adopted the same strategy with respect to land valuations and the rate struck from 1880 to 1985, thus substantiating the inclusion of the principle of homeostasis in the theory of local government action.

A fourth factor affecting the rate struck was the annual endowment paid to local authorities by Colonial Government:⁶⁷ £2 for every £ raised in rates from 1880 to 1885, £1 for £1 thereafter until 1903.⁶⁸ Thuringowa, like other Boards, struck rates as high as it was thought the electorate could bear. The sudden increase in the rate from 1½d. to 3d. in the £ for all Divisions for 1902 and 1903 was an unmistakable manoeuvre to maximise the subsidy before it ceased in 1903.

The differing attitude of Councils to what constituted an appropriate rate during the two world depressions which began in 1892 and 1929 respectively was the fifth factor to influence the rate struck. The former argued for maximum rates; the latter for low rates. In fact the Board in the 1890s propounded a rationale that had socialist overtones: the wealthier

67 State Government, of course, after 1901.

68 See Chapter 8 for an explanation of the endowment.

must pay to support the welfare of the Division. In 1892 the majority on the Board acknowledged that bad times constituted, at first sight, a strong reason for a low rate, but argued that a few extra shillings annually would "not be felt by the genuine settler who needs good roads". The large land owners who "would feel the tax certainly" were able to pay it and "must be made to do so in the interests of close settlement". To arrange for an income which would merely cover running expenses and do nothing towards improving "the means of inter communication" in Thuringowa would be "shameful".⁶⁹ In contrast, from 1929 through the Great Depression, the Councils under Cummins and Wordsworth implemented only two rate increases. Even those increases merely equalised the effects of a sharp fall in land valuations. By striking the rates that they did, the Councils during the two Depressions were reaffirming their philosophy of local government in a practical manner.

Some fluctuations in the rates struck, as shown in Table 9, were related to the sale of the Ayr Tramway,⁷⁰ as well as to works priorities and ratepayer criticisms. The drop of ¼d. in the £ for all Divisions in 1911 was undoubtedly a direct result of the sale of the Townsville to Ayr railway to the State Government because profit on the sale was ploughed into local government works. As money from this source dried up by 1913, the rate was then increased. Such fluctuations reflect Council manipulation in order to keep the burden of taxation down. Other reasons for the fluctuations were particular works' priorities and ratepayer dissatisfaction, the

69 Minutes, *NQH*, 10 August 1892, p.15. Messrs. Rae and MacAllister voted against the high rate, especially for Sub-division 3; *NQH*, 17 August 1892, p.28.

70 Thuringowa and Ayr Shires and the Townsville Municipal Council built and operated the Ayr Tramway; see Chapters 5 and 9 for details.

latter leading to lower rates in 1915 and 1916.⁷¹ The rates remained the same, except for a 2d. increase in Division 2, between 1933 and 1949. Coupled with the low land valuations, it is little wonder that the Shire was seen by others as stagnant. Nevertheless, as the Shire's own rural ratepayers were largely satisfied with the rate and what they received for their tax, the Council refused to be swayed by outside criticism.⁷²

Sometimes the Councils misjudged ratepayer attitudes to rates; they appeared too cautious and conditioned to the view that, because ratepayers generally complained about all taxation, they would only approve low rates. With the beef industry in decline and a world-wide depression, a low rate in the 1920s and early 1930s made sense. By 1937, though, at least suburban ratepayers were prepared to pay more for additional services: a secession poll resulted in the loss of the Oonoomba-Idalia-Stuart suburbs to Townsville. Again in 1958 the people of Giru wanted to secede from Thuringowa although, in Ayr Shire, their rates would double. "These people feel they are being neglected", declared the *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, and they are saying, "the sooner we get into Ayr Shire, the sooner we'll get things done, and get bitumen roads".⁷³ The majority in the Upper Ross suburbs also would willingly pay higher rates to receive better roads.⁷⁴ Yet most Councillors refused to consider an increase in rates. Rural councillors sometimes failed to understand the different expectations of suburban ratepayers.

Besides rates, loans have been a source of income

71 Minutes 1915, 1916.

72 Minutes 1933-1949.

73 TDB, ? March 1958, Press Clippings Book.

74 TDB, ? March 1958, Press Clippings Book.

for local authorities. Reluctant to raise their rates to pay for capital works, many councils have preferred to finance works program from loans. This allowed the costs of the project to be spread over a long period, paralleling the long-term benefits derived from them. The 1880 *Local Works Loan Act* classified loans according to categories of public works. Interest rates were stipulated together with repayment periods adjusted to the life expectancy of the projects involved: for example, 40 years for a water works project. No loan could be raised without prior approval from the State Government. Until the *Local Government Act* of 1936 local authorities were allowed to obtain loans from only three sources: the Treasury, the sale of debentures on the open market and banks.⁷⁵ Bank overdrafts were also permitted but had to be temporary and not more than half of the previous year's revenue. As Treasury funds were limited, loans were not to exceed five times the ordinary annual revenue of the local authority unless a project would itself generate income sufficient to cover interest and redemption payments; this limit was raised gradually to try to keep pace with inflation.⁷⁶ The processing of ordinary loans was slow and complicated and included the submission of plans, specifications and estimates for the proposed works, proposals for repayment and estimates of all contingent revenue. After 1902 the Governor-in-Council could approve debenture issues, though these required special procedures and were less attractive than loans. From 1936 the sale of debentures nevertheless increased markedly. High interest repayments formed a substantial portion of local authority commitments. After 1902 banks became a favoured source of loans for

75 Borrowing from other sources would be in competition with the State's own borrowing programs. Borrowing from banks was carefully regulated to ensure that the State was not unduly disadvantaged.

76 These limits were removed in 1923; Morrison, *Party Politics*, p.53. Harris, *Local Government in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, p.41.

local government.⁷⁷

Only in the first 20 years and in the last decade and a half have loans been a significant feature of Thuringowa's revenue. For the remainder, the Councils were circumspect and took out very few loans, preferring like other shires to rely on rates.⁷⁸ Most of Thuringowa's Councils felt they had little choice. Particularly between 1918 and 1940, rate revenue could ill afford the added burden of interest and redemption payments. Government legislation encouraged ratepayers to conduct polls on intended loans, which could be proceeded with only if a majority of the votes cast were in favour of the loan, making Councillors wary of proposing loans. Moreover, for most of the century State Government approval was required for every loan: a lengthy process often ending in refusal.

In its first two decades, Thuringowa's Divisional Boards took out ten Treasury loans: seven for bridges, two for water works and one for the Divisional Board administration building.⁷⁹ This record reflects the energy and eagerness of the early Boards determined to make up for the dearth of facilities. It is the more notable considering the changes in boundaries, decreasing endowment and the high turnover of Chairmen and Members.

The 1879 Act had permitted either the Divisional

77 Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism*, pp.34,213.

78 After the passing of the *Local Authority Act* of 1902, the heavy dependence by local government on its own taxes remained unchanged by the emergence of new kinds of grants from State and Federal Government. Even during the 1930s with substantial unemployment relief grants, rates accounted for 40% of local government revenue and, when the unemployment grants ceased in 1940, the reliance on rates rose to over 60%; Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, pp.42,43.

79 See Appendix 5.

Boards or ratepayers to call for a poll on loans. In an attempt to increase ratepayer participation in, and control of, councils, the 1902 Act encouraged ratepayers to demand a referendum on loan-raising proposals. Fear of "ratepayer backlash and a bitter local poll fight" made many councils abandon plans to raise loans.⁸⁰ (The *Local Government Act* now expressly forbids holding polls on loan raising).⁸¹ Through their timidity, Thuringowa and other Councils eschewed the participatory and liberty values of local government powers preferring to advocate the representativeness value and, hence, a more authoritative, closed-door approach to decision making. Too high a level of participatory democracy was not conducive to optimal functioning - or so it was interpreted.⁸²

Because of its caution in proposing loans, the Councils rarely faced a demand for a poll. In 1888 disgruntled ratepayers in Sub-division 1 requested a poll to determine if a further £800 should be spent on upgrading the Causeway.⁸³ A petition with 23 signatures in 1891 queried a proposed loan (£1 800) for the extension of Ross River Bridge and demanded a poll.⁸⁴ The Divisional Board rescinded both motions calling for

80 Tucker, "Queensland", p.382. Chuter acknowledged the effects in 1919 in his pamphlet, "Local Government Administration" cited in Morrison, *Local Government in Australia*, pp.37,40.

81 A poll is still necessary in South Australia. Robbins believes that this largely accounts for the fact that it has the lowest loan borrowing of all states. J.R. Robbins, *Local Government and Community in South Australia*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Adelaide (1975), p.74.

82 See Chapter 7 for a discussion of these values.

83 "Memorial" from Ratepayers, Thuringowa Divisional Board to Colonial Secretary, 20 January 1888, COL/076.

84 Acting Under-Secretary, Department of Public Works to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 11 April 1891, Correspondence Book 1891.

the loans because it did not wish to conduct polls which might create wider dissatisfaction with the Board's activities.⁸⁵ When the 1902 Act made referenda even easier to obtain, the Council became extremely circumspect with loan applications. Only four loans were taken out between 1902 and 1921 for a mere total of £1 568.⁸⁶ It took from 1917 to 1922 for Cr. Brookes to persuade the Council to take out a Treasury loan of £16 000 for the Haughton River Tramway to connect sugar farms with the Invicta Mill,⁸⁷ even though it was intended to be on a "benefited area" basis; that is, only ratepayers using or benefiting from the works paid for the loan.⁸⁸ Another call for a poll occurred in March 1936 when 36 Giru petitioners queried the merits of a £2 150 loan on a benefited area basis for just the investigation and planning of a water supply scheme for Giru.⁸⁹ As the petition had been signed by more than the required 10% of electors, a poll had to be conducted. Seventy-three voted for the loan; 122 against.⁹⁰ The result was clearly very upsetting to the Councillors because they took the unprecedented step of asking 54 Giru residents why they had failed to vote in the

85 Thuringowa Divisional Board to Under-Secretary, Department of Mines and Works, 15 March 1888, COL/076; Thuringowa Divisional Board to Under-Secretary, Department of Public Works, 16 May 1891, No.1439, COL/076.

86 Statistics of Queensland, 1902-1921; 11 THU/D5; see Appendix 5.

87 Minutes 1917 to 1922. Cr. Hodel rejoined the Council in 1920 and it was mainly his influence that provoked the change of decision. See Chapter 17 for details.

88 This was not unusual: in 1917 Division 1 was made a benefited area for a loan for a concrete bridge on Church Street; and the Haughton River District paid 3d. in the £ until a loan was paid off for bridges over Crooked Waterhole and Ironbark Creek; 11 THU/D5.

89 TDB, 16 March 1963.

90 TDB, 13 April 1963.

compulsory referendum.⁹¹

Twelve loans ranging from £149 to £7 519 were ratified between 1923 and 1940: nine were for upgrading main roads in the Shire, two bought road plant and one funded a Diphtheria Immunisation campaign (see Appendix 5).⁹² Given that these were Thuringowa's worst years financially, the small number and value of loans comes as no surprise. To Chuter, the public service head of local government and a Commissioner of the 1928 Royal Commission on Local Government, it was inconceivable that a local authority could be so timorous. But to grazier and farmer Councillors, struggling to keep their heads above water, it was more inconceivable to force their small Shire into substantial debt.

Since the 1940s local authorities have been able to obtain loans from numerous sources including building societies, insurance companies, banks and credit unions, despite a loan market that has always been restrictive and competitive. Since the Federal and State Governments' "Gentlemen's Agreement" of 1936, local government loans have been circumscribed by a financial agreement between State and Federal Governments and by the Loans Council limitation on federal, state and local government borrowings.⁹³ Thuringowa did not attempt to raise loans from sources outside the Treasury until the 1950s. Initially the Council had problems acquiring "outside" loans which must have been largely due to its reputation as "stagnant" and "unprogressive". In 1955, for instance, it took six months and two refusals before a £5 000 loan request was accepted by the State

91 Minutes, TDB, 20 April 1963.

92 11 THU/132; AUD/S41; AUD/S158; Accounts 1933-1941, Auditor General's Department, Local Authorities Inspectors' Reports, 1922-1948, AUD/R1-R30.

93 Wegner, Hinchinbrook Shire, p.55.

Government Insurance Office,⁹⁴ and it took loans from three different sources to fund the £35 000 Geaney's Road and Innes Estate Water Works Project in 1964.⁹⁵ By 1974, however, the Shire had negotiated so many loans that it had a loan liability of \$2 130 000 - two-thirds on account of water supply, sewerage, cleansing and sanitation projects arising out of the dramatic increase in population from 3 150 in 1970 to 6 700 in 1974.⁹⁶

Government assistance in the forms of endowment, subsidies and grants has been a necessary adjunct to rates and loans. As the general public pays taxes to state and federal governments, grants from those higher levels of government can act fairly both to distribute the costs of works which do not obviously benefit only certain users and to redress inequalities in funding between the different levels of government.⁹⁷ Through the strings attached to financial aid, state and, to a lesser extent, federal government manipulated local government power.

Along with the other local authorities, Thuringowa loudly protested the new reduced endowment provisions to come into effect in 1890 to Brisbane.⁹⁸ In 1890 Frederick Gordon put the local government case: "As the Government were evidently about to take measure to secure

94 Minutes, 14 October 1955.

95 The three loans were from the Police Superannuation Board, the Administrators of the Officers Provident Fund of the National Bank of Australasia and the Treasury; Minutes, TDB, 15 February 1964.

96 Statistical Summary of Queensland Local Authority Areas, Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1973-1974; Statistics of Queensland, 1970, 1974.

97 Also see Wegner, Hinchinbrook Shire, p.56.

98 Thuringowa Divisional Board to J. Macrossan, Esq., M.L.A., 24 August 1889, COL/076; TDB, 16 August 1890, p.19; TH, 20 May 1891, p.16; Minutes, 8 August 1895, 9 May 1906, 11 THU/D2. See Chapter 8 for details.

money", the Divisional Boards would be made "scapegoats" by having to suffer a reduction in subsidy and Thuringowa "could not possibly get along if a reduction were made".⁹⁹ To emphasise that point, Thuringowa's Board promptly retrenched its engineer and "the whole of the road parties".¹⁰⁰ Water works were permitted to continue only because the men "would not press for their wages for three months".¹⁰¹ Bernays aptly described the plight of local government:

It looked in those years as if local authorities were being bricked up, and that they would inevitably perish of starvation.¹⁰²

Thuringowa's endowment which had quickly grown from about £450 in 1880 to £5 000 in 1889, fell to £336 in 1903.¹⁰³ Thuringowa did not earn £5 000 in rates until 1914!¹⁰⁴ Between 1880 and 1903 the endowment contributed towards the formation and maintenance of some 364 miles of roads (costing approximately £35 833); towards the cost (roughly £14 000) of constructing seven major and five minor bridges; towards water supply and reticulation costing £8 500; towards the £1 026 for the administration chambers; and towards Thuringowa's two-fifths share (£31 200) of constructing the Townsville to Ayr railway.¹⁰⁵ For Thuringowa the endowment had been,

99 Minutes, TDB, 16 August 1890, p.19.

100 Minutes, TDB, 16 August 1890, p.19.

101 Minutes, 18 May 1891; TH, 20 May 1891, p.16.

102 Bernays, *Queensland Politics during Sixty (1859-1919) Years*, p.407.

103 Statistics of Queensland, 1881-1914.

104 WOR/N18; Valuation Registers, 1886-1887 to 1914-1915.

105 Chairman's Annual Report, 1890; Statistics of Queensland, 1880-1903; 11 THU/G1; Correspondence Book 1891; 11 THU/D2; COL/076; WOR/N18; Annual Report, President of Ayr Tramway Joint Board, 1910; John Kerr's Notes, p.3859.

indeed, a significant factor in its revenue and works program.

The low level of revenue which remained when endowment ceased, and the corresponding low level of expenditure, prevailed with little change for nearly 30 years: through the Great War and the 1920s into the Great Depression. As true of Thuringowa as the historian of Hinchinbrook has remarked of her Shire (and of local authorities generally): "paradoxically it was the Depression that rescued them from their predicament".¹⁰⁶ Three forms of assistance were initiated to alleviate the consequences of depression: grants for unemployment relief, State subsidies on loans and Federal grants.

The two major unemployment relief schemes in Thuringowa built the roads up Hervey's Range and Mt. Spec. The other relief grants were small but consistent: in 1933 £243 and £363 in 1938 for unemployment relief workers' payments. The Council distributed the money and employment throughout the Shire, though some areas of particular need (such as Giru) were always included.¹⁰⁷ Grants for relief work ceased, like large-scale unemployment, with the onset of World War II. But when unemployment again became a national problem in the early 1970s they were reinstated by the Whitlam government, which also initiated Special Unemployment Grants for the casual employment of Aborigines and Islanders.¹⁰⁸ Thuringowa's Council made substantial use of these grants; it took advantage of a \$15 000 grant administered by the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs on behalf of the Government to employ an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gang on kerbing, channelling and

106 Wegner, Hinchinbrook Shire, p.57.

107 Accounts 1933-1941.

108 TDB, 22 February 1973, p.4.

recreation facilities.¹⁰⁹ Under the 1975 Regional Employment Scheme, grants totalling \$94 852 allowed the employment of 35 people for eight to 22 weeks.¹¹⁰ Unfortunately cutbacks in November 1974 not only threw the Shire's budget into disarray but also meant retrenchment and a very poor Christmas for at least 45 men.¹¹¹ Relief schemes obviously served three purposes: work for the unemployed; special programs for Aborigines and Islanders who were most affected by unemployment; and injecting money into local government. Thuringowa benefited but could not rely on relief grants for additional finance as they were essentially welfare schemes, destined to be short-term.

State subsidies were a more reliable source of funds but from their introduction during the Depression until the 1960s they were made on a basis which minimised the benefits to Thuringowa: initially in proportion to the wages paid by the local authority, subsequently as a proportion of the cost of approved works.¹¹² In the 1970s the special claims of local government for more financial assistance to meet increasing responsibilities received attention. In 1974 \$5 million was distributed to local authorities through the State, as general assistance grants on the basis of a formula which took account of the local authority's population, area and

109 The gang boss was a Torres Strait Islander who was "respected by all who worked with him". The Council would have preferred a racially integrated gang in "the interests of efficiency" and of averting charges of segregation, but would have had to contribute from its own funds. Financial considerations could override ideology. Minutes, TDB, 28 September 1973, p.9.

110 TDB, 21 May 1975, p.8.

111 This included 25 Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders; TDB, 20 November 1974.

112 C.P. Harris, "Intergovernment Grants and Local Government in Australia". Unpublished Research Paper (Townsville, 1984), pp.2,3.

revenue from rates. Along with other local authorities Thuringowa received a minimum \$15 000 in the first two years.¹¹³ The new State subsidy system coincided with Thuringowa's dramatic population increase and consequent escalation of its works program; the monies received were a necessary and welcome adjunct to the Shire's revenue.

The Federal Government first gave grants to State Governments for redistribution as subsidies on local authority loans in the 1935-1936 financial year. Again, Thuringowa made little use of this form of support from 1936 to 1964. In 1973 the Labor Government introduced specific-purpose grants paid directly to local governments through the Grants Commission which received submissions from regional groups of local authorities. The grant was apportioned according to need as the Whitlam Government sought to reduce inequalities among local authorities. Thus the small remote Shire of Diamantina received a \$125 per capita grant in 1975, the average grant being \$6.91 per person. Thuringowa Shire received a \$60 000 grant, that is, \$6.59 per person, which was less than the average.¹¹⁴ It was also \$4 less per person than the 1973-1974 Federal grant.¹¹⁵ However, the 1972-1973 Federal Grant had been very substantial - \$200 000, that is, \$35.70 per person.¹¹⁶ One reason for the fall in the grant undoubtedly was that, in comparison with remoter and poorer Shires, Thuringowa was coping reasonably well with providing the necessary physical infrastructures for its ratepayers. A second reason had to do with Thuringowa's proximity to

113 Tucker, "Queensland", p.527.

114 Grants Commission, Parliamentary Paper No.173, 1975; Statistics of Queensland, 1975.

115 Statistical Summary of Local Authority Areas, Queensland, 1974 and 1975. The Federal grant was \$96 000.

116 Statistical Summary of Local Authority Areas, Queensland, 1972-1973.

Townsville. Thuringowa residents, especially those living in Townsville's dormitory suburbs, used the cultural and welfare facilities provided by Townsville's City Council. In the 1970s Thuringowa's Councils therefore saw no need to claim grants in these areas.

In addition to the Federal grants, local authorities could still apply for special purpose grants directly to Federal Government departments, particularly those concerned with services for children and the aged. The return of the Liberal/National Party Coalition Government effectively ended direct federal grants to individual local authorities from 1976. Instead, a fixed percentage of income tax revenue (1.52% in 1976) was apportioned to local government to be divided 30% on a per capita basis and 70% on an equalisation or financial need basis through the State Governments', State Grants Commission.¹¹⁷ This new apportionment proved more favourable to Thuringowa than the previous scheme which, based solely on equity, saw Thuringowa's grant entitlement systematically reduced from 1972 to 1975. Thuringowa's population increased by 4 000 between 1976 and 1979 thus, with 30% of the new entitlement based on the number of people in the Shire, Thuringowa gained an increased share of federal grant money.

The successive forms of Colonial, State and Federal assistance had variable effects on Thuringowa's revenue. The endowment of 1880 to 1903 was certainly significant; tied to the revenue raised in general rates, it encouraged a maximum rate levy. This allowed the Boards to be adventurous in taking out several loans as the general revenue could cope with the redemption and interest charges. By the time subsidies and grants were introduced during the Depression, also related directly

¹¹⁷ Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, pp.59,60; I. McPhail, "Local Government", pp.105-116; Tucker, "Queensland", p.525.

to expenditure, Councils were too habituated to a low level of expenditure (and too fearful of ratepayers' wrath) to obtain much benefit. It was only in the last decade and a half of our period, when revenue from rates began increasing rapidly as a consequence of suburban development within the Shire's boundaries, that subsidies and grants began to be significant. Since that time they have proved a necessary adjunct to the Shire's revenue which was increasingly committed to large, urban works programs.

Apart from general and special rates, loans and grants, there are few other sources of finance open to local authorities. They have been allowed to operate certain businesses, such as picture shows and caravan parks, but profits from such undertakings have been negligible because of the controversy over budgeting from surpluses, and because of statutory limits.¹¹⁸ Over the century only three of Thuringowa's Councils went into businesses: Hodel's Councils from 1900 to 1911 were partners with the Townsville and Ayr Councils in the Ayr Tramway Board, Wordsworth's Councils operated the aerodrome from 1930 to 1935 and between 1976 and 1979 "much money" was spent on the construction of a council caravan park at Giru but "no-one appears to know just what is going to be done with it. So far its only use has been by the council's own mobile workforce".¹¹⁹ The railway was profitable; the aerodrome did not recoup its initial cost.

118 *Local Authorities Act of 1902, S.262 (2).*

119 Letter-to-editor by Mrs. Mellick, Giru, *Advertiser*, 22 March 1979. Mrs. Mellick was Giru's representative on Council between 1973-1976 and 1979-1982. In 1964 the Council investigated the practicability of establishing the caravan park at Giru (*TDB*, 20 June 1964) but because it catered mainly for seasonal workers, the project did not eventuate until 1976. Cr. Walters believed that the day-labour employed on the first stage "must have been using teaspoons...as the costs of excavation were very expensive; Minutes in *TDB*, 19 May 1976.

The 1902 Act permitted local authorities to charge fees for a variety of minor services, licenses and permits, such as approving slaughter house applications, granting dog licenses, releasing impounded cattle, ratifying building permits and for road and drainage work undertaken on behalf of State Government or private land developers. In 1910, 1911 and 1973-1974, the Shire's revenue from sources other than rates was substantial in comparison to the general rates received (see Appendix 6). The major reason for the anomaly in 1910 was the annual profit (£1 600) of the Ayr Tramway and for that in 1911, the proceeds from its sale (£12 854). In 1973-1974 reimbursements for work done for the Main Roads Commission by the Council accounted for \$313 000 of the revenue received from sources other than rates. Not surprisingly, as Appendix 6 shows, usually only minimal revenue was received from charges and fees.

Nevertheless, the Boards and Councils took this avenue of raising revenue very seriously. Conscious of the Shire's precarious financial position, Thuringowa's respective Boards and Councils have been constant in their endeavour to increase revenue without taking out numerous loans or greatly increasing taxation. Most schemes brought in little money, but a sense of responsibility to the Shire's welfare remained undiminished.

Certainly there was no shortage of innovative ideas. For instance, the Members of Thuringowa's first Board bemoaned the fact that fences could not be included in property valuations, thereby increasing land values and hence rates.¹²⁰ In 1881 they planned to exact a rent from unauthorised occupants of Crown Land, but were advised by the Attorney-General that to do so would be

120 Letter to Colonial Secretary, 14 June 1880, WOR/N18.

unlawful.¹²¹ For several years beginning in 1881 the Board drew revenue from a toll gate at the junction of the Georgetown and Dalrymple Roads and Flinders Street West across all the main roads entering and leaving Townsville (see Map 4). It was removed when the building of a low bridge and causeway over Ross Creek at the junction of Flinders Street, Ingham Road and Charters Towers Road, enabled traffic to by-pass the gate.¹²² In 1887 the Board not merely increased but doubled the fee for licensed gates to £1 per annum.¹²³ Until the 1920s when the Main Roads Commission took over vehicle licensing, local authorities were able to set their own

121 The Board explained that it intended:
Not to lease said lands or give occupiers any title, but to charge rent for occupation as in several parts of the Division, notably Ross Island, persons have built houses, fenced land and made gardens, paddocks, etc., and are willing to pay rent - many are carrying on business as publicans, gardeners, storekeepers, etc.
Thuringowa Divisional Board to Colonial Secretary, 20 July 1881, WOR/N18.

122 Samuel Hind was appointed the Toll Keeper with a salary of £8 per calendar month. The schedule of charges was as follows:

	£.	s.	d.
For every horse or head of cattle	0	1	
" " 20 head of sheep or pigs	0	3	
" " spring-cart, buggy, one horse dray, or wagon on springs	0	6	
" " horse or bullock dray drawn by more than one horse or bullock	1	0	
" " horse or bullock wagon not on springs	2	0	
Exemption - one payment in 24 hours, commencing at midnight each day, shall exempt the party making same and using same vehicle or horse through same toll bar from paying further toll during that time.			

Copy of By-Law No.4, 1881, WOR/N18; Mr. Hind commenced duties on Friday, 15 June 1881; letters, 5 May 1881, 9 June 1881, 11 THU/G1.

123 Thuringowa Divisional Board to Colonial Secretary re By-Lay No.10, 9 May 1887, COL/076.

vehicle licence fees subject to government approval.¹²⁴ In his annual report to the Board for 1890, Joseph Hodel, the Chairman, advised that traffic licences yielded £136 against £22 for 1889 "which proves that the appointment of an efficient officer for this department has been a wise one".¹²⁵ In 1912 cabmen were complaining about the steeper fees in Thuringowa compared with Townsville City Council's charges.¹²⁶ Probably the strangest attempt to scale great heights with little ladders occurred in 1910: Robert Bruce, the Shire's Engineer, enclosed a cheque from "the sale of mangoes at the Waterworks Paddock" and asked the Council "to kindly credit the same to the Water Authority Account".¹²⁷ He did not say if he had sold the mangoes himself! On one occasion the Council was many years before its time in devising a particular revenue-raising scheme: in 1913 the idea was mooted that meters be installed for charging the large numbers of stock watering at the troughs near the Royal Oak and Rising Sun Hotels.¹²⁸ These attempts to supplement the main source of revenue were more creative than productive: in no year did they reach even a fraction of the yield from rates.

Periodically the Council sold land on which rates

124 By-Law No.15 set down a table of rates to be paid by proprietors of licensed vehicles in 1886:

Omnibuses	2	0	0
Four-wheeled vehicle	1	10	0
Two-wheeled (Cab or Hansom)	1	0	0
Lorry	1	0	0
Cart or Dray		10	0

Copy of By-Laws No.6 to No.16, Thuringowa Divisional Board, COL/076. The By-Laws were passed by the Board on 15 June 1885 and ratified by the Governor-in-Council on 25 February 1886.

125 Chairman's Annual Report, February 1891, Thuringowa Divisional Board Report Books, 1889-n.d.

126 Minutes, 10 January 1912.

127 12 May 1910, In-Letters Correspondence (JCU).

128 Minutes, 19 December 1913, 11 THU/D4.

had been in arrears for years, but the amount was never substantial: in 1914, for instance, the Council received £229/14/- and in 1957, though the Council advertised no fewer than 43 properties for auction unless the rates owing were paid within 13 days,¹²⁹ it recouped very little money. The newspaper reported, briefly and without detail, that the rates had been paid on only "about four" properties and the majority of the remainder had been sold at prices "that were to the advantage of the buyer"; the rest had been passed in.¹³⁰ A similar situation occurred in 1968 when 22 properties, \$2 607.07 in arrears, were auctioned. Seven had less than \$80 owing; one as little as \$16.71.¹³¹ This property must have appeared a profitable prospect for the Council not to have persevered just a little longer with the owner, especially as one ratepayer owed \$420 in back-rates.

Arrears in rates represented revenue foregone. In 1888, after taking legal advice, the Board's clerk and rate collector decided "to sue several persons on the chance of payment" even though the previous clerk had kept the books in such a bad state that it was "impossible to find the necessary particulars".¹³² The tactic worked, as it did again in 1889 and 1890; arrears fell by approximately £2 000. Indeed the amount collected was the "highest on record".¹³³ The failure to pay rates prevented essential work being undertaken. For instance in 1971, the Council had to delete the

129 TDB, 16 March 1957.

130 TDB, 10 April 1957. The Minutes do not mention the sale and the Account Books do not detail this specific sale. In 1968, 38 properties were auctioned for rate arrears ranging from a mere \$16.71 to \$419.69; TDB, 15 March 1969, p.9.

131 TDB 15 March 1968, p.9.

132 Statement of Accounts for 1888 from Edwin Norris & Son, Solicitors, 9 January 1889, Report Books 1889 (JCU).

133 Chairman's Annual Report, 1889 and 1890.

upgrading of two streets from its work program.¹³⁴ It sometimes meant a rise in next year's rates.¹³⁵ The conscientious ratepayer was doubly disadvantaged through rate increases and curtailment of works.

To encourage payment of rates, the 1902 Act allowed councils to grant discounts on rates paid by the due date and charge interest on overdue rate payment.¹³⁶ The effectiveness of such incentives in Thuringowa was acknowledged by Cr. Wordsworth in 1955: the major reason for the very high rate of arrears - £4 931 compared with £5 683 collected in rates for the financial year 1954-1955 - was his Council's decision to cancel remissions some years previously.¹³⁷

However, lack of incentive was not the only reason for the high arrears. Ratepayer irresponsibility was seen as a major reason by various people throughout the century. For example, the Board Chairman in 1890, Joseph Hodel, "found it necessary to use extraordinary pressure upon nearly 100 individuals... unwilling and careless in their payments"¹³⁸ whilst the editor of the *Townsville Daily Bulletin* was constantly dismayed by recalcitrant ratepayers in the 1970s: in 1970-1971 \$44 255 and a staggering \$133 882 in 1974-1975 were owed in arrears.¹³⁹ Thuringowa had "assumed a new identity as a progressive local authority and defaulting ratepayers cannot be allowed to tarnish this image".¹⁴⁰

134 *TDB*, 25 January 1971, p.2.

135 Minutes, *TDB*, 20 June 1975. The Council also decided to prosecute.

136 *Local Authorities Act* of 1902, S.231.

137 Thuringowa Auditor's Report, 1954-1955, AUD/S334.

138 Chairman's Annual Report, 1889 and 1890.

139 *TDB*, 21 January 1971, p.2; 20 June 1975, p.4.

140 *TDB*, Editorial, 25 January 1971, p.2.

TABLE 10

Comparison of Rate Arrears 30 June 1980-1985¹⁴¹

Percentage of Estimated Rate Receipts

Shire/City	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Thuringowa	10	9	11	10	8	7
Dalrymple	1	1	1	3	2	1
Hinchinbrook	2	1	1	2	0	1
Ayr (Burdekin)	2	2	1	1	1	1
Mulgrave	7	6	6	9	5	5
Pioneer	6	23	7	7	10	10
Townsville	4	4	5	6	5	5

Tardiness in debt collecting and prosecution were other obvious reasons, but councils correctly argued that legislation laid down a complicated and time consuming procedure that hindered the collection of arrears. Nevertheless, a comparison of Thuringowa with its neighbouring councils (Dalrymple, Hinchinbrook, Ayr, Townsville) and Mulgrave and Pioneer, two urban-rural shires, reveal that Thuringowa's history of dilatory arrears collection was little improved in the 1980s (see Table 10). It seems that Thuringowa may have used lengthy red-tape regulations as an excuse for its own resistance to debt collection.

One reason for such reluctance was the Councils' unwillingness to increase the burdens placed on families, especially during the Great Depression and World Wars, on graziers and farmers whose profitable livelihood was never assured in Thuringowa and from whose group most of the Councillors came and, since the mid-1970s, on

¹⁴¹ Local Authority Areas Statistical Summary, Queensland, 1979-1985.

businesses which Thuringowa was encouraging to locate and stay in the Shire rather than Townsville. These factors for non-prosecution - inputs in the systems analysis paradigm - reflect a number of theories in action: the pluralist and instrumentalist theories and, in the last consideration, the neo-Marxist theory of local government as a promoter of capital accumulation.

Despite their aversion of prosecution, the Councils were sometimes forced to act by an irate Auditor General's Department. For instance, in 1946 the Auditor General criticised the Council for its excessive arrears, pointing out with astonishment that the arrears for Division 1 were in excess of the total rates levied during the financial year.¹⁴² The Chairman replied that the recovery of outstanding rates would be conducted with vigour.¹⁴³ The reasons advanced in mitigation of the Councils' tardiness from the 1920s to the 1980s leave it still largely incomprehensible.

Hiring out their equipment brought in a little revenue. For instance, before the Divisional Board provided water reticulation in 1897, the sinking of private wells was common. This permitted the consistent hiring of the Board's pile driver which, however, only netted the pile driver's original cost, £35.¹⁴⁴ The hire of other Council equipment similarly yielded little revenue: £125 in 1934, for example, from the Council's power grader, horse grader and motor truck.¹⁴⁵ During the Board's early years, community groups used the

142 Letter, 15 October 1946, AUD/S187.

143 Letter, 18 November 1946, AUD/S187.

144 Letter, 2 December 1892, COL/076. In 1891 Rooney & Co., Timber Merchants, hired the pile driver for 15/- per week; letter, 13 November 1891, Correspondence Book, 1891.

145 Statement of Receipts and Disbursements for the Year Ended, 31 December 1934.

chambers free of charge; later, there was a hall hiring charge of "5/- per night including gas".¹⁴⁶

While seizing many opportunities to increase revenue, the Council sought just as conscientiously to decrease expenses on works. It eagerly accepted offers from ratepayers to provide labour, materials or financial help to cut costs. Individuals and businesses took it upon themselves to do council work if it meant immediate action and aided their interests. Thuringowa Councillors naturally agreed to such private initiatives because it was in their own political and economic interests to do so.

An example of private subsidisation occurred in 1940 when some graziers, Meehan and Love, donated £5 each and Swifts Meatworks, £10, toward repairing Toonpan Lagoon embankments.¹⁴⁷ On other occasions the Shire Councillors pressured local farmers to offer financial assistance; for example, cane farmers were asked to contribute to the cost of repairing the road from Marblegram School to Cromarty.¹⁴⁸ Sporting clubs were also lobbied; in 1964 the Haughton River Amateur Angling Club was asked to provide £1 000 of the £4 000 needed to construct two creek crossings and generally upgrade Pussy Cat Road leading to the Haughton River.¹⁴⁹ Time and

146 Minutes, 20 August 1918, 11 THU/D5.

147 Letters, 18 December 1939, 8 January 1940, 10 January 1940, 11 THU/J18.

148 Minutes, 9 January 1921, 11 THU/D6. The Council agreed in 1918 to spend £50 on road works in the Minehan's Siding area on the understanding that "the farmers would forego any payment for work carried out by them the previous year"; Minutes, 13 February 1918, 11 THU/D5.

149 Minutes, 14 August 1964. In 1920 the Townsville Turf Club agreed to pay half the cost of repairs up to £25 to Cluden Road near the race course; Minutes, 2 May 1920, 11 THU/D5.

again, Thuringowa's Councillors proved they were adept salesmen to the advantage of the Shire.

More common was the offer of labour, if the Council provided the necessary materials. The following example is typical: in 1923 the Bohle River Progressive League put down a public well near the Bohle Bridge as a drought appeared eminent; the Shire Council provided the pump and all materials.¹⁵⁰ On rare occasions an entire project was carried out by voluntary effort without any Council involvement and, although the Council was publicly seen as remiss, it remained unrepentant as works money could be spent elsewhere.¹⁵¹ Some of the older Councillors were experienced and canny in negotiation: they listened to lengthy discussion about the section of road which should be repaired first, Cr. Brookes finally interposing that the Haughton River cane farmers would be willing to find any labour and horses required to fix the roads in

150 In-Letters, 14 April 1923, 11 THU/A18; Minutes, 17 April 1923, 11 THU/D7. J. O'Donnell's offer "to do drainage repairs to the Idalia to Oonoomba Road, if Thuringowa Shire Council provided 20'6" concrete piping", was eagerly accepted by the Council at their monthly meeting in November 1920; Minutes 17 November 1920, 11 THU/D5. Sometimes materials were given to the Council. For instance, Messrs. Haberecht and Olufson received a letter of thanks from the Council in 1953 for supplying gravel free of charge for the road works at Majors Creek; Minutes, 17 April 1953.

151 In 1899 the *North Queensland Herald* advised readers that the Townsville to Ayr coast road via Alligator Creek (first change of horses) and the base of Mt. Elliott to Sandbeck's House (the half-way stage, 30 miles from Townsville), thence across the Barrattas to Ayr had been opened by coach proprietors; the Thuringowa Divisional Board had done "nothing whatsoever"; 4 September 1899, p.10. In 1952 the Council offered no objection to a Department of Works proposal to construct an access road to Mt. Louisa Airways Beacon - provided it did not cost the Shire any money or mean a reduction in its allocation from the Commonwealth Roads Aid Grants; this was perfectly justifiable as the roadway was exclusively of benefit to Commonwealth purposes. Minutes, 20 March 1953.

his Division before cane carting commenced in early June.¹⁵²

For about 20 years after 1893 when Stuart Gaol came into use, prison labour was occasionally employed. In 1896, for instance, the Under Colonial Secretary agreed to Thuringowa's request that prisoners be used to form the approaches and make repairs to Stewart's Creek Bridge as long as the Board agreed to pay an extra warder's salary.¹⁵³ In 1906 prison labour cleaned out the Shire well at Stewart's Creek;¹⁵⁴ in 1907 prison labour was again used to repair the Upper Alligator Creek Road.¹⁵⁵ However, in 1910 the Thuringowa Shire Council was advised that no prisoners were available to repair the road through the Gaol Reserve as they were busy concreting four prison yards and building one concrete cottage.¹⁵⁶ This was the last reference to prison labour.

Thus, over the century, the Shire left few stones unturned in its efforts to increase revenue without unduly increasing taxation. Most of the Councils' entrepreneurial enterprises earned little revenue and reduced expenses minimally but the businessman's approach to the Board or Shire's finances - except, perhaps, for the tardiness in processing arrears - showed due regard for the seriousness of elected local government office.

As with all local authorities, it was obvious that rating remained the central element of its finances. Central because the endowment was paid as a proportion of

152 Minutes, 18 March 1919, 11 THU/D5.

153 Minutes, 25 March 1896, 11 THU/D2; Stuart Gaol was completed in January 1893; *NQH*, 22 February 1893, p.14.

154 Minutes, 15 February 1906, 11 THU/D3.

155 Minutes, 18 September 1907, 11 THU/D3.

156 Letter, 18 April 1910, Thuringowa Shire Council Correspondence 1910 (JCU).

rates received; loans were granted on condition that revenue from rates could cover the loan redemption and interest; and subsidies and grants were contingent on the shortfall between rates received and what was needed to upgrade Shire services. Contrary to Wegner, rates were not the largest source of income.¹⁵⁷ Appendix 6 reveals the wide fluctuations in Thuringowa's sources of revenue. The percentage of General, Special and Cleansing Rates/Charges to all revenue ranged from 29% to 98.3%.

A high ratio of rates to other income usually accompanied a timid use of loans and, therefore, a low level of activity in public works undertaken by the local authority out of its own revenue. The low ratio of rates to all revenue in the first two decades reflects the vigorous loan program of the Boards. Although the high percentage (71%) of rates in 1895 seems atypical, it did not result from any real change of policy. It reflects simply the accident that a loan for almost three times the rate income was not processed by the Treasury in time to appear in the 1895 accounts.¹⁵⁸ Reflecting the supine inactivity in the long middle period, rates became the major source of income from 1912 to the mid-1960s. From then until the change to city status (1985), rates again became the secondary source of revenue to loans - except for 1970-1971 when rate income amounted to 65.3% of the revenue (see Appendix 6). High percentages of revenue from rates were usually the corollary of low loan commitments.

157 Wegner, Hinchinbrook Shire, p.47.

158 Even with a £3 000 overdraft in 1890, falling endowment, the 1893 land excision and the necessary redemption and interest payments on earlier loans, the Board submitted a £5 000 loan proposal for a water works scheme.

TABLE 11
Percentage of Rates to Revenue¹⁵⁹

Shire/City	1937-1938	1970-1971	1973-1974
Thuringowa	75.2%	65.3%	26.1%
Ayr (Burdekin)	42.2%	51.7%	52.9%
Dalrymple	77.7%	25.3%	32.5%
Hinchinbrook	28.5%	42.7%	45.3%
Pioneer	44.7%	32.5%	33.9%
Mulgrave	20.0%	57.4%	51.2%
Average all Qld. Local Authorities	56.7%	32.1%	30.8%

There is some variability in the proportion of rate revenue to total receipts between Thuringowa and its neighbours (Ayr, Dalrymple and Hinchinbrook), other rural shires with suburban over spills (Pioneer and Mulgrave) and the Queensland average of all local authorities. From 1912 Thuringowa relied much more heavily on its own taxes than did most other Queensland authorities. Thus, in 1937-1938 when local authorities were receiving substantial grants from the State Government to alleviate unemployment, the percentages of rates to all revenue was 75.2% for Thuringowa and 56.7% for Queensland local governments generally. Comparison with its neighbours highlights the gap between the wealthier sugar shires of Ayr and Hinchinbrook and the poorer, predominantly cattle shires of Dalrymple and Thuringowa. The higher capital value of canefarms compared with grazing properties as well as the fact that Pioneer and Mulgrave had not lost their suburban land to their neighbouring city councils (Mackay and Cairns, respectively) as had happened to

¹⁵⁹ Calculated from Statistics of Queensland, 1937-1938, 1970-1971, 1973-1974 and Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism*, p.43 and Table III-1, pp.67,71.

Thuringowa in 1937 were the deciding factors explaining the differences between the considerably lower percentages in Pioneer and Mulgrave and the high percentage of rates to revenue for Thuringowa.

As Table 11 clearly shows, the differences in the percentages was marked in the 1970-1971 financial year. It would be easy to again attribute the disparity to Thuringowa's circumspection in loan borrowing. However, when Table 11 and Table 12 are compared, other reasons need to be found because Thuringowa's - and Dalrymple's¹⁶⁰ - loan liability per head of population were at least twice that of the other Shires. Rates and charges per head of population were also substantial. The differences in rate revenue to total revenue in Table 11 are attributable to two factors. One, Thuringowa received one-third less than the other Shires in grants and subsidies from the State and Federal Governments. Two, the other Shires received considerably higher revenue in the form of reimbursements for work carried out on behalf of the State Government.¹⁶¹ The situation was reversed in 1973-1974, however, when Thuringowa's rate income of 26.1% of total revenue was the highest (see Table 12). Between 1970-1971 and 1973-1974, Thuringowa's population had increased by 3 268 and the number of rated properties by 2 142.¹⁶² The Council had to cater for this boom in terms of the provision of water, sanitation, roads and drainage, as well as

160 The loan liability per head of population was \$230 for Dalrymple Shire and \$101 for Ayr Shire; compiled from Statistics of Queensland, 1970-1971.

161 The percentages ranged from Ayr Shire, which received 85% more in this type of revenue than Thuringowa, to Pioneer Shire receiving 97% more revenue for reimbursements than Thuringowa; calculated from Statistics of Queensland, 1970-1971. In Dalrymple, most was for roadworks.

162 See Table 1, Chapter 1 for demographic changes. Statistics of Queensland, 1970-1974.

TABLE 12
Comparison Local Government Finance
1970-1971 to 1978-1979¹⁶³

Shires

	Thuringowa	Mulgrave	Pioneer
Average annual population increase	19%	6%	4%
Loan liability per head of population: 1970-1971	\$268	\$110	\$140
1978-1979	\$479	\$253	\$248
Rates and charges per head: 1970-1971	\$ 70	\$ 42	\$ 32
1978-1979	\$173	\$144	\$100
Rates and charges per head:			
increase current prices	147%	241%	213%
increase constant prices	-2%	35%	24%
Expenditure per head on:			
administration 1970-1971	\$ 14	\$ 10	\$ 5
1978-1979	\$ 44	\$ 26	\$ 18
interest and redemption 1970-1971	\$ 26	\$ 12	\$ 16
1978-1979	\$ 52	\$ 29	\$ 32
water and sewerage 1970-1971	\$ 72	\$ 9	\$ 11
1978-1979	\$ 97	\$110	\$ 61
other works & services (incl. roads) 1970-1971	\$ 64	\$ 31	\$ 28
1978-1979	\$119	\$101	\$123
Expenditure per head:			
increase current prices	78%	332%	291%
increase constant prices	-29%	71%	55%
Explanation of increase in expenditure:			
due to inflation	47%	49%	55%
due to population growth	74%	23%	18%
due to increase in real level of works	-21%	28%	27%

163 Collated from Harris and Crossman, *Growth and Change in Queensland's Six Provincial Regions 1970-71 to 1979-80*, pp.102,106,108,113,114,190,192.

increased staff, equipment and the use of professional consultants. Accordingly, deCoursey's Council applied for a sizeable federal grant of \$96 000 and borrowed what was for Thuringowa an unprecedented \$719 000 which attracted substantial subsidies totalling \$204 000 (see Appendix 6). Revenue from these and other sources therefore outstripped the income from rates. The overall, lower dependence on rates for revenue in the 1970s reflects the entry of Federal Government grants into the arena of local government finance.

Of course, the point emphasised in comparing Thuringowa's expenditure with that of other Shires was not so much the percentage of rates to total revenue but what it showed about Thuringowa's Councils. This is also the purpose of the Table 12 which gives a comparison of the level of loans, rates and expenditure in the 1970s with that of Mulgrave and Pioneer.

Thuringowa's large annual increase in population - the biggest in the State - was a crucial factor with respect to the differences between the three Shires. Thuringowa levied the highest rate, had the greatest loan liability and, as a consequence of the latter, paid more per person in interest and redemption in order to cater for the population-generated increase in works and services (see Table 12). The higher expenditure on administration also reflected the expansion in staff and associated office equipment and consumables needed to cope with the growth in administration created by the escalation of the Shire's population. It is not surprising that Harris and Crossman conclude that Thuringowa's increase in expenditure over the decade was due less to inflation and more to the growth of its population which generated more expenditure. In comparison, because of their small population increments, increases in expenditure in Mulgrave and Pioneer were due primarily to inflation and secondly to the Shires'

ability to allocate more of its revenue to the provision of more works and services per person than in 1970-1971 (see Table 12). Such increases in "real outlays", frequently referred to as "constant price outlays", indicates that the expenditure is calculated

by assuming that 1970-71 prices applied in 1978-79 [and] represents the purchases of goods and services in quantitative terms, since any additional expenditure due to mere price increases has been eliminated.¹⁶⁴

The negative percentages, based on "constant prices", for rates and expenditure (see Table 12) suggests that Thuringowa did not keep pace with inflation. However between 1970 and 1979 there was a 44% and 60% increase in loan liability and rate charges, respectively. Ratepayers were hardly likely to have approved steeper increases, particularly as 72% of the Shire's roads were paved and over 80% of all dwellings had water reticulation.¹⁶⁵

Evident throughout this chapter are three distinct periods in the Shire's financial history. In the first 20 years or so Boards, faced with the need to establish a basic road network and encouraged by Colonial endowments, entered upon vigorous works programs and relatively large expenditure. During the middle 60 years rural-oriented Councils kept rates and works programs alike to a minimum and eschewed loans almost entirely. Admitting the limited reserves on which it could draw, much of the financial stringency of this middle period, particularly from World War II to the mid-1960s, was self-inflicted. As the penny-pinching policies were clearly popular with the Shire's voters, it is difficult in a democracy to condemn an elected government for doing what the majority

164 C.P. Harris and P.J. Crossman, *Growth and Change in Queensland's Six Provincial Regions 1970-71 to 1979-80*, Townsville District Development Bureau, Townsville, 1980, p.126.

165 See Chapters on Roads and Water.

of the electorate demonstrated consistently in every year it wanted. Since 1965 a balance of growth, needs and available finance, akin to that of the first period, produced vigorous works programs financed by high, but by no means reckless expenditure, aided by new State and Federal support. The cycle of boom and stagnation was predictably paralleled in the Councils' provision of quality of life services.

CHAPTER 14

"Quality of Life" Considerations

Though local government is closely identified in studies on government with the values of liberty, participation and efficiency, the person in the street and the ratepayer associate it more clearly with taxation and the provision of essential road, water, garbage and sanitation services which effect their daily lives; these are seen as its *raison d'être*. Its existence is often justified as an efficient provider of such services - not on the basis of any contributions to democracy.¹

Even the most mundane pursuits of local government, however, have far reaching ramifications; they cannot be considered in isolation. Firstly, the provision of basic services affects the physical and aesthetic aspects of the local environment.² Secondly, the effective implementation of water reticulation and sanitation systems (together with other health improvement measures, such as anti-pollution and land zoning regulations) affects the quality of daily life - even more significantly, perhaps, than the provision of cultural, recreational and tourist facilities. Water reticulation replaces water drawn from the backyard well or tank; bitumen roads reduce dust and noise pollution; sewerage obviates the emptying and cleansing of smelly chamber pots and outhouses. Essential chores become less onerous and disagreeable. Thirdly, a district's economic pursuits can be improved or hindered depending on the

1 See Chapter 7 and R. Chapman, "Local Authorities and Responsible Government", p.100 and R. Jensen debate this thesis; "Local Government in Queensland: A Need for Re-orientation". *Planner* (Brisbane), 17, 2 (1977), pp.22-26.

2 Sometimes, though not in Thuringowa's case, this can have state, national and international repercussions - the Mulgrave Shire Council's decision, with State ratification and backing, to put a road through the Daintree National Park Reserve, for instance.

quality of a local authority's roads and bridges; an ample water supply is crucial for industry; anti-erosion measures aid farmers and graziers.

Overall, between 1879 and 1985, Thuringowa's Councils implemented effective works programs that improved the physical and aesthetic qualities of life, but not at a uniform pace. The first two decades (1880-1902) and the last two decades (1963-1985) were particularly eventful, with vigorous works programs to meet the demands generated by population booms in the suburbs of Townsville. In the first period, 1880-1902, the Divisional Boards were imbued with ideals of progress dictating that the environment be tamed. Roads and bridges for quicker transportation and communication within and between towns were mandatory; water reticulation was a necessity for "civilised" living in the suburbs; improvements in sanitation were instigated with the changeover from the pit to the pan system; and suburbia was shaped into sets of rectangular grids, bound and linked by formed roads and footpaths which were periodically torn up to put down water mains. The latter period, 1963-1985, was characterised by unrelenting expansion; the provision of eight different water reticulation services; substantial road improvements; two shire halls; tourist facilities; and massive injections of loan and revenue monies into sewerage, cleansing and drainage. Both periods had colourful, charismatic chairmen (especially Hodel and Gleeson) who attracted media coverage of Thuringowa's activities, particularly with their aggressive stances against the Townsville City Council and State Government whenever they thought Thuringowa was not receiving a "fair go". The middle period (1903-1963) presents a different picture. Though the years from 1903 to 1918 witnessed consolidation and minor extension of existing roads, bridges, sanitation and health services, the impression is one of plodding self-satisfaction with the *status quo*. In the next 40

years even less was achieved: from 1919 to 1963 Thuringowa was seen as an impoverished, backward Shire struggling to maintain even the established level of services.

A brief analysis of the main emphases of the various Boards and Councils in each of these three periods will provide a general, chronological framework for an assessment of the effectiveness of the works programs in this chapter; the next two will attempt a more detailed, critical evaluation of the implementation of two major functions of local government - roads and water. Thus, these three chapters examine aspects of the three theories in the Thuringowa model. This chapter particularly focuses on the theories of existence and action with respect to the liberty and efficiency values and the modified systems analysis of what was done, or not done, and why.

Even in the progressive eras, administering the various local government acts to ensure that efficient and effective environmental works projects were implemented and that ratepayers were given value for money was not an enviable task for Thuringowa's elected representatives. Firstly, in its provision of essential services, the local authority was always circumscribed by its budget in which expenditure was largely limited to revenue, and the budget had to be acceptable both to ratepayers and state government.³ The Chapter on finance revealed the Shire's financial predicaments: as receipts fluctuated, so did expenditure and, hence, the type and priorities of works projects. Income from rates, therefore, was the most important factor affecting what works would be completed. Secondly, boundary changes not

3 Tucker states: the "budget must be balanced as nearly as possible and once adopted, it may not be departed from except in emergent or extraordinary circumstances"; "Queensland", p.519

only changed the character of the Shire from rural-suburban (1882-1893) to suburban-rural (1893-1916) to rural-suburban (1918-1936) to rural (1937-1963) but also the type of works carried out. For instance, during the secession of the rural south-eastern portion between 1893 and 1916, the suburbs were a very significant feature of the Shire and hence their works priorities. Thirdly, the effectiveness of the Shire's works programs was also dependent on whether the business of running the Shire was conducted efficiently by the various Boards and Councils. Even though the minutes became progressively more bland and devoid of detail, there is enough information about discussions to indicate whether or not debate was serious: the frequency of amendments to motions and divided voting, for example. The Minutes, and more particularly newspaper reports, reveal that the Shire's meetings were rarely disrupted by internal factionalism or (as the journalists described it) "slanging matches". Indeed, meetings were interrupted for these reasons on only six occasions in a century of government.⁴ It was also rare for a meeting to be cancelled for lack of a quorum, even in the first decade; when they were, it was usually the weather - and

4 Minutes, 1880-1979. Two instances stand out; it would seem that one Councillor who was volatile was a major factor in both. In 1971 when the Chairman was accused of spending public money to build a private road and hiring his brother as the plant operator, there was a 20 minute "exchange of shouting and name-calling which another Councillor described as a 'witch hunt'"; *TDB* 17 June 1971, Press Cuttings and Advertisements Book 1964+. In 1973 a Council meeting erupted into "a mud slinging... abuse hurling match", *TDB*, 18 May 1973, Press Cuttings and Advertisements Book 1964+. In comparison, the Townsville City Councillors were often at loggerheads; Moles, for instance, points out that by 1948 Townsville's municipal government had "degenerated into a tripartite contest of mudslinging and table-banging in which venom, acerbity, acrimony and vitriol were mingled freely"; *A Majority of One*, pp.149,151.

sometimes a race meeting - that prevented attendance.⁵ Successive Boards and Councils took the job of governing a difficult Shire quite seriously.⁶ Fourthly, Thuringowa's environmental and recreational works programs were also influenced by the various Councils' philosophies of the role and functions of local government, the benefits and disadvantages of proximity to Townsville and the Colonial or State Government's responses to proposed loans, by-laws and projects. These factors will be woven into the analysis of how effectively Thuringowa's Councils tamed the environment.

Implementing works programs was an enormous task in a new local authority area whose only amenities were the

5 For example, in 1889, the only meeting to be cancelled through want of a quorum fell on the area's most important race day; Annual Report, Joseph Hodel, Chairman, 13 February 1890, p.1, Thuringowa Divisional Board Reports Book 1889 -. On 25 January 1892, the meeting lapsed because Mr. Munroe had resigned, Mr. F. Gordon was on leave of absence and Mr Mawby "was disinclined to ride the 15 miles into town due to the heavy rains on the chance of a quorum being present"; TH 27 January 1892. For the remainder of the century, only five meetings lapsed for want of a quorum: 8 January 1908, 12 January 1910, 18 June 1918, 21 December 1956 only three Councillors arrived for the subsequently cancelled meetings; no Councillors were present for the 4 January 1957 meeting due to the wet; Minute Books, 11 THU/D3 and 11 THU/D5.

6 Analysis of the attendance of Members and Councillors shows that in 1891 attendance compared very favourably with that of Cardwell and Woothakata. Out of 13 general meetings in 1891, five Members attended more than 10 Thuringowa Divisional Board meetings and one Member less than seven; the comparable figures for Cardwell and Woothakata were two and three at more than 10 meetings and three each at less than seven Board meetings, respectively; Thuringowa Reports Book, 1889-1891; TH, 20 January 1892, p.10; 8 March 1892, p.10. Between 1906 and 1921, attendance at Thuringowa Shire Council meetings fluctuated between five and nine members; usually seven to eight Councillors attended; Minutes Books, 11 THU/D5. Between 1952 and 1961 most of the seven Councillors attended most meetings, though the rate fluctuated from four to seven in attendance; Thuringowa Minute Book, 17 November 1952 - 17 February 1961.

Cobb & Co. routes out of Townsville. Thuringowa's Divisional Boards in the first two decades effectively demonstrated their ability to cater for both the needs of a vast rural sector and the urban requirements of the rapidly expanding, western suburbs of Townsville. This was particularly so after Thuringowa lost Ross Island to Townsville and the remote south-eastern corner to Ayr Divisional Board, in 1881 and 1888 respectively. The urban and rural works programs in this first period - substantial road formation, at least 16 bridges, water reticulation, modernisation of the sanitation system and the Townsville to Ayr railway - were remarkable in view of the number of obstacles: the very infancy of rural local government; the diminishing endowment subsidy; the 1890s depression; the boundary changes and loss in rateable land and income; the considerable distances involved in a Division of some 2 000 sq.miles; the huge increase in the suburban population; and the frequent turnover in Divisional Board Chairmen and Members, many of whom had to be appointed to the position.

Tangible evidence of progress was seen in the increase in rural settlement with the resumption of pastoral properties and the creation of 160 acre leases but, more so, in the dramatic growth of suburban Thuringowa. Thuringowa was predominantly rural with one suburb in 1880. Out of 279 dwellings, there were 75 suburban rateable dwellings - 57 in the Townsville suburb of Ross Island which was annexed to Townsville in 1881; 13 on Ingham Road; and 5 dwellings and 13 vacant allotments in Mundingburra.⁷ However Thuringowa quickly became a rural-suburban shire. Only three years later, half of the 400 dwellings were in the suburbs. In 1890 a majority of the 683 dwellings were located in 32 different suburban sub-divisions whilst in 1902 there

⁷ References for these and following statistics are in fn 9.

were 1 020 dwellings listed.⁸ Between 1880 and 1902, suburban dwellings increased by a staggering 882%.⁹

In comparison with other Divisional Boards, this growth was unparalleled. The implications of an average, yearly, urban growth rate of 40% for Thuringowa's works programs were staggering. In order to cope with this population boom in suburbia, two major suburban bridges, two reconstructions of Ross River Bridge and at least seven minor suburban bridges were built during the first two decades. The formation, stumping, gravelling and general upgrading of suburban roads was another priority. Formed footpaths in the more closely settled suburbs were provided. Like other local authorities, roads and bridges dominated Thuringowa Divisional Boards' expenditure.

The close proximity of urban, residential living meant that regulations for the general health of suburban residents became increasingly important in these two decades. Diseases were thought to be transmitted by miasma, "an evil and invisible mist arising from 'nuisances' such as swamps, open drains, cesspits, garbage, rotting carcasses, excreta, and anything else that stank", that is, unhygienic local conditions.¹⁰ The miasma theory of disease transmission ensured that the main thrust of the Government's public health policies was directed at local solutions. Local

8 The latter figure is probably an exaggeration as the population did not increase that dramatically; see Table 1 and discussion of Thuringowa's demography in Chapter 1.

9 I have used a more realistic figure than 1 020 dwellings for 1902 which would have resulted in an increase of 1 260%. Statistics of Queensland 1880-1900; WOR/N18; Reports Book 1889-1891; 11 THU/132; 11 THU/G1; Valuation Registers 1886-1887 to 1900-1902, 11 THU/20-35.

10 Janice Wegner, "Nightcarts and Nuisances: Rural Local Government and Public Health in North Queensland, 1879-1945", p.181; hereafter "Nightcarts and Nuisances".

government was therefore given the responsibility for the prevention and disposal of local nuisances. It had the power to approve slaughterhouses, dispose of carcasses, impound straying animals, adopt anti-pollution measures, provide sanitary services and implement water schemes. Following upon a recent typhoid epidemic, Griffith's *Health Act* of 1884 also made local authorities responsible for the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases; in conjunction with the Townsville Municipal Council, Thuringowa's Divisional Board was made responsible for the upkeep of quarantine facilities and an infectious diseases ward in the North Kennedy Joint District Hospital.¹¹

Above all, the Board's major health priority was the provision of reticulated water. A plentiful supply of clean water would significantly lessen the spread of the most troublesome diseases during early settlement: typhoid, dysentery, malaria and dengue fever. As a comprehensive analysis of Thuringowa's water works provisions occurs in the next chapter, it is sufficient to highlight here the Board's commitment to the public health of its constituents. Money was expended from revenue on various water schemes from as early as 1888 until a suitable supply was found in 1896. The Board sank at least six wells, tested more and proposed several adventurous water projects before settling on Hodel Well in Mundingburra. The Thuringowa Water Area was duly constituted in January 1897.¹² By comparison, Thuringowa's neighbour, Hinchinbrook Shire, did not provide reticulated water for its town, Ingham, until 1935.¹³ The early Boards displayed great tenacity in

11 Morrison, *Local Government in Queensland*, p.19. This was the first name given to the Townsville General Hospital.

12 Letter, 16 January 1897, Correspondence Book.

13 Wegner, "Nightcarts and Nuisances", p.183; see next chapter for more details.

the long search to provide one of the major functions of local government - water reticulation.

Attention to the sanitary requirements of Thuringowa's urban spread occurred only after roads and bridges, the economic lifelines of early settlement, and water reticulation, were under control. The first sanitary by-laws abolished cesspits in 1896 and introduced the earth closet and the sanitary or night cart which remained features of suburban life in Thuringowa until the 1960s.¹⁴ Thuringowa's Board could have instigated a sewerage scheme in 1896 as the technology was available. There is no evidence that such a scheme was proposed, undoubtedly because a sewerage system would have placed excessive drain on the Board's most precious resource - water. It had taken eight years to find a satisfactory source of water for drinking and washing purposes but, as the suburbs kept expanding, water restrictions became a necessity.¹⁵ Obviously Hodel Well could not meet the needs of a water-based sewerage scheme. Even if this had been an ample source or the Board had located another suitable underground supply, a loan from the Treasury would have been highly unlikely having regard to the recent depression and Brisbane's policy of imposing the financial burden for public health onto the stooped shoulders of local government. Thuringowa was already sorely strained: coping with the needs of a yearly 40% urban growth rate as well as those of the Division's rural residents left little room for provisions beyond the basic requirements. The pan system was comparatively inexpensive and, if monitored properly, met acceptable standards of health,

14 Copy of Sanitary By-law No.19 attached to letter from Elizabeth Cuthbert requesting permission to use her nightsoil for horticulture purposes, 7 April 1897, Thuringowa Divisional Board Correspondence 1896-1898. The nightcart was so-called because it originally operated at night.

15 See next Chapter for details.

particularly in the prevention of transmissible diseases.

The Divisional Boards were fairly successful in their attempts to enforce public health legislation against "nuisances".¹⁶ The siting of slaughterhouses on the outskirts of urban settlement posed no problems for Thuringowa but when its neighbour, Hinchinbrook, tried to do likewise, the butchers objected as slaughterhouses were already established within Ingham township.¹⁷ By-laws to control straying goats, cattle and horses were passed very early in Thuringowa's history. With the employment of a pound keeper, the Boards were successful in combating the problem, at least in the more built-up areas of Townsville's suburbs. In Ethridge and Hinchinbrook, on the other hand, cattle and goats fouled the footpaths and shop verandahs causing offensive smells and unsanitary conditions.¹⁸ The siting of Thuringowa's pound at the Causeway near Townsville's business centre was not accidental. As always, Townsville's needs and, in the secessionist era, its image as North Queensland's most important port were given attention by a Divisional Board whose members had substantial town business interests. However in the rural areas straying goats were a problem; although teachers complained about ransacked lunches and chewed school bags, the Boards did little, other than warn the settlers of the by-law, as goats were a cheap source of milk and meat for the struggling settlers.¹⁹

Thuringowa's civic pride was not confined to

16 The Chairman reported in 1890 that the many complaints regarding existing nuisances had been dealt with; Chairman's Annual Report for 1890, 12 February 1891, Thuringowa Divisional Board Reports Book 1889 - .

17 Wegner, "Nightcarts and Nuisances", p.183.

18 *Ibid.*

19 Secretary Toonpan State School to Under Secretary, Department of Education, EDU/22704.

controlling public nuisances but was also manifested in its administrative centre. The Division's hall was erected in these years to give the Members and ratepayers a focus of identity and to demonstrate the progressiveness of the Board.²⁰ In 1889 the Board spent £800 on acquiring land for the Division's first recreation facility - a park.²¹ However by 1891, Joseph Hodel, the Chairman, seriously contemplated selling "this boon which should have been hailed with delight" as it was not being used by those who most desired it.²² The Board's commitment to what Hodel saw as the luxury functions of local government was met by public indifference, leading to an official reluctance to expand this area of local government spending for years to come. This provides a clear example of the inputs-conversion-outputs mechanism in the modified systems analysis paradigm of the theory of action. It also reveals how councillors could manipulate the participatory value of local government to suit their policies.

This first period reflected such substantial consolidation of the Shire's infrastructure that it had begun to use particularly effective strategies to promote quality of life for Thuringowa's citizens. Such a solid introduction to local government in Thuringowa culminated in 1901 with the Divisional Board's key involvement in the instigation, construction and operation of the Townsville to Ayr railway in conjunction with its two neighbouring local authorities. Thuringowa's reputation by the end of the first two decades as an efficient and effective provider of services was affirmed.

20 See Chapter 9.

21 It was a triangular piece of land in Hermit Park bounded on one side by MacIntosh Street.

22 Chairman's Annual Report for 1890, 12 February 1891, Thuringowa Divisional Board Reports Book 1889 - .

The middle period (1903-1962) was characterised by conservative works policies which were myopic and basic by comparison. The small number of loans taken out, particularly between 1903 and 1918, indicated that the Shire had declined from its earlier status as a progressive and effective local government authority to a local authority backwood.²³

It is difficult to see why the Councils did not maintain the momentum of the first two decades into the 1900s and 1910s. Of course works programs generally continued to upgrade and extend water, roads and sanitation facilities in the Shire. Another well was sunk adjacent to Hodel Well in 1913 to help cater for Thuringowa's increased urban population. However, due mainly to the dearth of ample water supplies, this function became too much for the Shire and was handed to the Townsville Water Board in 1915. Roads were a budget priority but, despite some upgrading and increased mileage, the Councils' emphasis was on maintenance of existing roads. Sanitary regulations were more rigorously enforced, particularly after the 1900 outbreak of bubonic plague, but sanitary services were not substantially increased until the 1910s when there was the startling jump in revenue from sanitary services and cleansing charges from £137 in 1910 to £1 399 in 1915.²⁴ The Councils were content to consolidate their works programs. Improvements made did not approximate the 16 bridges, water reticulation, road projects, construction of the administrative building and Ayr Tramway that were implemented in the first period. There seemed to be a lack of enthusiastic drive. Certainly the Shire still needed more and better bridges and substantially improved roads.

23 Three loans were taken out; see Appendix 5.

24 Statistics of Queensland, 1910-1915.

One reason for the curtailment of formerly adventurous works programs, at least in the 1900s, may be that the previous 40% annual growth rate experienced with the number of dwellings built in the suburbs had declined. In fact there was zero growth for a number of years. However, influenced by Townsville's economy, the lull proved temporary; in 1913, 80 homes were erected in the suburbs. By 1917, Thuringowa had 1 315 rateable dwellings on its books, the majority situated in Townsville's western suburbs.²⁵ The *North Queensland Register* eulogised the new growth in suburbia:

...sites which a couple of years ago represented vacant plots are springing into brisk residential form. The sound of the carpenter's saw and the clink of the bricklayer's trowel are in active evidence and a new and busy group of suburbs is actively asserting itself.²⁶

This rise in the number of lucrative freehold properties meant that the Shire was able to maintain a fairly sound financial situation during the 1910s as, up until then, the Ayr Tramway had brought in a profit nearly every year until its sale in 1912.²⁷ Yet just three loans, ranging from a meagre £265 to only £863 were taken out between 1901 and 1918.²⁸ The Council could have easily afforded the interest and redemption payments on additional and more substantial loans.

Administrative practices that were out of character with the earlier decades also emerged. The Councils allowed the administrative costs of running the Shire to climb from an efficient 9% of expenditure in 1901 to a

25 Statistics of Queensland, 1900-1917.

26 *NQR*, 4 January 1914, p.76.

27 The sale netted the Council £16 000.

28 Statistics of Queensland, 1901-1918; Minutes, 1901-1918 11 THU/D3, 11 THU/D4. Also see Appendix 5.

disproportionately high 39% in 1915.²⁹ State Government thought an expenditure of 25% of a local authority's revenue on administration was the maximum fiscally prudent. Indeed, both the 1897 and 1928 Royal Commissions on Local Government were instructed to consider abolishing any local authority whose administrative costs exceeded that figure. Increases in salaries accounted for some of Thuringowa's increase but this was not a significant factor since the Council maintained its practice of retrenching staff after a particular works program was completed and over the Christmas-New Year holiday period.³⁰ It seems that the Councils became inexplicably lax in controlling what was spent on furniture, fittings, stationery and other administrative expenses, apart from salaries. In 1915 the Council spent more out of rate revenue on office expenses and salaries than it did on public works though it still congratulated itself on finishing the year with a surplus.³¹ Fiscally, the Councils appeared not merely cautious but unduly circumspect, opting for balanced books and a works program shackled to a very moderate rating structure.

Hodel was still Chairman for 10 years between 1903 and 1918 - the same man who had steered Thuringowa for most of the progressive first period from 1889 to 1902 during which effective and innovative works programs were carried out in spite of the 1890s Depression and boundary changes. The cessation of the endowment in 1903 and the 1902 local government legislation which encouraged ratepayer polls on loans certainly influenced the contraction of Council activities.³² In addition, Hodel

29 Statistics of Queensland, 1901-1918.

30 See Chapter 17.

31 Statistics of Queensland, 1915; Minutes, 9 June 1915, 11 THU/D4.

32 See Chapter 8.

reversed his earlier rating policy. It was a decision that also protected the Councillors' personal interests. In the 1880s and 1890s the ratepayers and particularly the more well-to-do landholders from whom the Board Members were drawn, had endured relatively high rates. Now that basic services were in place, they were intent on keeping rates down. The profits of the Ayr Tramway, and the proceeds from its sale, were used not to improve services but to keep rates down.³³ Shortsighted as this is bound to seem in retrospect, it has to be acknowledged that facilities in Thuringowa in the early part of the twentieth century compared quite well with those of other Shires. For instance, water reticulation had not yet been implemented in most other North Queensland shires; the shire hall was "more elegant" than those in neighbouring shires; a recreation reserve had been gazetted; and sanitation and roads were being consolidated.³⁴ Hodel and the Councils were content to rest on their laurels.

Between 1901 and 1918 the Councils exuded an air of conservative self-satisfaction. Both policy and practice were reflected in moderate rate charges and a mediocre works program that maintained the *status quo*. However, between 1918 and 1950 it was rather the Shire's poverty which shaped a continuing low rate charge and modest works program.³⁵ Of course, the advent of the motor car

33 See Chapter 13.

34 Based on a comparison from Statistics of Queensland, 1903-1917.

35 An indication of that poverty was the dearth of new dwellings erected between 1937 to 1956: eight dwellings were erected between 1937 and 1945, 12 between 1945 and 1950 and 28 in the seven years to 1957; a total of 48 dwellings for 20 years. Statistics of Queensland, 1937-1956; Valuation Registers, 1937-1956, 11 THU/113-127; Census. Men returning from the War and migrants, particularly Italians, settling in the Giru and Major Creek areas would have accounted for some of the increase.

imposed enormous financial burdens on an indigent Shire encumbered with long lengths of main roads. Changes in the role of local government brought about by State laws also added to Thuringowa's financial burden. However, in the 1950s, with the upturn in the cattle and sugarcane industries, Thuringowa's rural Councillors were hypocritical in blaming the Shire's poverty. The reasons had more to do with maintaining low taxes.

After losing the densely populated, western suburbs in 1918 - 790 dwellings and 4 500 people³⁶ - and the financially poorer, small suburbs of Stuart, Oonoomba and Fairfield in 1937, Thuringowa became a poor rural Shire with one small village, Giru, and four hamlets, Woodstock, Mutarnee, Paluma and Rollingstone. The two World Wars and the Depression years were difficult for everyone; the 1920s and 1930s were especially so for a financially weak Shire whose Councils seemed increasingly unable or unwilling to cope. Thus, the 27 loans taken out between 1918 and 1960 meant that the Shire did not average even one loan per year. Loans, moreover, were small, only 11 exceeding £1 000.³⁷ "A depressive air of stagnation hung over the Shire".³⁸

Additional burdens were placed on Thuringowa's revenue after 1918. Local government was given further duties and increased financial responsibility for health care even though control was lodged with the Central

36 Statistics of Queensland, 1917 and 1918.

37 See Appendix 5.

38 TDB, Editorial, 25 January 1961, p.2.

Board of Health.³⁹ State Government's legislative dictates was one of the environmental input factors in the theory of action model affecting the Councils' decision making. With the outbreak of Spanish Influenza in 1919, Thuringowa Shire was responsible for 11% of the cost of equipment and upkeep of the infectious diseases ward in the local hospital, as well as the hospital costs of each shire patient admitted with Spanish Influenza.⁴⁰ The Chairman, Councillor Cummins, believed this was too great a burden as "country people did not avail themselves of the benefits of hospitals as much as city people".⁴¹ Though this was correct in the case of Thuringowa, the level of contribution remained unchanged.

Though the germ theory had by now gradually superseded the miasma explanation of disease transmission, local government was still made responsible for child immunisation programs from the 1920s to the present day.⁴² The Shire had to take out a loan to provide this service in 1937 even though the amount was a mere £149.⁴³ Any outbreak of diphtheria caused heightened concern, the Council ensuring that the

39 Provoked by an outbreak of bubonic plague which occurred yearly between 1900 and 1910 in various ports from Cairns to Brisbane, the 1900 Health Act established a Commissioner for Public Health who could order recalcitrant councils to implement health works. R. Cilento points out that the Queensland Government was accused of evading responsibility for public health by placing it on local government; *Triumph in the Tropics* (Brisbane, 1959), p.432.

40 The Townsville Municipal Council paid 22% and the Queensland Government 66%; *Local Government*, June (1919), p.563.

41 *Local Government*, June (1919), p.565. In the first two months, the Council paid £107; Minutes, 10 September 1919, 11 THU/D5.

42 Report of the Commissioner for Public Health, *QPP*, 1921, Vol.2, p.45.

43 See Appendix 5.

children in the "infected" area were promptly immunised.⁴⁴

In the 1930s, local government, which could ill-afford added burdens, was required substantially to help finance public hospitals. From 1932 to 1940 Thuringowa paid an annual levy of £707 to the Townsville Hospital Board.⁴⁵ In addition to the yearly charge, there were the expenses concerned with infectious diseases, the salary and expenses of a Health Inspector and the retainer for a Medical Officer. This represented approximately 25% of all Thuringowa's expenses; in 1937 it was 33.3%. It was an enormous burden on Thuringowa's meagre revenue and contributed in no small way to Thuringowa's penury - not to say the Council's reputation as a stagnant and unprogressive body, for there was little left to spend on roads and other works. The cost of funding public health sapped Thuringowa's finances and limited its works programs. A basically rural Shire was forced to appropriate a disproportionately high percentage of its revenue to health services which were more properly seen as the responsibility and preserve of higher tiers of government because of their complex nature and high cost - and because disease was no respecter of local government boundaries.

Cummin's Council gave full support to the Government's Hookworm Campaign in June 1920 though only after two month's careful consideration of the issues. There were great difficulties in the way of adopting the scheme because of the Shire's scattered population. (The

44 For instance, in 1953 when four isolated cases of diphtheria were diagnosed at Bohle River, a campaign "started immediately to immunise the children at the Bohle and at Rollingstone"; Minutes, 17 April 1953.

45 This was the average; the range was from £536 in 1934 to £996 in 1940. Auditors Reports, 1929 to 1933, AUD/S1 to AUD/S41; Statement of Accounts 1933-1940, 11 THU/131 (QSA).

length of the deliberations also indicates a lingering resentment of centralist decisions). The Councillors arranged public and school addresses in the different sections of the Shire and lent horses to the campaign's staff. The health inspector was instructed to carry out inspections of all outhouses to ensure that the privy was fly proof, re-inspect those not acceptable and report recalcitrant householders.⁴⁶ Indeed the Council's records of this period - in fact from 1896 to the 1960s - detail with great fastidiousness the minutiae of sanitation services: tenders called and terms of acceptance, charges, complaints, tabulations of the number of pans in store, requests for the extension of the sanitary service, reports of depot maintenance and health inspection. There was human drama too: sanitary pans improperly positioned by the sanitary contractor; a clutter of obstacles between road and "dunny" for the contractor to negotiate in the dark; the contractor making noisy entrances that woke the dog, that woke the goat, that woke the confused rooster, that woke the baby!⁴⁷ As Wegner confirms, sanitation was a very necessary but troublesome public health service.⁴⁸

Although there was genuine support for Australia's involvement in the two World Wars, such as the promotion of Australian Government war bonds to help finance the war effort, Thuringowa's Councils were ever mindful of their responsibility to the physical and economic wellbeing of their citizens. For instance, in 1939 the Council reflected the general anxiety of its citizens

46 *Local Government*, April 1920, p.326; Minutes, 9 June 1920, 11 THU/D5.

47 Inletter, 18 April 1936, General Correspondence, 11 THU/J8.

48 From her studies of the Ethridge and Hinchinbrook Shires, Wegner remarks that "Council Minutes indicate an obsession with sanitary matters", "Nightcarts and Nuisances", p.185.

when it lobbied the Government to "speed up the establishment of an air squadron and provide adequate defences so that property and life might have some protection in the event of the outbreak of hostilities".⁴⁹ It supported the request by Upper Ross parents that the Weir School, which bordered the Bohle airfield, be temporarily closed and relocated to the home of one of the children's families.⁵⁰ The education department concurred.⁵¹ The Council was adamant that the sugar and beef industries should not be made to suffer just because Thuringowa and Townsville became a garrison location for Australian and American troops. The Council ensured that the Government excised and fenced a section from the top area of the Bohle airfield to protect travelling stock to the QME and Alligator Creek Meatworks.⁵² On the grounds of justice to the North which was in the first line of defence and whose economy was suffering because of the reduction in sugar production, Thuringowa Shire Council protested that rationing of refined (mill-white) sugar should not be applied north of the Tropic of Capricorn; it lobbied other Councils to support Thuringowa's petition to the

49 Letter to Minister for Defence, Canberra from Thuringowa Council, 26 June 1939, Correspondence re Woodstock-Charters Towers Road (1937-1939), 11 THU/149 (QSA).

50 Letter to Director of Education, Department of Public Instruction, Brisbane, 5 April 1943, EDU/Z2879.

51 Reports by E. Walton, District Inspector of Schools, Townsville-Innisfail District re Report re proposed alteration, by R.A.A.F. authorities to the fences at the Weir School, Nos.17041 and 42089, 20 April 1943 and 21 October 1943, respectively, EDU/Z2879.

52 Letter to Premier of Queensland from Prime Minister, Commonwealth of Australia, 24 April 1942, CRS/A6478, Prime Minister's Department, Correspondence Files, Secret and Confidential War Series (4th System), 1939-1945, Item A1.27/1/1 Townsville Dispersal Facilities - Weir School Townsville Hiring No.1069, 1943.

Government, too.⁵³ In reply, the Minister for Trade and Customs not only highlighted Australia's obligation to fulfil the current sugar needs of the Empire and its Allies, but cautioned Thuringowa to think of the long term benefits to its sugar industry:

from a purely selfish point of view it is incumbent on Australia to export as much sugar as possible to the United Kingdom during its hour of need, as we look to that country to relieve us of all excess production of sugar in times of peace.⁵⁴

Thuringowa heeded the message; there were no more protests about the Government's sugar rationing.

Councillor bias on contentious war issues did not surface in Council affairs. Thus, there was no intimation of how the Councillors felt during the First World War towards conscription, an issue which was dividing the community.⁵⁵ During World War Two, the Council did not reflect the wider Australian concern for the deployment of Black American troops in its Shire. Moles caustically comments that Australian reaction to Black American soldiers was "plainly schizophrenic".⁵⁶ General MacArthur "respected" Australia's racial views and assigned Black American soldiers to bases "far from

53 Letter to Thuringowa Shire Council from R. Keane, Minister for Trade and Customs, 30 November 1942, 11 THU/152.

54 Letter to Thuringowa Shire Council from R. Keane, Minister for Trade and Customs, 30 November 1942, 11 THU/152.

55 Minutes and Outwards Correspondence, 1916-1917. See M. Douman, "Townsville During World War 1", pp.177-195, for an examination of the conscription issue.

56 Moles, *A Majority of One*, p.124.

urban centres".⁵⁷ Thuringowa was just such an area "far from [southern] urban centres". Probably close to 1 000 were stationed in Thuringowa.⁵⁸ To the Council, their travelling would have added to the wear-and-tear of the Shire's roads, but this only strengthened the Council's demands for Federal support for its road program in order to ensure efficient transportation during the War.⁵⁹ During both World Wars, it was business as usual for the Councils.

Between 1918 and the 1950s the Councils fought uphill battles to maintain existing services; any improvements effected were seen by outsiders as insubstantial. Most of the criticisms were directed at the Council's "inadequate" road works program. The concentration of complaints on roads cannot be taken as

57 Officially, Australia "reluctantly" agreed to accept Black American regiments on the condition that they would be withdrawn "at the end of the Australian emergency". J.H. Moore, "Australians learn to live with big black bucks", *The Sunday Review* (Melbourne), 13 June (1971), p.1022.

58 450 were stationed at Reid River, a battalion at Giru, others at Woodstock and Antil Plains and "some hundreds of Negroes in a large holding encampment" were situated on the border of Thuringowa-Townsville; Moles, *A Majority of One*, p.125. See Map 6 for locations. By mid-1942 there were 6 394 in Australia; 3 500 were in Mt. Isa and most of the remainder (2 894) ended up in North Queensland. The total figure represented nearly 40% of all Black American troops stationed overseas at the time; only in the British Isles and Northwest Africa were they as numerous as in the southwest Pacific; Moore, "Australians learn to live with big black bucks", pp.1022-1023. However "even concealment in the bush was deemed inadequate insulation": Queensland newspaper editors were forbidden to include articles or photographs depicting black troops; State Publicity Censor: Instruction to Press on United States Troops, 16 April 1942, 23 April 1942, Department of Information, Queensland State Publicity Censor, Unregistered Correspondence Files, 1939-1945, BP361/2 items 1-1, 1-1A.

59 Chapter 15 shows that the Commonwealth Government was instrumental in much of the upgrading of the Shire's roads.

evidence that other Council services were satisfactory. It is merely a reflection of the larger number of road users who passed through the Shire without experiencing any of its other services. In 1935 the local branch of the RACQ and the Townsville and District Development Association even called for the dissolution of the Council and the dismantling of the Shire because it could not upgrade or even effectively maintain the existing main roads.⁶⁰ Of the 27 loans taken out between 1918 and 1960, all but seven were for roads, bridges, culverts or road plant; more significantly, because of its relevance to the questioning of Thuringowa's ability to govern, 11 of the 12 loans taken out between 1928 and 1939 were associated with road works.⁶¹ Road works were clearly a Council priority but the amount of money available from revenue and the small size of the loans (which were dependent on the Council's ability to repay) were insufficient to do anything but maintain and minimally upgrade the long lengths of road in Thuringowa.⁶²

Yet Thuringowa's Councils under James Cummins and Charles Wordsworth had the initiative to implement three development projects not merely local but regional: the Haughton Tramway Extension in 1922, the region's aerodrome in 1930 and the Toonpan Dam in 1935.⁶³ The latter two projects were not expensive; they were paid for out of general revenue. Nevertheless they reveal that the Councils were prepared to go beyond local concerns, especially when benefit also accrued to the

60 Copy of Minutes of Deputation to the Minister for Transport (Hon. J. Dash, who was also the local member), 9 March 1935, pp.1,2, 11 THU/141.

61 See Appendix 5.

62 See next Chapter.

63 Cummins was Chairman from 1920-1929; Wordsworth from 1930-1948.

shire's rural industries. The three projects however were exceptions to the general timidity of the Councils who could have obtained more revenue by increasing rates. In fact, when Wordsworth increased rates in the 1930s, the valuer had decreased the value of the land.⁶⁴ In effect, it cancelled any increase in revenue but it did take cognisance of the pockets of the rural ratepayers. The common denominator in the moderate land valuation and rating policy and the three regional development projects was a determination to protect the Shire's beef and sugar industries. As with Hodel's Councils, the Councillors also benefited as all but two had financial stakes in Thuringowa's rural industries. As the Shire was predominantly rural, there was no major conflict of interest except that the people of Giru often bemoaned the low level of urban facilities but, as their numbers were small and their constant petitions for secession were ignored by Brisbane and Ayr, to whose Shire they wished to belong, their demands could be safely brushed aside. Effected by the general poverty of the Shire and, after 1950, by a desire to minimise rates, rural interests dominated.

In 1958 Cr. A.H. Innes (who continually pricked the Council's complacency) compared Thuringowa's Council with the local authority described by Charles Dickens in *Little Dorrit*: both "make it their business of discovering how things may not be done".⁶⁵ For most of the 60 years after 1900, this would be fair comment.

The last period in Thuringowa's first century (1963-1985) was characterised by unrelenting expansion. The new shire hall built in 1963 reflected a turning point. It gave the Shire a symbol of modernity which augured well for the future direction of the Councils. During

64 See Chapter 13.

65 TDB, ? March 1958, Press Clippings Book.

the early 1960s, the editor of the *Townsville Daily Bulletin* saw the connection and praised the "new look" Shire for emerging from the doldrums through its own efforts.⁶⁶ By 1965 Thuringowa had its first full-time shire clerk since the early 1930s, the services of consulting engineers, a new shire hall, £20 000 of modern road making plant, its first full-time foreman of works - the Councillors could not remember when they had one last - and water reticulation:

For decades, the Shire languished, virtually on the brink of bankruptcy, a Cinderella among the local authorities of Queensland...The Council decided that if Thuringowa were to achieve some prosperity and some status, it must think big... Thuringowa Shire has grown up and is tackling its problems manfully.⁶⁷

In addition to providing effective works programs and catering for the traditional tasks of local government, Councils moved into areas previously neglected, such as town planning. This was made possible by a suburban explosion which tipped the income scales in favour of suburban ratepayers, *vis-a-vis* the rural areas, for the first time since 1918.

1964 heralded the era of "big spending". Under Brabon, the Council decided to seek approval for a record works program worth more than £68 000 for the 1964-1965 financial year.⁶⁸ Ten years later, the Shire had accumulated loan liabilities totalling \$2 130 000: \$678 000 for general services, \$932 000 for sewerage, cleansing and sanitation and \$520 000 for water supply

66 The Editor claimed Thuringowa had "shed the garments of Cinderella and has stepped forward, ready to advance on its own feet", *TDB*, Editorial, 19 November 1963, p.2.

67 The Editor obviously thought the metaphor of Cinderella apt; he had used it in one of his editorials in 1962; see previous footnote. The discourse in the last sentence of the quote brings local government back from female connotations (Cinderella) to the man's world that it was; *TDB*, Editorial, 23 February 1965, p.2.

68 *TDB*, 15 February 1964.

projects.⁶⁹ The massive expenditure on sewerage and water was necessary to cater for Thuringowa's rapid growth in suburbia: in Townsville's suburbs and in the alternative rural/suburban one acre to 20 acre "urban farmlet" settlements such as Alligator Creek, Cordelia Estate and Oak Valley, as well as the seaside villages of Balgal, Saunders Beach and Toolakea. An example of this growth was the dramatic increase in population of the Upper Ross suburbs from 121 at the 1961 census to approximately 5 000 by 1977. Of 10 914 people living in Thuringowa in 1976, 9 699 were classified as "not living in rural dwellings". And the population kept increasing. Two thousand dwellings were built in Thuringowa between 1976 and 1981.⁷⁰ The Shire had come a long way, even since the 1950s.

The loan amounts for 1973-1974 reflect the automatic provision of the physical necessities for "the good life" in the suburbs and in equivalent small communities where 80% of its population now lived. Civic amenities always lagged behind. The situation was summarised in evidence given to the Northern Regional Organisation of the Commonwealth Grants Commission which was hearing applications for financial assistance in 1974:

Thuringowa is in the throes of a change from a predominantly rural area to an emphasis on urban development. In a way, it shares to a lesser extent the problems of Townsville with the current demands for the extension of basic services such as water, sewerage and bitumen roads. Its rapidly expanding dormitory suburbs are deficient in civic amenities.⁷¹

Even with supporting data these arguments did not attract an increase in Federal grants; hence the continuing

69 Statistical Summary of Queensland Local Authority Areas, Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1973-1974; hereafter Statistics of Queensland.

70 Calculated from Statistics of Queensland, 1961-1979; Census 1976 and 1981; TDB, 23 July 1979, p.10.

71 Hearing, Commonwealth Grants Commission, p.13.

reliance on loans for roads, bridges, water and sanitation.

Improvements in sanitation were now a priority. Septic and sewerage installations paralleled the reticulation of water, on which they relied. The number of septic installations rose by a yearly average of 23% between 1965 and 1973 then levelled out to a low 3% after the Council implemented a sewerage scheme in 1973 (see Table 13). From 1973 the Shire Councils' commitment to sewerage was substantial. There were only 70 sewerage installations in 1973; within a year there were 680: a 90% increase in expenditure of \$1 002 000.⁷² DeCoursey's Council then settled down to a not insubstantial 19% yearly increase in the number of sewerage connections. By 1979 the sanitary cart had become a memory and by 1985, so had the septic.

TABLE 13
Sewerage and Septic Connections
June 1965 to June 1985.⁷³

Number of Premises Connected			
Year as at 30 June	Sewerage	Septic	Total
1965	-	45	45
1968	-	149	149
1971	-	325	325
1973	70	800	870
1974	680	855	1 535
1978	2 920	921	3 841
1981	3 584	912	4 496
1985	5 580	-	5 580

72 Statistics of Queensland, 1972-1974. This figure includes loans plus subsidy and the amount spent from revenue.

73 Statistics of Queensland, 1965-1983; Local Authority Areas Statistical Summary, Queensland, 1984-1985.

Social welfare became an increasingly important function for local government in 1970s. "Social welfare" is defined by Harris and Ernst as health and welfare services (excepting sanitation and garbage collection) and cultural and recreation facilities.⁷⁴ The Fraser Government's "New Federalism" policy proposed transferring much of the control and responsibility of hitherto Commonwealth social welfare functions to state and local governments.⁷⁵ Welfare bodies looked to local government to take over many social welfare functions because of its "grass-roots' nature". This view was echoed in the answers to a questionnaire on the provision of social welfare services which was sent to aldermen and councillors on the following northern councils: Thuringowa, Ayr, Dalrymple and Hinchinbrook Shires; Townsville and Charters Towers City Councils. A large majority of the aldermen and councillors thought local government had an important role to play in social welfare because it was "closest to the people" and therefore able to understand local needs. They argued that

their council should have more involvement in social welfare programs and activities...because they saw the local authority as the strategically important tier of government because of its close proximity to the people it serves...and therefore more knowledgeable about community needs.⁷⁶

Only four respondents argued that their electorate (unidentified) would be opposed to greater involvement in

74 C.P. Harris, "Local Authorities and Social Welfare Services and Facilities" in Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, *The Delivery of Welfare Services* (Canberra, 1977). J. Ernst, *A Study of Local Government and Social Welfare in the Northern Region*, Northern (QLD) Regional Council for Social Development (Interim Committee) (Townsville, 1977), p.5

75 The following is based on Ernst, *A Study of Local Government and Social Welfare in the Northern Region*, pp.1-14.

76 Ernst, *A Study of Local Government and Social Welfare in the Northern Region*, p.12.

social welfare. All were emphatic, however, that they and their electorates would not countenance an increase in general rates to finance any extended role; rather, there would have to be a massive injection of State and/or Commonwealth money.

For Thuringowa any expansion would have been salutary. In 1976 the Shire spent only 5.1% of its general rate revenue on health and welfare services, including remission and deferment of rates. The bulk of the expenditure went on an Immunisation Program, Health Education and the employment of a Food Inspector. Even in 1976 the Shire was spending much less than the Queensland norm (6.8%) for similar Shires in 1971. With respect to its Cultural and Recreational budget the Shire again spent less in 1976 than its counterparts did in 1971: 7.3% as against 9.2%.⁷⁷ Except for a subsidy to Townsville City Council for the use of its libraries by Shire residents, all the Cultural and Recreational allocation was spent on recreational facilities: parks, gardens, playing fields, a caravan park and beach facilities, such as toilet blocks, barbeques, benches and tables.

In comparison with its neighbouring local authorities in 1976, Thuringowa spent more from rates revenue on health and welfare services than Ayr (2.1%) and Dalrymple (1.8%) Shires, a comparable amount to Hinchinbrook Shire (5.3%) and less than Charters Towers City (10.8%) and Townsville City (7.3%). Again it spent more than Ayr (4.5%) and Dalrymple (1.2%) Shires and less than Hinchinbrook (8.6%), Charters Towers (16.9%) and Townsville (20.3%) on cultural and recreational facilities.⁷⁸ Townsville and Hinchinbrook were the only

77 Harris, "Local Authorities and Social Welfare Services and Facilities", p.10.

78 Harris, "Local Authorities and Social welfare Services and Facilities", pp.9-11.

two Councils to provide a theatre and community and recreation centres.⁷⁹ A cattle shire, Dalrymple had two tiny hamlets and therefore needed to spend little money on urban welfare and recreational facilities. However, Dalrymple's service centre, Charters Towers, was obviously intent on improving its services, particularly as it was attracting more tourists. Sugar cane and rice were the main industries of Ayr Shire which clearly saw social welfare as a low priority: roads, bridges, water and sanitation were its essentials in local government spending. In comparison, Hinchinbrook, a cane growing centre also, saw its role quite differently: the cultural and recreational needs of its constituents were important and therefore needed funding through local government taxation. In comparison with Charters Towers and Hinchinbrook Shire, Thuringowa's efforts were not meritorious. Thuringowa had a larger population in its suburbs than Charters Towers City or Hinchinbrook's principal town, Ingham, yet it spent less on social welfare.

One reason for Thuringowa's meagre expenditure on social welfare facilities (\$6.97 per person out of the \$54.39 per capita received in general rate revenue), had to do with the high population and housing growth in its eastern suburbs.⁸⁰ Between 1971 and 1976 the growth rate was a staggering 26.02%, one of the highest in Australia, placing overriding demands on the Shire's budget for the provision of basic physical infrastructure services, such as roads, drainage, water and sewerage. Another reason has already been referred to in Chapter 9; because of Thuringowa's proximity to Townsville social welfare services provided by Townsville were available to the Shire's residents.

79 Ernst, *A Study of Local Government and Social Welfare in the Northern Region*, pp.7,10,11.

80 Except for Dalrymple Shire, this was the lowest per capita expenditure by the Councils.

This "free rider" behaviour - drawing on central city facilities with users-pay compensation⁸¹ - and rejection of social welfare and support for certain cultural activities was still occurring in the 1980s. In 1984 the Council agreed to sponsor a childminding centre only because it was not financially liable; in 1985 the Council reaffirmed its policy not to support the New Moon Theatre;⁸² and between 1982 and 1986 continued its practice of discriminating against sole parents. Because the majority of Councillors adjudged the sole parents' pension to be morally "open to too much abuse", these pensioners were not allowed a rebate on rates, as were old aged and invalid pensioners, graziers and plant nursery owners.⁸³

Responsibilities towards tourism became an increasing commitment for the Council during this period (1963-1979). Though tourism was one of the largest growth areas in Queensland's economy, local authorities were expected "to carry most of the burden of the provision of tourist amenities".⁸⁴ Thus, as the House of Representatives Select Committee on Tourism concluded: "...the role of local government is crucial to the development of tourism".⁸⁵ With at least 13 popular tourist areas and some roadside rest areas to establish, develop and maintain, Thuringowa's Council advised the 1974 Commonwealth Grants Commission that "access to and

81 Of course, it was not all one way: Townsvilleans were "free riders" with respect to Thuringowa's recreation and shopping facilities. For further discussion of the concept see Archer, "Public Choice Paradigms in Political Geography", pp.78,79.

82 TB, 9 September 1986.

83 TB, 1 March 1985, Newspaper Clipping Book 1985; TB, 9 January 1986, Newspaper Clipping Book 1986.

84 Tucker, "Queensland", pp.414,415.

85 House of Representatives Select Committee on Tourism, *Final Report* (Canberra, 1978), p.65.

provision of facilities for recreation areas...was the Shire's biggest liability".⁸⁶

Town planning powers given to local government in 1922 were ignored by Thuringowa's Councils until the 1960s mainly because, as a poor rural Shire, its population growth had been very small and absorbed by the existing subdivisions since 1918. However the Council began to look ahead, and standards for future subdivisions were laid down in the scheme submitted in 1965 by Thuringowa's town planning consultants.⁸⁷ The need for efficient town planning was brought home to Thuringowa in 1978. The Shire had been without a town planner since the resignation of their local consultant 12 months previously. A southern firm of consultants was commissioned to develop a strategic plan for the development of the Shire, particularly to locate potential urban-rural living environments. However the firm was sacked one week after submitting the first stage of the plan in early 1978 because of certain inaccuracies. The Council was not blameless as the work had been completed in a hurry to meet urgent council demands. The upshot was that the Thuringowa Shire Ratepayers and Residents Association, supported by a few Councillors, called for an inquiry into the Council's town planning affairs, particularly the advisability of appointing non-locals who did not know the Shire.⁸⁸ An election was due in six months and the Councillors'

86 Transcript of Hearing into Applications for Financial Assistance by the Northern Regional Organisation of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, 4 November (1974), pp.37,45; hereafter, Hearing, Grants Commission).

87 The firm was Storer and Storer, Brisbane. *TDB*, 20 February 1965, p.8; 16 October 1965, p.6; 22 February 1966, p.5. A second town plan was submitted by G. Mill, a local consultant, in 1966; *TDB*, 19 February 1966, Press Cuttings and Advertisements, July 1964 -.

88 *TDB*, 25 May 1978, p.3; *The Advertiser*, 19 September 1978, pp.1,2.

support, despite genuine concern for the Shire's welfare, was not disinterested. However with the rapid development of the Shire's suburbs and urban-rural settlements, town planning could not be allowed to lapse into spasmodic responses to emergency or electoral situations; it needed to be ongoing, consistent and, of course, always cognisant of local conditions.

Conditioned by poverty and stagnation, the Councils had allowed a wide range of building standards in its urban settlements - with the result that many of its homes were sub-standard. In keeping with its new progressive self-image, housing standards were raised in this period. In 1963 the Council unanimously agreed that permits would no longer be issued for temporary dwellings: "Won't allow 'Shanty Town' at Yabulu".⁸⁹ As well, Thuringowa no longer permitted itself to be Townsville city's dumping ground. Previously, houses which had been served demolition orders by the Townsville City Council had been resited in Thuringowa as cheap housing. Thuringowa also clamped down on the practice of allowing Townsvilleans to build sub-standard cottages in Thuringowa's beach communities. By 1969 the "clean-up campaign on inferior dwellings" had gained momentum: 24 "eyesores" were demolished and a further 22 owners served notices to show cause why their sub-standard houses should not be removed.⁹⁰ The country cousin no longer tolerated Townsville's cast-offs and hand-me-downs.

Thuringowa's Councillors believed it was no longer appropriate to make a decision on each development problem without considering wider and long term ramifications for the Shire's residential growth,

89 "Sub-standard Shacks at Nome give concern" was another headline indicating the Shire's concern; *TDB*, 9 February and ? August 1963, Press Cuttings Book.

90 Minutes, *TDB*, 18 November 1967, p.7; 20 July 1968, p.3; 16 August 1969, p.3.

Shanty on a Farm near Giru, 1916.



Although functional and affordable when trying to authenticate the agrarian dream in 1916, sub-standard houses like this one were condemned in the new by-laws enacted by the Council in the late 1960s. (Courtesy Oxley Library, No. 15545)

tourism, industrialisation and changing rural activities:

The phenomenal growth rate in recent years and the increasing complexity of development proposals associated with industrial and residential lots of various forms, commerce, tourism and changes in rural activities have cause it to become inadequate to deal with development proposals under the practice of individual consideration and decision.⁹¹

In its last two decades, Thuringowa Shire adopted modern local government practices, calling in experts to give professional assessments on specific problems such as the quality of water from the Ross River well, sulphides in the Ross River sewerage system, the locality and density of flat zoning and an overarching land usage plan.⁹²

The percentage of administrative costs to rate receipts is taken as a gauge of the efficiency of a local authority. In the last half decade before Thuringowa became a city, a comparison with its neighbouring councils (Dalrymple, Hinchinbrook, Ayr and Townsville) and two comparable urban-rural shires (Mulgrave and Pioneer) reveals two important facts.

Firstly, the percentage of Thuringowa's administrative costs to rate receipts fluctuated, the range being a fairly substantial seven percent (see Table 14). It is obvious that the Councils were aware of the high proportion in 1979-1980 and 1981-1982 and took deliberate measures to reduce the percentage

91 Burchill, *Thuringowa Shire Strategic Plan*, p.1.

92 McIntyre and Associates, *Report on the Quality of the Ross River Well Supply*, Job No.W274, January (Townsville, 1972); McIntyre and Associates, *Thuringowa Shire Council Upper Ross Sewerage Scheme: Sulphides in the Trunk System Report*, Job No.S304, September (Townsville, 1977); Geoffrey Mill Pty. Ltd., *Development Control Standards in Respect of Flats and Home Units in Shire of Thuringowa*, 9 November (Townsville, 1971); Geoffrey Burchill and Partners Pty. Ltd., *Thuringowa Shire Strategic Plan 1978*, December (Townsville, 1978) which was commissioned from a local firm after the previous submission from southern consultants was found unacceptable.

TABLE 14

Comparison of Administrative Costs
as a Percentage of Rate Receipts 1979-1984⁹³

	% 79/80	% 80/81	% 81/82	% 82/83	% 83/84
Thuringowa	22	16	23	17	19
Dalrymple	31	31	29	29	35
Hinchinbrook	22	22	25	26	25
Ayr (Burdekin)	14	15	17	17	17
Mulgrave	29	24	29	26	27
Pioneer	20	15	18	17	15
Townsville	14	-	10	11	11

significantly in the subsequent financial years, 1980-1981 and 1982-1983. Rates were raised by at least 1.2 cents in the dollar each year between 1979-1980 and 1982-1983.⁹⁴ If increasing the rate struck was an attempt to lessen the proportion of administrative costs to rate revenue, it was not successful in 1981-1982. Pruning administrative costs was a more significant factor. The rate struck was decreased by 1 cent and 1.5 cents in the dollar for urban and rural divisions respectively in the 1983-1984 financial year,⁹⁵ and the percentage of costs to revenue remained at an acceptable level (see Table 14). The Councils prudently realised that the policy for keeping costs as a percentage of revenue at manageable levels had to rely not so much on increasing the rate struck but in ensuring administrative costs were reduced.

93 Department of Local Government: Queensland, *Statistical Survey, 1979-1984*. Administrative expenses as a percentage of rate revenue was not tabulated prior to the 1979-1980 financial year and from 1984-1985 onwards, they were expressed as a percentage of the total expenditure.

94 See Table 9.

95 See Table 9.

Of course, Councillors perceived that this was a more tolerable solution from the ratepayers' - and State Government's - point of view. A reason for the high outlay on administrative expenditure in 1979-1980 was the personnel and paper work associated with the erection of a new shire hall. Reasons for the escalation in 1981-1982 are not clear, although increased staff was a factor. The fluctuations in the percentages in Table 14 underscore the reasons and implementations of the conversion and output processes in the theory of action in the Thuringowa model of local government.

Secondly, Thuringowa's percentage of administrative costs to rate revenue was the third lowest of the councils compared in Table 14. In fact, in the years under review (1979-1984), only between three to eleven councils out of 29 councils (including those in Table 14) in the Far Northern, Northern and Mackay regions had lower percentages than Thuringowa.⁹⁶ Yet Thuringowa Shire had a higher growth rate than the other six local authorities in Table 14, and one of the highest in Australia. In terms of the efficiency debate within the theory of local government existence, Thuringowa's viability as an efficient administration unit was confirmed.

Led by Brabon, decourcey and Gleeson, the Councils in the 1970s and early 1980s seemed to relish the magnitude of their new challenges. The Shire was no longer "poor", "stagnant", "unprogressive" or "doomed" - charges that had been laid on the Councils' doorstep, not

96 Number of Councils (total 29) in Mackay, Northern and Far Northern Local Government Regions having Smaller Percentages of Administrative Costs to Rate Revenue than Thuringowa

1979-1981	1980-1981	1981-1982	1982-1983	1983-1984
7	5	11	3	9

Calculated from Department of Local Government:
Queensland, *Statistical Survey*, 1979-1984.

without some truth, for so many years. Though ratepayers were never completely satisfied, Thuringowa's Councils from the 1970s provided value for money in basic necessities. Only in the area of social welfare, which Thuringowa's Councillors mentioned to the Commonwealth Grants Commission in 1974 as one of their seven principal problems,⁹⁷ had Thuringowa Shire Councils been purposefully neglectful.

Although there was frequent doubt over the value of local government's involvement in welfare activities, the priority of road works was never questioned. It was, after all, the major reason behind the Colonial Government's creation of rural local government, and it is now appropriate that attention turns to the effectiveness of the Councils' road works program.

97 Hearing, Grants Commission, p.19.

CHAPTER 15

Functions of Local Government: Roads

Clark is one of the few historians to see the importance of examining the functions of local government in Australia. He maintains that water reticulation, roads and sewerage deserve the historian's attention because they are "crucial forms of overhead capital"; adequate and efficient roads and water services are essential requirements of urbanisation.¹ But both the economic and social aspects of local government in Australia, according to Clark, have been largely ignored. Though they do not acknowledge any theoretical base, Chapman and Wood's contention supports the neo-Marxist view that one of the major functions of local authorities is capital accumulation. They argue that the "housekeeping" services which local authorities provide are of

fundamental importance for the operation of the national economy ...they provide the infrastructure necessary for the maintenance or initiation of other economic activity ...Local government has a stake in the Australian economy of greater importance than its share of receipts and outlays suggest.²

They are functions, it is generally argued, which should not be left to the vagaries of private enterprise but rather given to government.³ Roads and water reticulation are social needs which affect the physical, aesthetic and economic welfare of the community.

Thuringowa's policies and practices in regard to road works (this chapter) and water supply services (next

1 D. Clark, "'Worse than Physic?': Sydney's Water Supply 1788-1888" in M. Kelly (ed.) *Nineteenth-Century Sydney: Essays in Urban History* (Sydney, 1978), p.54.

2 Chapman and Wood, *Australian Local Government: The Federal Dimension*, p.69.

3 See Gates, "Local Government in a Dynamic Economy", pp.14,15 and Chapter 7.

chapter) demonstrate the complex factors affecting local government decisions with which Clark is so concerned. The two chapters provide an important test of the Thuringowa model⁴ in action. There is an interweaving of elements within and across the three theories. For instance, within the division of government powers paradigm, the historical-spatial dimensions and the division of sharing-exclusivity of responsibility for roads and water among state, federal and local governments and statutory authorities are crucial factors in the decision making area of the theory of action. The ambiguities in Councils' decisions are highlighted in an examination of how the theory of existence meshes with the theory of action. Thuringowa's liberty versus that of its neighbouring council was challenged by central government in the context of, for instance, Thuringowa's inability to provide decent roads out of Townsville and the acrimony over proposed water agreements with Townsville's Councils. On the other hand, Thuringowa Councils' road policy was often disdainful of the liberty rights of ratepayers who were not graziers or cane farmers. An examination of the efficiency value in the theory of existence reveals the marked differences in policy decisions between the Shire's roads and water provisions. Thuringowa's adherence to economies of scale with respect to its roads policy was shortsighted. In comparison, the various Councils' water reticulation policy was progressive and efficient, given the political and geographical impediments. Thus, issues of liberty and efficiency were either or both cause (inputs) and consequence (outputs) in the modified systems analysis paradigm.

In Chapter 8, it was shown that a major reason for the instigation of rural local government in Queensland was road works. Colonial Government reasoned that the

4 See Diagram 1, Chapter 7.

provision of roads was an unwarranted drain on colonial funds, therefore local authorities would be given the power of taxation to provide that service in their local area. For most of Thuringowa's first century, at least to the mid-1960s, road works functioned within a combined maintenance-small works program, that is, numerous small road improvements (maintenance), minor new construction and little permanent road work. The effect of the policy was that, although the mileage and quality of roads improved over the years, the upgrading process was slow as most of Thuringowa's roads remained in the "formed but not otherwise improved" and "unconstructed" categories until well into the 1960s (see Appendix 7). Government financial support through road grants allowed Thuringowa to change its road policy after 1964 from one of maintenance and small works to a combination of maintenance and permanent work.

From the outset, the extent of roads to be surveyed, stumped, straightened and formed by the new Board, both in suburbia and the rural areas, was daunting. In 1880 the only roads that had received any attention were the three main routes out of Townsville which were established over a decade before Thuringowa came into existence to link Townsville with points beyond the Division (see Map 3). The roads were not "made" but "marked". Wagoners, Cobb & Co., Corveths and the bullock teams marked trees to indicate the route.⁵ Occasionally they would fell a tree, remove a stump or move aside a rock to improve access; otherwise the road was made - to the extent it was - by the wheels of the wagons. The few suburban streets were tracks which skirted bog holes and prolific china apple and gum trees. There were no bridges. Faced by the enormity of the rural and urban road works program and a limited budget, the early Boards could make only one, logical road policy decision. Of

5 Corveths was a local coach operator.

course the policy was not perfect. Transport operators complained that they had done all the initial work, without Divisional Board support, on the Townsville to Ayr road but that it nevertheless took the Board two years to complete Bowen Road.⁶ Within the first two decades, four major rural and at least eleven suburban bridges were constructed. There was little permanent work; indeed some of the suburban bridges, Ross River Bridge and the formed and gravelled roads were seriously damaged or washed away each wet season. However the road works policy allowed distance and the physical environment to be slowly subdued.

During the first two decades, the roads policy ensured that money was available for rural bridges. High priority was given to bridges on the main roads out of Townsville over Ross Creek (1883), the Causeway (1883), Ross River (1885), the Upper and Lower Bohle (both 1889), Stewart's Creek (1893) and two reconstructions of the Ross River Bridge (1893 and 1896-1897) because ratepayers in a predominantly rural division had to have their produce reach market. Also, nearly all the Board Members had businesses in Townsville.

Many had been amongst the district's earliest European settlers whose economic livelihood had depended upon the establishment of road networks linking the hinterland with Townsville's port and marketing facilities. Part of the rural and town elite, their future was bound up with Townsville's stability and prosperity. The bridges built in Thuringowa would aid that growth. The symbiotic relationship between Thuringowa and Townsville and the attention to be given to Townsville's needs was always acknowledged:

⁶ This stretch of road was between the Rising Sun Hotel and Ross River Bridge. When Charters Towers Road turned the corner at the Rising Sun Hotel, it became known as Bowen Road.

The continued prosperity of Townsville and the attention to its demands that it has received from the late and previous governments is in no small portion due as a result of the energy and public spirit displayed by such local Townsville bodies as the Municipal Council, Thuringowa Divisional Board and the Chamber of Commerce.⁷

Proximity to the major town in North Queensland meant that Thuringowa provided the bridges over the Causeway, just 10 yards on Thuringowa's side of the Townsville-Thuringowa-Flinders Street boundary, over Ross River, over the Upper and Lower Bohle River, over Stewart's Creek and later, particularly with the advent of motor vehicles, over at least 13 other rivers that became well-known for their depth, width and/or flooding.⁸

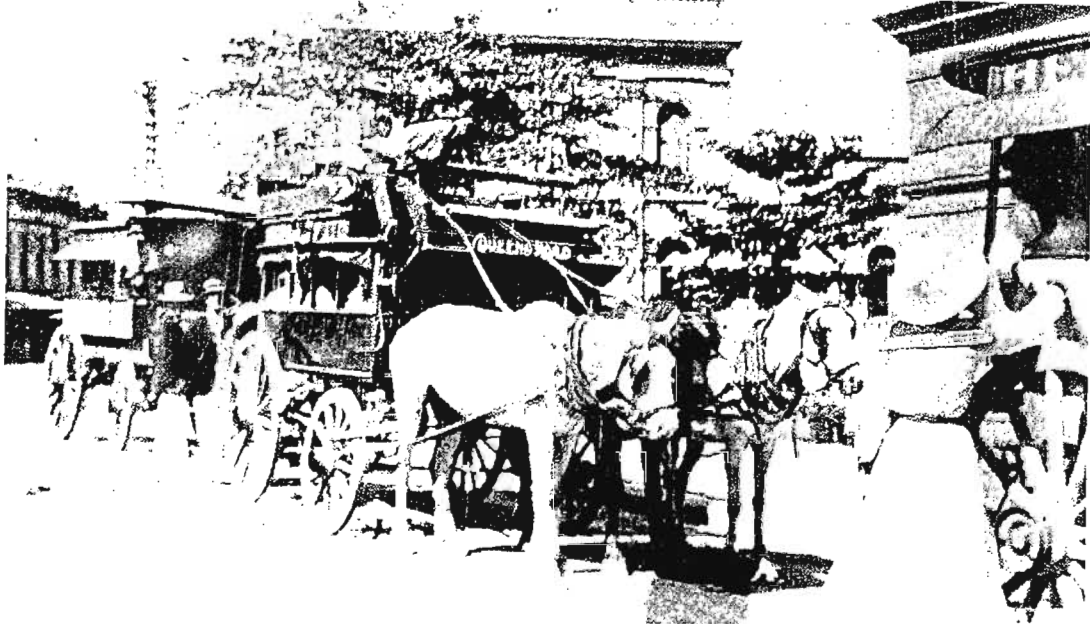
The policy allowed money to be spent on the one exception to Thuringowa's road maintenance-small works policy - Charters Towers Road. Hodel and his Board Members, conscious of the importance of the road to Townsville, believed that the main thoroughfare in Thuringowa and main arterial road out of Townsville warranted special attention. It was the only road in the Division to be macadamised and, in 1889 alone, £1 691 or one-quarter of the Board's public works budget was spent on it.⁹ It gradually developed the features of a main highway, becoming less of an obstacle course with tree stumps, tidal salt pans and, in the wet, swampy bog holes

7 TH, 18 April 1895, p.11.

8 These are Hencamp, Ollera, Rollingstone, Saltwater, Leichhardt, Christmas, Bluewater, Deep, Althaus, Black, Reid, Alice, Alligator rivers (or creeks). Crystal Creek and the Haughton River are on Thuringowa's borders and have been built in conjunction with the neighbouring Shires and the Main Roads Department.

9 Chairman's Annual Report, 1889; Statistics of Queensland, 1889.

Bus Transport in Thuringowa, 1912.



Horse-drawn buses were welcomed sights for the tired pedestrian on Thuringowa's main urban road, the Flinders Street of Thuringowa. (Courtesy Townsville Municipal Library, No.188 Public Utilities - Transport).



Motorised transport made for a more comfortably convenient ride, even up the gradient of Mt. Spec. (Courtesy, Thuringowa City Library).

grubbed, bridged or filled in.¹⁰ Street gas lamps lit the way as far as the Hermit Park Hotel for those trudging home late from work or jauntily from the pub; or perhaps for those dressed in the latest fashion on their way to a "fitting reception" for the officers and crew of the Auxiliary Squadron visiting the port.¹¹ The beautification of the main thoroughfare did not occur until 1906 when fig trees were planted every four chains down both sides of the road. Busy with basic road formation and maintenance, the Council, led by the wily businessman, Joseph Hodel, only agreed because the local nurseryman, T.A. Gulliver, offered to pay a £ for every £ the Board contributed.¹²

During the Divisional Board's first two decades, no other road policy would have served its interests better. The policy required a small outlay in equipment and wages. Most of the grubbing, forming and mending of roads were undertaken by tender, the contractor supplying his own materials. A few examples highlight Thuringowa's heavy reliance on this system well into the century. In the twelve month period, February 1889 to February 1890, the Board ratified 58 new contracts for road works.¹³ In the 1920s tenders were called for the following types

10 Divisional Board Member, William Lennon, called it "the Flinders Street of the Division" (Flinders Street being the main street of Townsville); *TDB*, 6 October 1888.

11 *TH*, 23 December 1888, p.14; *NQH*, 12 August 1891, p.14. In 1889 the gas lamps cost the Board £100 per annum, Chairman's Annual Report, 1889, p.2.

12 The Board earlier had refused to entertain proposals from a Major Vincent in 1887 and 1888 to line the main trunk route with trees. *TDB*, 8 December 1887, p.12, 15 March 1888, p.15; Reports of Various Committees, 21 March 1906, 11 THU/129. The trees were planted from the Causeway to Phillips Aerated Cordials on the western side only; thence on both sides to the Rising Sun Hotel at the junction of Bowen Road. The Shire contributed £50.

13 Calculated from Works Committee Report Book, February 1889-February 1890.

of works: repairs to suburban roads such as the Idalia-Oonoomba road, maintenance of the Townsville to Ingham highway from the Bohle River to the Shire's northern border and eradication of lantana on the Townsville to Hervey's Range road.¹⁴ From the 1930s, large contracts were awarded to big professional bridge and road contractors.¹⁵ Wordsworth's Council was astute in using the professional expertise and modern road plant of the Shire's neighbouring Councils which were contracted to do road work for Thuringowa Shire.¹⁶ With work being done by settlers, ratepayers, neighbouring councils, road engineers and professional contractors, Thuringowa's Councils needed to buy only minimal equipment.

To successive Boards, a comparison with wages highlighted the economic wisdom of using tenders for a

14 Minutes, 11 THU/D5, 11 THU/D6, 11 THU/D7. In 1927, for instance, the following contracts were awarded: P.F. Neville and A.T. Webb both for upkeep of different parts of the Townsville to Charters Towers Road; W. Gribble, W.W. Crabb and C. Tooth for upkeep to different sections of the Townsville to Ingham road.

15 J.J. Maddison and R.C. Schrock and Son submitted successful tenders for repairs to the Upper Bohle Bridge (£1 411) and an A class reinforced concrete bridge over Major's Creek (£2 080) respectively in the 1930s; in 1946 Messrs. Wells and Koski won the £11 133 contract to construct part of the Townsville to Ingham road for the Mains Roads Commission; Accounts 1933-1941; AUD/S187.

16 For example, the Townsville City Council repaired the Crystal Creek crossing on Thuringowa's northern border before the wet in 1952; the Ayr Shire Council's staff and plant were used to repair crossings and roads in the Giru District in 1953. Minutes, 21 November 1952, 17 April 1953, 9 June 1953. In 1919 Councillor Cummins mooted the idea that Thuringowa Shire Council and its neighbouring councils jointly buy plant to which each would have 3 months's access under the direction of a qualified engineer. This practice occurred in some southern shires. Because there were months when work could not be carried out due to the wet, the matter was shelved. Minutes, 10 September 1919, 11 THU/D5.

Division of some 1 580 sq. miles.¹⁷ In February 1889, the Board paid out approximately £53/16/0 per week just for wages for Casey's road gang; equipment, horses and their keep and road filling were extra.¹⁸ In the same month, a yearly contract for "putting in repair and trafficable order" Ingham Road from the Bohle River to the northern border, some 40 miles with numerous creeks, gullies and rivers, was awarded to John Althaus for a mere £85.¹⁹

The contract system meant that the Council spent as little money as possible on wages; in fact it needed to employ few men as road gangs whether on a permanent or temporary basis and fewer still as day labourers. Most were stood down when the scheduled work was completed or there were mechanical breakdowns.²⁰ It was customary for the Council to close down road works over Christmas but, instead of being granted holidays, the men were paid

17 This was its area after loosing land to the Ayr Divisional Board in 1888.

18 11 THU/G1.

19 Contract 103, Works Committee Report, February 1889.

20 In 1886, for example, Overseer Casey paid off his road gang on completion of the major jobs in Sub-division 2; Minutes, 21 July 1886, 11 THU/D1. The Board's Chairman advised the Overseer in July 1894 to retrench the men and retain only two or three to continue with minor repairs as those requiring urgent attention were nearly finished; *NQH*, 20 June 1894, p.24. Until then two permanent overseers and temporary road gangs with cooks were employed, one each in Sub-division 1 and 2; John McNeil was appointed Overseer on £3 per week in 1880; Maurice Casey was Overseer for Sub-division 2 from 1885 to about 1893; Andrew Graham finished as Overseer in March 1887; one of the cooks was a boy, Andrew Willcox, who received 25/- per week; Minutes, 11 THU/D1, 11 THU/D2. When the grader was garaged for repairs in 1920, men in the road gang at the Haughton were paid off; Miscellaneous Reports, Contracts, Balance Sheets, December 1924-April 1931, 11 THU/132.

off.²¹ It must have resulted in a precarious living for road workers and their families - and, as David May remembers, a poor Christmas.²² Councils' road works policies not only improved communications and thereby the quality of citizens' lives but also affected the living standards of employees - adversely if, as in Thuringowa's case, those policies were greatly influenced by a determination to balance the books, and, in many cases, have a surplus.

Another way of cutting employment costs on road construction was to have a multiple job appointment. For instance, Henry Sinnott was initially appointed Overseer in 1888; in 1890 he was also the Board's Traffic Inspector; and in 1894 he became, in addition, the General Officer of the Board, Dairy Inspector, Inspector of Bridges and the Board's Ranger, all for £3 per week plus £20 per annum for his horse's keep. From 1908 to his retirement in 1914, he was officially designated the Council's Engineer.²³

The policy of successive Boards and Councils resulted in the slow, painful upgrading of roads but was adopted in the interests of ratepayers, as was seen earlier; there is nothing to show that a different policy would have been followed if they had been free from all external constraints. But it should be noted that legislative provisions and administrative practices strongly encouraged that approach. Firstly, until reversed in 1962, the local government Acts of 1879, 1902

21 Minutes, 11 THU/D1-D4; Miscellaneous Reports, Contracts, Balance Sheets, December 1924-April 1931, 11 THU/132.

22 Interview, David May, 18 April 1986.

23 Minutes, 11 THU/D2; Reports Book 1890; Minutes, 11 THU/D3. John Harnley or Darnly was appointed Overseer, Traffic and General Inspector in 1916 with C. Adler the Engineer and Field Surveyor on £8 per week in 1922; Minutes, 9 August 1916, 11 THU/D5.

and 1936 stipulated a system of financial divisions for local authorities, each with differential rating and paying for its own works. This lessened ratepayer dissatisfaction. There were fewer cries of being bled to support works programs in other Divisions. However, it also meant that expenditure in each Division was limited to income from it. It was a very "retrograde and unbusinesslike" arrangement as even unused funds were "inviolable and sacrosanct to that division".²⁴ This stultified major works since special and time-consuming arrangements had to be made to divert revenue from one Division to another. Secondly, grants often came with strings attached. The Main roads Commission (later Main Roads Department, MRD) usually stipulated whether money was for maintenance or permanent road works and on what roads it should be spent.²⁵ Thuringowa's objections to the priorities set down by the MRD had little effect.²⁶ Notwithstanding their complaints, Thuringowa's Councils failed to confront the problem. Federal road grants were not subject to the same apportionment requirements but the Councils voluntarily chose to disburse them in the

24 TDB, 19 November 1962.

25 In 1955, for instance, Thuringowa was granted £19 000 for "road maintenance only" and advised how it was to be apportioned between the main roads in the Shire TDB, 17 September 1955. The distribution of the Main Roads Grant for permanent works in 1956 was also typical:

Townsville -	Hervey's Range Road	£ 79
Townsville -	Ayr Road	755
Townsville -	Ingham Road	149
Clevedon -	Stuart - Giru Road	7

£ 921

One wonders at the permanence of works amounting to £921 let alone £7! TDB, 28 July 1956.

26 TDB, 28 July 1964, Press Clippings Book.

same way between the three Divisions.²⁷ Thus, in most years, no more than £2 500 was available for roads in any one Division. Taken together, these factors "meant that no major scheme could be carried out in any division".²⁸ Progress in Thuringowa was thus held hostage by both the Local and State Governments' commitment to fairness.

The State Government's policies concerning the gazettal of "a declared road" also influenced Thuringowa's road works programs. Under the *Main Roads Act 1920-1979* the Governor-in-Council declared important long distance through roads as state highways which then became the responsibility of the Main Roads Department. Costs were apportioned between the State and Local Governments. Local authorities were initially responsible for 50% of the construction costs which were met by means of a loan repayable to the Treasury over a 30-year term at the existing rate of interest; their 100% contribution to maintenance was paid directly to the Main Roads Department in the year following the year in which

27 Under the *Federal Main Roads Act* of 1923, State Governments received grants on the condition that they provided a similar amount. The local authorities' share of the Federal money was allocated to them as a grant, but their portion of the State's matching subsidy was received under the same terms as the Main Roads Acts. In 1930, the Federal Government offered grants directly to local authorities over the opposition of the States.

28 *TDB*, 24 September 1962. In 1961 the Council spent £3 400 on roads in Division 1; it was the "highest amount the Council had ever spent"; Minutes, *TDB*, 17 June 1961, Press Clippings Book.

the maintenance was carried out.²⁹ After 1931 they had no responsibility for highway construction but were responsible for half the expenditure on maintenance.³⁰ As road transport established itself as the primary means of long distance movement of goods, State Government accepted an increasing proportion of the costs of road works. By the 1960s Thuringowa was required to repay 10% of the total cost, with interest, over five years for special maintenance schemes carried out by the Main Roads Department.³¹ After 1963 "free ridership", the use of one authority's facilities by people in another without direct compensation, was an issue;³² the policy whereby city councils were held accountable for a proportion of the costs on declared main roads in adjacent shire areas lapsed.³³ Unless Townsville offered, it legally did not have to contribute to the maintenance of the main roads in Thuringowa that Townsville's citizens used for business or recreation jaunts.

29 Besides state highways, declared roads also included developmental roads (instigated in 1927), tourist roads (in 1928) and secondary roads (added in 1934). Urban arterial roads and main roads were added well after World War II. The State Government's subsidy varied for these categories; for instance, 50% was granted for construction and maintenance of tourist and secondary roads but local authorities were to find half the costs of construction and all maintenance costs for developmental roads. By 1982, the percentage was under 15%. See Tucker et.al., *Local Government in Queensland*, Vol.2, pp.22-24,133; G. Greenwood and J. Laverty, *Brisbane 1859-1959: A History of Local Government* (Brisbane, 1959), p.278; first Annual Report of the Main Roads Board, *PP*, 1922, Vol.2, p.1432; and Wegner, *Hinchinbrook*, 1879-1979, p.14.

30 Report of the Main Roads Commission, *PP*, Vol.2, 1932, p.979.

31 *TDB*, 21 December 1963, Press Clippings Book.

32 This is an important concept in the public goods theory; see Archer, "Public Choice Paradigms in Political Geography", pp.78,79.

33 *TDB*, 17 October 1964, Press Cuttings and Advertisements, July 1964 -.

Thuringowa felt that its residents were "penalised by having three Main Roads within its area".³⁴ In the 1920s and 1930s, it was not Main Roads policy to gazette as a state highway any road which paralleled a railway. Of course, the Government was not irrational in refusing to finance main roads competing with established railway lines. Not only were they protecting a huge capital investment, but there could not have been any prospect of road transport substituting for rail transport during these two decades. Consequently, financial responsibility for two out of the Shire's three most important main roads - to Ingham and Charters Towers - and for much of the third - to Ayr - remained with the Shire. When a State Minister was brought to acknowledge the inequity of this policy, he did so in terms of the problem created for Townsville: Thuringowa's predicament in attempting to conquer distance and isolation were ignored:

The important city of Townsville was without a single decent road leading into it...he recognised this, the road difficulties of Townsville...and he could assure them that it was his intention to, as far as possible, rid Townsville of its road isolation.³⁵

As a dubious indication of his faith, an 18 mile section, Stewarts Creek to Woodstock, of the 78 mile Townsville to Charters Towers highway was gazetted a main road.³⁶ In effect, this meant that Thuringowa was responsible for 50% of the maintenance costs on the Stewart's Creek to Woodstock section and all costs of upgrading and maintaining the remaining 25 miles from Woodstock to the border with Dalrymple Shire as well as 37 miles of the Townsville-Ingham and 23 miles of the Townsville-Ayr

34 Thuringowa Shire Council to Commissioner, Queensland Main Roads commission, 21 June 1937, Correspondence re Woodstock-Charter Towers Road c.1937-41, 11 THU/149 (QSA); hereafter 11 THU/149.

35 "RACQ Townsville Branch Notes", C&C, March 1934, p.45.

36 C&C, March 1934, p.45.

highways. Because of the increasing use of the highway by trucks and tourists after the War, the Government reversed its policy but gazettal of the Thuringowa sections of the Brisbane to Cairns highway occurred gradually.

However Thuringowa was often less than gratified by the gazettal of sections of its roads as highways as the apportioned costs for maintenance work completed by the Main Roads Board/Department curtailed work on any other program. Nor was the Council pleased with the harsh reactions of the Main Roads Board which displayed a distinct lack of understanding of Thuringowa's predicament. When the Council objected to further work being carried out on its main roads because of the costs involved for the Council, the Queensland Main Roads Commission (QMRC) advised that the Shire would receive "no further allocations of Federal Aid Money and [that] existing funds will be transferred".³⁷ The Commissioner of the QMRC also requested that Thuringowa's obstructionism be taken into account by the Royal Commission on Local Authority Boundaries.³⁸ Because Thuringowa did "not wish to retard Townsville's progress", it reluctantly agreed to the gazettal of the Woodstock-Chartiers Towers road in 1937 "provided special conditions are arranged with regards to the repayment of the annual maintenance costs, which already amounted to £500 [i.e., one-eighth of the revenue]...because no money is left for ordinary road work, outside of the Main Roads in the Shire".³⁹ Twenty years later, the Shire did not

37 Letter from Queensland Main Roads Commission, 5 March 1928, Evidence to the Royal Commission on Local Authority Boundaries, COL/220.

38 Letter from Queensland Main Roads Commission, 5 March 1928, Evidence to the Royal Commission on Local Authority Boundaries, COL/220.

39 Thuringowa Shire Council to Commissioner, Queensland Main Roads Commission, 21 June 1937, 11 THU/149.

object to gazettal but protested the lack of consultation concerning the expansion of maintenance work on its highways because of the accompanying steep increases in the Council's apportionment of costs. Thuringowa argued that, because of the great extent of main roads in the Shire, the 59% increase in 1956-1957 and the unbelievable 150% in 1964 would lead to chaotic financial conditions for the Shire. Indeed, the latter increase, which represented 23% of the estimated total receipts from the general rate revenue, meant that proposed new road works and employment would be curtailed.⁴⁰ One reason for the 1964 increase was that under the new scale of charges to local authorities, a city council was no longer liable for part of the costs of repayment on maintenance works on highways in an adjoining shire, unless that city council agreed. Thuringowa was "left with carrying the whole load, subsidising the motorists and commerce of Townsville".⁴¹

Limited funds and State Government policies and practices combined to perpetuate the penny-pinching road policy inaugurated in the nineteenth century. Political expediency was a further reason, overriding sound economic planning as the Councils acknowledged. Thuringowa's Board Members and Councillors approved their local government policy on road works because numerous road improvements, minor new construction and little permanent work allowed more ratepayers to feel that roads were being improved. They would therefore be relatively satisfied with their Council. Cr. Harry Henderson put this view quite succinctly:

We haven't enough finance to develop our roads...and to avoid conflict over what road is given priority...it would be best to do a

40 TDB, 17 November 1956, p.9; 17 October 1964, p.7. For the three financial years prior to 1964, the average ordinary and special maintenance repayments were 9%; TDB, 17 October 1964, p.7.

41 Minutes, TDB, 21 December 1963, Press Clippings Book.

portion of several jobs. That way, something will be done on several roads in the Shire during the year.⁴²

Improvements to taxpayers' roads was probably the most tangible way of showing residents that their Council was aware of their needs and performing its elected duties responsibly.

Undoubtedly the policy reflected a desire by various Board Members and Councillors to stay in power. In fact, two Chairmen lost elections because of their mismanagement of road works: one in 1884 (who bungled the building of a bridge over the Causeway) and the second in 1973.⁴³ Though the latter was exonerated by his full Council, ratepayers still showed at the polls that they gave very high priority to road works.

Sometimes, the Boards and Councils misjudged ratepayer reaction to the maintenance-small works policy. Many residents saw it as shortsighted and "penny wise". Two instances stand out. In 1935, the Stewart Town branch of the ALP condemned the "piece work" approach to the Shire's road works because it was more expensive in the long term:

My members object to their money being wasted year after year doing patch work on roads and respectfully suggest that the Council again considers the matter with a view to having some work of a permanent nature carried out.⁴⁴

This was again the case in 1958. The suburban residents

42 TDB, 9 February, 1963, Press Clippings Book.

43 Minutes, 18 April 1884, 11 THU/D1. In council chambers, the Chairman was accused of spending money to build a private road for his family; this led to a 20 minute exchange of shouting and namecalling which another councillor described as a "witchhunt"; TDB, 17 June 1971, Press Clippings and Advertisements, June 1964 -; also see TDB, 17 June 1973, p.3; 19 June 1973, p.5.

44 Secretary, Stewart Town Branch, ALP to Acting Under Secretary, Home Secretary's Office, 30 April 1935, 11 THU/140.

in the Upper Ross area and the small town of Giru wanted an end to the maintenance philosophy. They would willingly accept a rate increase if it meant better roads and especially if it meant bitumen roads.⁴⁵

Though the Council commenced its first suburban bitumen road in 1959, partly in response to ratepayer agitation, the Councils generally ignored criticism of the piece work policy though they acknowledged its validity. Thuringowa's Council admitted to the Commonwealth Grants Commission in 1974 that their traditional policy of borrowing 15 year loans for gravel roads was uneconomical because the roads were worn out before the Council had finished repaying the loan.⁴⁶ Council efforts to placate most constituents by giving them gravel roads instead of constructing fewer but better bitumen roads was both politically self-interested and economically unsound. It was also a measure of the grassroots' democracy of local government, and a demonstration of its consequences.

A road policy which committed virtually all expenditure to maintenance became self-perpetuating partly because of engineering difficulties created by the soils of Thuringowa. Its solodic soils caused major engineering and financial problems. Consisting of a layer of sand over clay and very poorly drained, they quickly become boggy. Because the soils also have a "low bearing strength", road foundations quickly collapse.⁴⁷ Therefore many of Thuringowa's Councils were reluctant to spend money on new works because the roads quickly deteriorated. New works expenditure seemed a waste of money, which reinforced the maintenance policy until the mid-1970s. Unable any longer to ignore the need for high

45 Minutes, TDB, ? March 1958, Press Clippings Book.

46 Hearing, Grants Commission, (1974), pp.41,42.

47 TDB, 24 January 1987, p.9.

quality road construction, the engineering solutions to the problems of "road base and embankment failure, erosion and surface cracking" were spectacularly expensive for the deCoursey and Gleeson Councils of the 1970s.⁴⁸ Thuringowa's major topographical feature - flattish to low slope plains - has meant that road drainage works were also costly.⁴⁹ Even with new technology, Thuringowa's environment was never easy to manage.

The wet played havoc with the maintenance-small road works program, either increasing expenditure for reconstruction or diminishing the amount available for new road work. However, as the costs of repairing mainly gravelled roads were usually within acceptable budget limits, the policy remained.

Numerous examples highlight the inimical effects of climate on the roads and budget, but two examples 80 years apart are particularly illustrative. In 1890 the floods and torrential rain cost the Board £1 933 for reconstruction which was met out of ordinary revenue, resulting in a budget deficit for the year of £3 024.⁵⁰ Day labour had been increased to 14 (from the usual two) to cope with the necessary road repairs.⁵¹ Because of the prolonged and heavy wet in 1974, repair work also superseded new construction and the usual maintenance work.⁵²

When there was a mild wet, the various Boards and

48 TDB, 24 January 1987, p.19.

49 Burchill, *Thuringowa Shire Strategic Plan, 1978*, pp.7,9.

50 Chairman's Annual Report, 12 February 1891; Statistics for Queensland, 1890.

51 NQH, 8 February 1892, p.23.

52 TDB, 18 February 1974.

Construction of the Mt. Spec Road.



Thuringowa's solodic soils caused major engineering and financial problems, particularly for road construction. Building the Mt. Spec Road had other difficulties: rock, steep slope and persistent rainfall. (Peut and McKergow Collections, respectively, Thuringowa City Library).

Councils welcomed their good fortune. In 1893, for instance, the Board congratulated itself on its low expenditure, mainly because "we have been free from storm and flood".⁵³ Indeed Councils from 1880 to 1974 operated more on hope and good luck rather than experience and forward planning in terms of assessing the effects of climate on their road program.

Complaints about the state of the roads and requests for improvements were numerous and constant. However the various Councils' promptness in responding to the requests often depended on their source. Roads affected by the floods of 1891 were "being made good as expeditiously as the small number of hands at my disposal will admit", according to the Overseer, Mr. Berwick, who further advised that the road party would be sent immediately to fix the portion between the Bohle River and Alice River "because all carriers and the Georgetown loading is [sic] hung up because of unpassable conditions".⁵⁴ Townsville business interests were clearly being given priority in the Board's works program. The sugar industry's needs were also met promptly, particularly in comparison with those of the dairy or small crop farmer.⁵⁵ Roads to the entrance of popular sporting arenas also received prompt attention, especially before big events which drew people from the

53 Minutes, 18 February 1893. Sometimes the rainy season worked for the Council which waited until the wet for the easier removal of trees; for instance, the removal of some 60 china trees from Ross River Road between Gleeson's and Kelso's was held over to the wet of 1920-1921. Weaving between the thorny china apple trees, the "road" must have meandered crazily!

54 Overseer's Reports, 3 March 1891, 27 April 1891, Reports Book 1889-1891.

55 Grubbing and grading were carried out without delay on the road connecting the new mill site at Giru to the main Townsville to Ayr road in 1919; Minutes, 24 April 1919, 11 THU/D5. See next chapter for more details concerning the different treatment.

suburbs and the country.⁵⁶

Roads were not of uniform significance throughout the period studied. The main roads out of Townsville were indispensable at first - as the only means of overland communication - but sharply declined in importance as railways were opened to Charters Towers in 1881, Ayr in 1901 and Ingham in 1919. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of Thuringowa's road works programs reflected the priorities and tenor of each of the three periods evaluated in the last chapter.

The first period (1880-1900) was one of progress with an emphasis on building, extending and upgrading roads for quicker communication and urban living. Yet, very little was of a permanent nature. Of course, the Boards had had to start from scratch in 1880 and service an area of some 2 000 sq. miles.

The second period (1901-1960) saw a gradual improvement but the main concern was maintenance of existing roads. The Shire's poor financial situation was sorely strained by the demands placed on the works programs by the motor car. After losing the western suburbs where most of the upgrading of road works had been concentrated, Thuringowa in 1928 (the year of the Royal Commission on Local Authority Boundaries) had five miles of metalled road, approximately 22 miles of formed but otherwise unprepared road and 138 miles of unconstructed but surveyed roads (see Appendix 7).⁵⁷ Based partly on Thuringowa's limited achievements in road works, particularly in light of the importance of roads

56 The following instance is typical: at the request of the Springfield Race Club, Ingham Road was put in order within a few weeks for the Easter Monday Cup Day; Minutes, 24 March 1895, 11 THU/D2.

57 Thuringowa lost 86 miles of streets to Townsville City Council in the boundary change; *C&C*, November 1929, p.49.

as the major function of local government, it was not altogether surprising that Chuter, the Commissioner of the 1928 Royal Commission, recommended the dissolution of Thuringowa Shire and its apportionment among neighbouring local authorities. However the majority recommendation in the final report was that the Shire be left intact.⁵⁸ Somewhat embarrassed by the Commissioner's report, the Council's commitment to roads increased for, by 1936, the mileage of roads in the permanent and formed categories doubled - as did the number of bridges. To obtain some of these improvements Wordsworth's Council spent an average of 41.6% of its total yearly expenditure on road works. This represented 50% of the revenue from rates in 1934.⁵⁹ Nevertheless in 1936 only 19% of all roads in Thuringowa had been graded or otherwise improved.⁶⁰

Improvements to Thuringowa's roads were gradual. Not until the 1949-1950 financial year did the Council again spend money on new, permanent road works while also increasing its expenditure on road maintenance. Though the amount spent on new road work in the 1949-1950 budget was still only a paltry £226, at least 44.8% of the Shire's 372.7 miles of road were now graded or otherwise improved; 84 miles were first-class roads, nearly all built by federal authority during World War II. The

58 See Chapter 12.

59 Calculated from Statistics of Queensland, 1930-1937.

60 The Commonwealth and State Governments through the Main Roads Commission and the Unemployment Relief Scheme were responsible for two new bridges on the Hervey's Range and Mt. Spec roads respectively and for a substantial upgrading of the Shire's roads. Indeed, between 1932 and 1937 the Main Roads Commission injected £117 718 into these bridges and roads and £104 000 in wages; C&C, July 1937, p.41. In 1936 23.5 miles of road were of a permanent nature, i.e., bituminised, paved or macadamised; 10 miles were prepared; 31.5 miles were formed but not otherwise prepared and 293.5 miles of road were unconstructed; Statistics of Queensland, 1936; Miscellaneous Reports, Contracts and Balance Sheets, 11 THU/132.

Charters Towers road as far as Sellheim, the roads around the Weir runways and Ingham Road to the wartime hospital and barracks at the Bohle and Black Rivers were all built as strategic roads with federal money. After the 1949-1950 financial year the Council reverted to its former practice of spending road funds on maintenance only. Little wonder that most complaints to the Councils concerned roads.

The Shire's reputation as "stagnant" and "unprogressive" between 1901 and 1960 was not the result merely of limited financial resources but of the manner in which it chose to use those resources. It repeatedly declined to raise loans that were well within its means. Almost incredibly, it rented out its few pieces of road-making machinery for substantial parts of every year between 1931 and 1936. The Council rented its only motor truck, power grader and horse grader for an average of 46, 51 and 14 days respectively per year.⁶¹ Nor were these rentals confined to the wet seasons when road works were minimal. Generally, the Councils judged the success of a year's activity not by work accomplished but by the size of the financial surplus remaining. Between 1915 and 1960, various Councils, particularly those under Hodel, Cummins and Wordsworth, put a higher priority on money in the bank than better roads. In 1915 the Council believed it was not "the right time" to ask for a loan or incur an overdraft for new road works. Yet the Council finished the year with a surplus of £722, paradoxically acknowledging that even minimum road works in the Bohle area were helping to open it up to more settlers!⁶² The 1959 Council similarly congratulated itself on its "very healthy position", with an overall surplus of

61 Calculated from Statements of Receipts and Disbursements for the years ended 31 December 1931 to 1936 inclusive, AUD/S34; hereafter AUD/S34.

62 Minutes, 9 June 1915, 11 THU/D4.

approximately £5 000.⁶³ Mr. Chuter, the Under Secretary responsible for local government in Queensland, was making a shrewd point when he asked during a Royal Commission: "Does your statement that your Council is not in debt suggest that you do not do anything?"⁶⁴ But his words had no effect. Given the non-profit character of local government, the excessive concern of Thuringowa's Councillors for a balanced budget, with its concomitant lower expenditure on roads, hardly seemed sound, local government practice.

There was a furore over Thuringowa's apparent unwillingness or inability to provide decent surfaces on the main roads out of Townsville. Townsville, the region's port, light industry and service centre, was snugly landlocked by Thuringowa Shire which, consequently, had the responsibility, albeit with increasing government assistance in loans and grants, of constructing and maintaining the four arterial roads connecting Townsville to Ayr (south), Ingham (north), Charters Towers (west) and to the Hervey's Range, Georgetown and Greenvale districts (north-west).⁶⁵ And that was not an easy surveying and construction task as, for example,

the road from Townsville to Ingham was particularly rough with a creek or river to every mile.⁶⁶

It was no wonder a civil engineer with the Main Roads

63 Minutes, TDB, ? April 1959, Press Clippings Book.

64 Chuter was Under Secretary of the Department of Health and Home Affairs which had responsibility for local government. Evidence to Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries in 1928, p.978, COL/224.

65 The latter road was the first road constructed to link Townsville with its cattle, sheep and mining hinterland in 1865. Increasingly from the 1890s to the 1970s the road was not used, except when tobacco was planted on Hervey's Range in the 1930s.

66 C&C, June 1938, p.8.

Commission told the 1928 Royal Commission that the Shire did not give "any aid or assistance to the Main Roads Commission to provide roads...they are very unprogressive".⁶⁷ In 1932, the Hon. John Dash, Minister for Transport, wrote very disparagingly of Thuringowa's capabilities and attitude. He even suggested taking responsibility for the construction of main roads away from Thuringowa and giving it to Townsville.⁶⁸ These comments were not merely repetitive in their damnation of the Shire's Councils but interpreted by Thuringowa as an intrusion on their liberty and by Brisbane and Townsville as a matter of gross inefficiency.

TABLE 15

Expenditure on New Road Works and Maintenance 1937-1950⁶⁹

Expenditure	Thur.	Ayr	Hinch.	Dalry.	Pioneer	Mulgr.
1937	£	£	£	£	£	£
New Works	-	3587	7397	-	15999	8143
Maintenance	1421	15586	11 574	2094	24281	22571
1940						
New Works	-	2226	2729	-	3796	3080
Maintenance	10560	10560	12865	2636	16927	11027
1950						
New Works	226	-	1929	6679	2754	1079
Maintenance	2090	31692	27980	5759	35642	25774

67 Evidence by Victor Crawford to Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries 1928, p.1196, COL/224.

68 Dash was also the local member of parliament. With respect to the Townsville to Ingham road being gazetted a main road between Garbutt's Siding and Rollingstone, he advised the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ) that "the case would be subject to an agreement with the Townsville City Council. The Thuringowa Shire Council, it is thought, would not be interested in the matter". "R.A.C.Q. Townsville Branch Notes", C&C, October 1932, p.7.

69 Statistics of Queensland, 1937-1950. 1937 was the first year that the Statistics showed these categories.

Comparison with its neighbouring Shires and Pioneer and Mulgrave, two rural-suburban Shires, with respect to the amount of revenue spent on new road works and road maintenance in 1937 and 1940 tends to confirm Brisbane's and Townsville's view (see Table 15). The differences can be attributed mainly to the comparative wealth of the sugarcane shires (Ayr, Hinchinbrook, Pioneer and Mulgrave) vis-a-vis the poorer cattle shires of Dalrymple and Thuringowa. However even Dalrymple, which, unlike Thuringowa, had no sugarcane to offset the slump in the cattle industry, spent more on roads. In 1950, the situation was worse. The cattle and sugarcane industries were relatively buoyant due to the War and international agreements yet Thuringowa spent one-fifth less than Dalrymple and one-fourteenth less than its other neighbours, Ayr and Hinchinbrook. Of course, the Government had upgraded portions of the main highways in Thuringowa during the War. Thuringowa obviously took these as a bonus - or its due - and remained uncommitted to increasing its taxation for road works.

In its defence, Thuringowa Shire pointed out that its "peculiar difficulties" had prevented forward planning and progressive action; the Shire was a poor one and it could not possibly cope with the "long, long main roads" within its boundaries:

the lengths of roads which have to be maintained, and the small revenue available, consequent on the low valuations, together with the poor production in the area, also present great difficulties to the Council while higher rates are not practicable...our area is not one that will lend itself to intensive cultivation, owing to its natural poorness.⁷⁰

The Council's submission to the Federal Grants Commission in 1974 cogently argued along the same lines for a substantial grant if it were to keep the region's arterial roads in a satisfactory condition, particularly since road

70 Thuringowa Shire to Acting Under Secretary, Home Secretary's Office, 30 April 1935, 11 THU/140.

deterioration was not, in the main, caused by Thuringowa residents.⁷¹ Thuringowa's Council used Townsville and the region's needs as another lever in its attempts to attract more money for roads.

Though Townsville complained incessantly about the poor state of the roads, the Thuringowa Councils were more influenced by the general poverty of the Shire and a minimal tax burden: they therefore condoned low land valuations and rates and accepted the limitations thereby placed on road works. Even with direct government support, only 38% of Shire roads were in the permanent category of road formation by 1960.⁷²

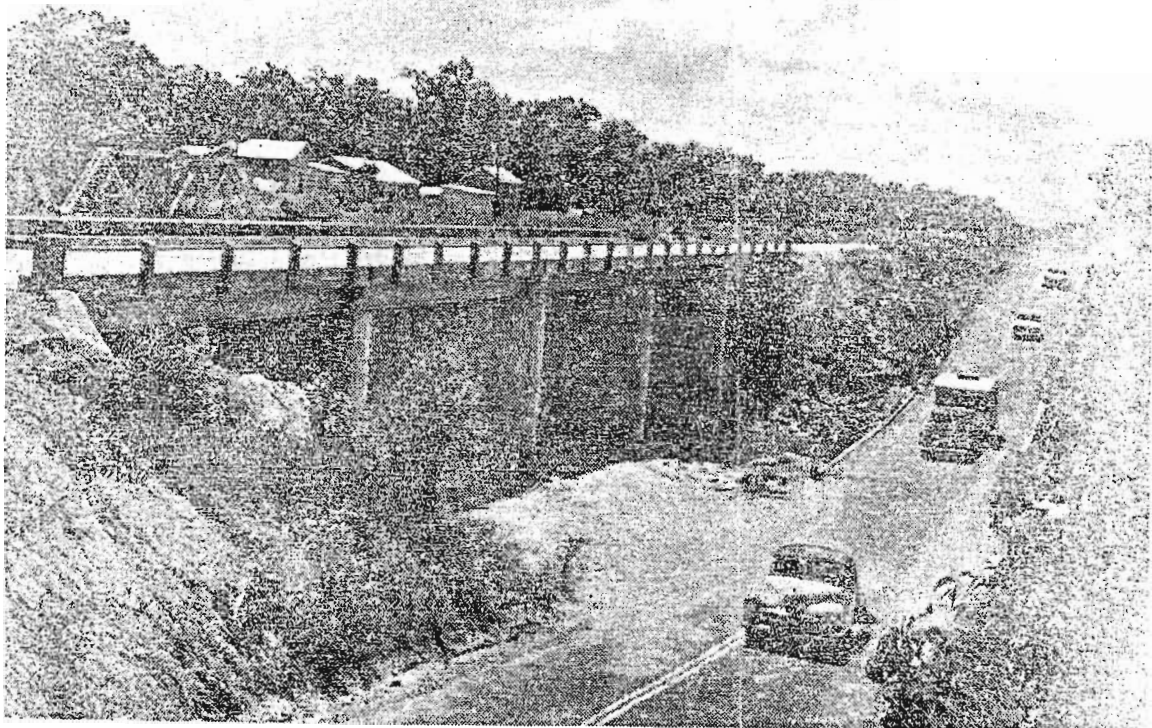
However the substantive upgrading of roads became a priority from the early 1960s. The change from a maintenance-small works program to an emphasis on new work was forced by the increasing use of roads by tourists and road haulage trucks. For many local inhabitants, this caused a sharp divergence of opinion between them and the road carriers. The former accepted roads untrafficable for parts of each year as a minor nuisance off-set by low rates; for long distance hauliers even short interruptions in the quality of the roads meant heavy additional costs and/or losses. As well, the suburban boom demanded high quality, arterial residential roads. 1964, the year that heralded the Council's big spending program, saw £36 552 expended on new, permanent road works and £22 917 on maintenance. However, in the early 1970s Thuringowa again eschewed new works as a priority: a mere \$18 000 was expended on new works and \$68 000 on maintenance.

In comparison with other Shires (see Table 15), Thuringowa's monetary commitment was low. There were three major reasons. Firstly, there was an increase in road

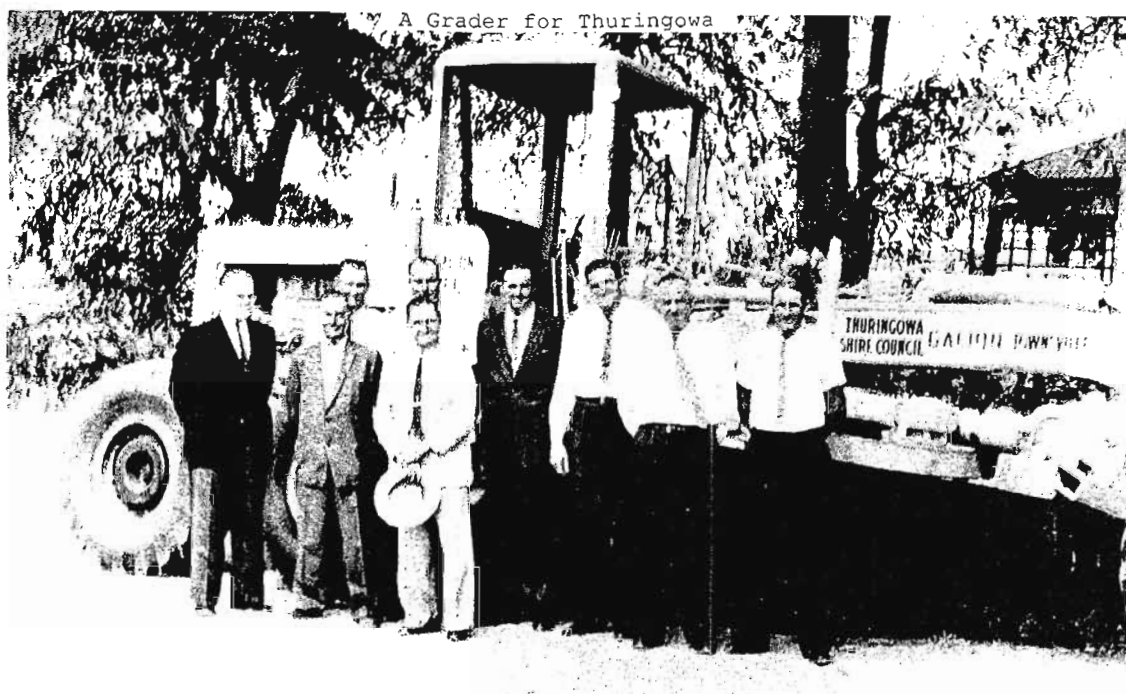
71 Hearing, Grants Commission, pp.17,37,45.

72 Calculated from Appendix 7.

The Old and the New Healy Creek Bridges



Over its 115 years, Thuringowa's engineering practices underwent immense change, exemplified here in these two juxtaposed versions of the same bridge. (*Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 1966).



Thuringowa was slow to fund new technological changes as they materialised but, eventually, Councillors proudly supported the arrival of a new grader for use in road works. (Courtesy, Mrs. Cummins).

TABLE 16
Comparison Length of Roads
Normally Open to Traffic 1970-1985⁷³

Surface	Thur.	Ayr	Hinch	Dalry	Pion.	Mulgr.
1970 (miles)						
Sealed	197	353	227	269	347	221
Unsealed	49	71	172	132	54	47
Formed only	24	90	30	2125	545	60
Total formed	270	514	429	2526	946	328
Unformed	151	118	55	167	833	80
TOTAL(miles)	421	632	484	2693	1779	408
1985 (kms)						
Sealed	613	662	476	643	868	606
Unsealed	142	61	212	530	453	81
Formed Only	42	197	76	3373	59	16
Total Formed	797	920	764	4546	1380	703
Unformed	26	99	60	288	26	30
TOTAL (kms)	823	1019	824	4834	1406	733

works by the Main Roads Commission. Secondly, the Councils now enforced the *Local Government Act* of 1936 which required developers to provide top quality roads in their suburban Divisions.⁷⁴ Thirdly, and most importantly, Thuringowa felt complacent with its efforts as 47% of its roads were sealed, a percentage which equalled that of its more affluent neighbour, Hinchinbrook (47%), compared favourably with Ayr (56%) and Mulgrave (54%) and totally blitzed that of Dalrymple

73 Statistics of Queensland, 1936-1985.
 Thur.=Thuringowa; Hinch=Hinchinbrook; Dalry=Dalrymple;
 Pion.=Pioneer; Mulgr.=Mulgrave.

74 *Local Government Act* of 1936, s.34 (6). There seems to have been a reversal of this policy in the 1980s when the Council built bitumen roads to "nowhere" in rural-suburban communities on the understanding that developers would follow; at least one of those communities is still without water reticulation.

(10%) and, quite surprisingly, Pioneer (20%). The Council conveniently ignored the statistics which showed that Thuringowa was 16% to 30% lower than all the other Shires, except Pioneer, on the length of formed roads.⁷⁵

By 1985 the situation had improved substantially. In comparison with the other Shires, Thuringowa had the second highest percentage of roads sealed and formed to total length of roads (Table 17). More significantly, the percentage increase of sealed roads from 1970 to 1985 was the greatest, and 34% more than its neighbour, Ayr (see Table 18). Moreover, Thuringowa had the largest increase in the total length of roads. The urban overspill from Townsville - and from Cairns for Mulgrave Shire - was the crucial factor in the increases in all three categories (sealed, total formed and total length of roads). The figures demonstrate that Thuringowa, one of Australia's fastest growing Shires, met the challenges of providing and upgrading roads more so than Shires whose growth was insubstantial. Ayr obviously experienced a very small growth in population during this decade and a half whereas its "twin", Hinchinbrook, weathered a comfortable increase in terms of coping with road works. Pioneer's negative percentages (Table 18) reflect the

TABLE 17

Percentage of Roads Sealed and Formed
to Total Length Roads 1985⁷⁶

Thuringowa	75%	Ayr	65%
Hinchinbrook	58%	Pioneer	62%
Dalrymple	13%	Mulgrave	83%

⁷⁵ The percentages of "formed only" roads to "total length of roads" in the Shires were: Thuringowa - 64%; Ayr - 81%; Hinchinbrook - 89%; Dalrymple - 94%; Pioneer - 53%; and Mulgrave - 80%. Calculated from Statistics of Queensland, 1970.

⁷⁶ Calculated from Table 16.

TABLE 18

Percentage Increase of Length of Roads, 1970-1985⁷⁷

Surface	Thur.	Ayr	Hinch.	Dalry.	Pion.	Mulgr.
Sealed	48	14	23	33	36	41
Formed	46	10	10	11	-10	25
TOTAL	18	.2	5	10	-103	11

substantial drop in length of roads (see Table 16) in the Shire caused mainly by lost territory through a boundary change. In 1985 Thuringowa Shire closed its first century with 75% of its roads paved, a not insignificant achievement considering that Thuringowa was still a large, predominantly rural shire with a fast growing suburbia.

For 80 years Thuringowa's road works policies permitted only gradual improvements in the quality of the Shire's roads, leaving latter-day Councils the task of providing for modern needs of road communication. Thuringowa's Boards and Councils clung to such a maintenance-small works road program for a number of reasons, each reinforcing the other until time and historical precedent lent respectability to the policy and practice. The policy was dictated not only by the huge distances and long lengths of road in the Shire, but also by the massive population boom of the first two decades which led to insistent demands for the initial construction of suburban roads. However, given limited revenue, Council timidity in taking out loans, Government regulations, councillor self-interest and Thuringowa's climate, topography and soil type, there could be no

⁷⁷ The length of roads calculated in miles in 1970 was converted to kilometres for this table.

progressive roads program. For many compelling reasons, the policy made some sense.

Because the next chapter, too, deals with the provision of one of the functions of local government, it is concerned with the efficiency debate and therefore explores the effectiveness of one local authority to provide water reticulation.

CHAPTER 16

Functions of Local Government: Water Reticulation

It will be shown that in its decision making, Thuringowa's water policy was much more progressive than its roadworks policy. Increased taxation could have ensured greater new and permanent roads whereas the curtailment of water reticulation was enforced through inadequate water sources.¹ On the one hand, there was a penny pinching program; on the other, enormous efforts were expended to supply water within environmental limitations. The actions of Colonial and State Governments, its neighbouring council and big business interests also stultified Thuringowa's water program. Such infringement of Thuringowa's liberty was compounded by Thuringowa's strategy, after a long bitter battle with Townsville Municipal Councils, to diminish local government power by suggesting the function of water reticulation be given to a statutory authority. This does not reflect impetuosity but rather the reality of decision making which necessarily changes due to differing inputs over time. In effect, this is an example of the principle of homeostasis in the theory of action which is of importance in maintaining stability (rather than the *status quo*). Thuringowa's water reticulation policies represent yet another appropriate example of the interrelatedness of the three theories in the Thuringowa model of local government.

Thuringowa's various Boards and Councils had an unenviable task providing reticulated water to its residents living in such distant and scattered places as Townsville's outer suburbs, Giru, Paluma, Woodstock and the smaller coastal villages. This pattern of settlement posed considerable problems of water supply. Costs were thereby increased; the more so, as the Council in the

1 Of course, increasing taxation during the Great Depression would not have been feasible.

late 1970s had to provide one chlorination treatment plant for each of eight water supply sources.² Overall, Thuringowa, a rural-suburban authority, dealt fairly conscientiously with the problem of reticulating water, having regard to the limits imposed by geography, economics and proximity to a large city which had legal title to the best and major water supply sources in Thuringowa.

The first water works project took a long ten years from 1887, when the proposal for reticulated water was first mooted, to the formation of the Thuringowa Water Board in 1897. This Board was abolished in 1915 when the Townsville City Council became the water authority for the city and suburbs, including those in Thuringowa. After losing its suburbs in 1918 and 1937, Thuringowa did not commence its second venture into water reticulation until 1947 when it operated a tiny water scheme to the small village of Paluma. The third era of water supply began in the late 1950s. Because Thuringowa lacked a single source adequate to its needs that was not already controlled by Townsville, the Councils had to instigate and maintain eight separate water schemes between 1947 and 1985 to serve the various dispersed communities in the Shire.

The chapter will examine these periods of water supply within three themes in order to reveal the Shire's progressiveness within various political, economic and geographic restrictions. The first theme will examine the reasons for the various Councils' determination to provide reticulated water. The second theme examines three sets of setbacks involved in implementing water projects. One group of setbacks involved local geographic and economic factors; another was the major

2 McIntyre and Associates, *Thuringowa Shire Council: Report on Chlorination of Shire Water Supplies* (Townsville, 1978), pp.1-9.

frustration attributable to Colonial and, later, State Governments; and the last series of setbacks occurred because of conflict between Townsville's and Thuringowa's Councils. The third theme examines Thuringowa's substantial but not disproportionate commitment with respect to the amount of revenue expended on water reticulation.

The rationale behind each of the 1887-1915, 1947 and 1957-1985 water schemes was not merely a commitment to providing one of the necessities of urban living. In fact, although water reticulation was an important health function of local government under the 1897 Act, a rural local authority was not compelled to provide this service.³ Thuringowa's Councils saw its provision in terms of progress. They felt that if a rural-suburban authority provided such an extra commodity as water, it would demonstrate the progressiveness of its members.⁴ The decision to reticulate water reflected a desire to be acknowledged by suburban residents, fellow local authorities and Brisbane as a progressive council - one cognisant of the needs of urban life in spite of its basic rural character. As well, it was firmly believed that progress beget progress: settlement would expand with the reticulation of water. Joseph Hodel, Thuringowa's Chairman in 1889, put the viewpoint concisely: "No opportunity should be lost in giving the public water because a plentiful supply would double the population of the Division".⁵ Brabon's Council expressed a similar belief in 1963 on the eve of the instigation of

3 Harris, *Local Government and Regionalism in Queensland 1859 to 1977*, pp.153-157. Town water supply did not become a direct function of local government until 1942; Tucker, "Queensland", p.387.

4 Minutes, *NQH*, 14 March 1891, p.19; Minutes, *TDB*, ? July, ? March 1960, Press Clippings Book.

5 *TDB*, 15 June 1889, p.15.

the Gearney's Lane-Innes Estate water scheme.⁶ The rapid growth in the Shire's population, 2 000 in 1970 to 4 200 in 1972, was partly due to a decision in March 1970 to introduce a water scheme for the Upper Ross.⁷ An additional water scheme in 1975 meant that the seaside areas of Bluewater, Saunders Beach, Balgal and the Black and Bohle Rivers "became attractive to people wishing to establish homes away from the city environment". Water reticulation had thus permitted progress by diversifying "living environments".⁸

Proximity to Townsville placed pressure on Thuringowa's Boards and Councils to provide water. Thuringowa ratepayers in the closely settled, western suburbs in the 1880s and 1890s and from the 1960s felt disadvantaged *vis-a-vis* fellow Townsvilleans who, because they lived in suburbs under Townsville municipal rule, were connected to the town's water system. Consequently, urban Thuringowans clamoured for water reticulation, too.⁹ Their sense of injustice was heightened because, as the various sources of Townsville's water lay in Thuringowa, the Townsville Council's mains "passed the door" of numerous Thuringowa residents.

On a practical level, Thuringowa's suburban residents argued that their respective Boards or Councils must necessarily venture into water reticulation because a family could not obtain sufficient domestic water

6 Suburban Thuringowa would "develop rapidly following the provision of water", Minutes, 19 October 1963, Press Clippings Book. Editorials in *TDB*, 24 June 1963, p.21 and 20 January 1964, p.2., concurred.

7 *TDB*, interview with Alan Ward, retiring Shire Clerk, Thuringowa Shire Council, 13 July 1985, p.11.

8 *TDB*, 13 July 1985, p.11.

9 *NQH*, 4 May 1892, p.14; 24 August 1892, p.27; 14 September 1892, pp.12,13; 19 October 1892, p.34; 25 July 1962, 20 July 1963, 21 December 1963, Press Clippings Book; Minutes, 15 May 1959, 17 February 1961.

supplies from roof runoff owing to the paucity and variability of rainfall in most parts of the Shire.¹⁰ Until 1896, even those who could afford to sink their own wells could not be guaranteed unpolluted water because of the close proximity of each dwelling's cesspit. As well, livestock were part of the normal suburban scene until well into the twentieth century.

Residents also pointed out that the charges levied by water vendors were exorbitant. For example, in 1964 one water carter charged £2/10/0 per 1 000 gallons compared with the anticipated charge under the Council's new water scheme of 5/9d. per 1 000 gallons.¹¹ With the population boom from the mid-1960s and the trend towards higher density suburban living, reticulation was needed to cater for the necessary, hygienic sanitation systems.

The significance of clean, reticulated water for the quality of daily life was always understood. It was another reason for water reticulation. The Boards and Councils were inundated with letters and petitions requesting that "my" street and "our" suburb be connected to the mains. One ratepayer even promised to pay the water rate retrospectively for seven months if his property were connected!¹² Housewives from the Upper Ross suburbs marched on the Shire office to protest against polluted water which discoloured their washing, ruined hot water elements and killed domestic fish.¹³ Another indication of the importance attached to reticulated water was the attendance by the Minister for Local Government at a ceremony to mark its supply to

10 Burchill, *Thuringowa Shire Strategic Plan*, p.14.

11 TDB, 18 January 1964, p.12.

12 Joseph Bullimore, Bayswater Terrace to Thuringowa Divisional Board, quoted in Minutes, 12 July 1897, 11 THU/D1.

13 TDB, 5 December 1975.

Bluewater in 1975.

However, the turning on of taps in 1896 occurred without ceremonial fanfare in recognition of the early Board's nine year struggle "to meet a necessity which will press its claim on this Board year by year".¹⁴ But John Davidson remembered that day. He often recounted to his family, with ever-increasing embellishment, the luxury of not having to cart bucket after bucket of water for his father's and his mother's and his elder sisters' baths; there was also the "blessed quietness" without continual threats of the dire consequences that would befall his "unprotected bottom" if he spilt the water.¹⁵ For those, particularly the women and older children, lucky enough to be connected to the water mains, the quality of daily life was indeed improved. No longer did endless buckets of water have to be carted for drinking, washing, cleaning and bathing. Muddy footprints no longer trekked through the house from the quagmire under the tank. No longer, in the driest seasons, did the poorer families all use the same bathwater or go without proper bathing because the tank was running dry. No longer were families riven by tensions caused by "wastage" of their precious tank water.¹⁶ Even with the water restrictions that accompanied water reticulation, gardens had a better chance of flourishing as the family's yearly water supply was not dependent on its tank or water carter. The suburbs gradually became greener and more aesthetically pleasing. The risk of infectious diseases was also lessened. Day-to-day living was made more comfortable and healthier through water reticulation.

14 Chairman's Annual Report, 1889.

15 Interview, John Davidson, 27 July 1979.

16 Interviews John Davidson, 27 July 1979; Mrs. V. Litster and Mrs. M. Skinner, 18 June 1984.

The immediate reason for Thuringowa's second attempt at water reticulation in the tiny settlement of Paluma in 1947 was atypical: the facilities already existed. Water tanks had been erected and used by the RAAF during World War II; the council only needed a small loan for connecting residences to the mains. Nevertheless, Wordsworth's grazing and sugar Council thereby displayed some commitment to its isolated northern constituents.

In summary, Thuringowa's decisions to reticulate water were in response to ratepayer demands. Boards and Councils also realised that a reticulated water supply led to the rapid growth of suburbs and rateable income, to say nothing of the kudos thereby bestowed on the local authority and its members.¹⁷

The second theme of water reticulation in Thuringowa explores the setbacks involved in implementing the water projects, particularly in the first and the last periods. Firstly, the setbacks were numerous, not least of which was simply locating a plentiful, drinkable water supply. Secondly, Thuringowa's Councils felt bitterly disadvantaged by the decisions of the State Government, 880 miles away, which were thought to favour Townsville. Thirdly, additional delays were caused by the haggling and disagreements between the two neighbouring Councils each attempting to service its own residents from the area's limited water sources.

The first series of setbacks involved the search for water which proved particularly troublesome in the 1880s and 1890s and from 1957 to 1985. Townsville had a monopoly on the only adequate, surface water storage areas in the region - Ross River (1887-1980), Paluma Dam

17 For instance, in 1894 the Hon. J. Deane refused nomination to the Chair unless there was "a prospect of proceeding with the waterworks business. If the government would promise a loan, he would not hesitate"; *NQH*, 14 March 1894, p.19.

TABLE 19
The Search for Water 1888-1896¹⁸

Year	Site	Reason for Abandonment
1881-1890	Fulham Rd (Gulliver)	Sand drifts, gravel
1888-1889	Ross River (near Gleeson's Hotel)	Interfered with T'ville's water authority
1890-1891	Stewart Creek (Railway Reserve)	Irregular supply
1890-1892	Stewart Creek (shafts Caledonian Coal Co.)	1890 - purchase price too high; 1892 - Treasury loan refused
1891-1892	Stewart Range	Reservoir too costly
1892	Five Head Creek	Dam too expensive
1893-1895	Ross River (near QME)	Urine pollution
1893-1895	Purves Street (Mysterton Estate)	Urine seepage
1895	St. John Wood	Contamination
1895	Willmetts Well (Mundingburra)	Townsville Council refused to sell
1895-1896	Love Lane (Mundingburra)	Urine seepage
1894-1896	Wellington Street (Anderson Park near Mundingburra State School). This site proved successful.	Hodel Well (after the Chairman)

(1957-1980) and Ross River Dam (stage I completed in 1974). Thuringowa's Councillors looked elsewhere.

¹⁸ The first date is the year the water search began at a particular site; the second year is when that particular site was abandoned or in the case of Hodel Well, when it became operational. 11 THU/D2-D3; Minutes 1887-1897; Improvement Committee Reports, 1889-1890; Water Supply Correspondence Book, 1891-1896; NQH, 11 November 1891, p.14, 11 May 1892, p.14, 16 August 1893, p.1, 5 December 1894, p.16, 16 January 1895, p.17, 19 February 1896, p.27; TH, 20 July 1889, p.13.

Between 1887 and 1897 Thuringowa's Boards sank seven wells and mooted four other schemes before finding a satisfactory site for supplying the domestic and industrial water requirements of Townsville's western suburbs (see Table 19). Eighty years later, the Councils attempted to find suitable water sources near each of the communities they intended to service. This proved viable for only three residential areas: from 1964 water was pumped from the Black River to a 5 000 gallon reservoir on the north-eastern spur of Mt. Bohle, thence to the 40 residents in Innes Estate and Gearney's Lane; in 1968 two bores were sunk west of Ross River to service the Upper Ross suburbs; and in the 1970s Rollingsstone was supplied from the nearby Rollingsstone Creek. Thuringowa had to go outside the Shire for water for Giru: in 1970 two bores were sunk in Ayr Shire on the southern side of the Haughton River (see Appendix 8). The Shirbourne rural community was also supplied from the Giru water mains.¹⁹

From 1957 numerous requests were made to the Townsville City Council to allow Thuringowa to tap the Mt. Spec water pipe for residents in Rollingsstone, Bluewater and the seaside villages.²⁰ On the grounds that it had no obligation to service areas outside its boundaries,²¹ the Townsville City Council refused all requests until after Ross River Dam was completed in

19 McIntyre and Associates, *Report on Chlorination of Shire Water Supplies*, p.3.

20 Minutes, 15 March 1957, 31 August 1959; Minutes, TDB, ? October 1959, ? July 1960, ? February 1961, Press Clippings Book; TDB, 21 July 1962.

21 Even though "the supply being taken from Bluewater Creek was unfit for human consumption", the Townsville City Council feared that once it permitted the pipeline to be tapped, "there would be no end to applications from other communities"; Tucker, et.al., *Local Government in Queensland*, Vol.2, p.98.

1974, which eased the City's own water supply problems.²² Jaloonda-Saunders Beach and Bluewater-Toolakea were the first to be connected.²³ Townsville agreed to service the tiny western hamlets of Woodstock in 1960²⁴ and Brookhill and Oak Valley in 1970 from its Ross River supply because there would be little drain on the municipal water supply. The City Council later reneged (see Appendix 8). By 1976 the Upper Ross suburbs were also obtaining their water from the Townsville City Council as the bores then were only capable of being used as an emergency pressure boosting system.²⁵ By 1979 Thuringowa was involved in eight different, water reticulation schemes.²⁶

As Table 19 and Appendix 8 show, the time between the instigation of a water scheme and either its implementation or abandonment was, on average, up to four years; in the case of Saunders Beach, 13 years. Yet the sites chosen seemed suitable in the light of current technology. For instance, the Fulham Road, Purves Street and Wellington Street wells were located in the old dried-up bed of Ross River; others (those in Love Lane, Ross River, Five Head Creek and Stewart Creek) were located in or beside rivers. Ironically, though these sites seemed potentially suitable, the main problem for abandonment was the poor physical properties of the site. Thus work on the Board's first well in Fulham Road was temporarily suspended in February 1889 due to sand drifts

22 TDB, 25 July 1962, 11 May 1963, 22 June 1963, Press Clippings Book.

23 TDB, 12 March 1977, p.6.

24 ? April 1960, Press Clippings Book.

25 McIntyre and Associates, *Report on Chlorination of Shire Water Supplies*, p.3.

26 These were: Paluma, Giru, Shirbourne, Upper Ross suburbs, Gearney's Lane and Innes Estate, Bluewater-Toolakea Beach, Saunders Beach or Jaloonda and Rollingstone.

and gravel beds. This was two years after boring had commenced.²⁷ It took one year to ascertain that the Stewart Creek site was inadequate because the supply was too erratic to be the water source for the Division's expanding suburbs. Nevertheless, the Board and later Councils kept it in workable condition, enabling rural residents and those in the tiny suburban areas of Stewart's Creek and Roseneath to use the well. Although the users had to travel to the site to draw their water, the well was in constant use except, of course, during droughts or when sand and gravel cave-ins occurred. After preliminary drilling the Bohle River site was abandoned in 1963 as its prospects were poor.²⁸

Urine seepage from cattle, horses, pigs and cess pits was another reason for aborting water projects between 1893 and 1897. This occurred with the Purves Street, Ross River and Love Lane wells. Unfortunately it took time - and wasted money and effort - before the contamination could be properly ascertained. The well had to be bored to a depth well below the surface water level before realistic testing of the underground supply could occur. The tests as to purity and yield could only be carried out in the dry months.²⁹ Since there was no chemical analyst in Townsville, samples in test bottles had to be sent by rail to Charters Towers or by boat to

27 Wrongly convinced of its potential, the Board had recommenced boring in May 1889 and had even erected a small tool house and cart shed; Improvement Committee Reports, 6 May 1889. For a detailed description of the Fulham Road scheme see State Hydraulic Engineer's Report in TDB, 18 August 1888.

28 TDB, "Hydrologist's Report on Shire Water Sources", 21 December 1963, p.7.

29 Under Secretary, Treasury to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 10 July 1893, Water Supply Correspondence Book, 1891-1896.

the government analyst in Brisbane.³⁰ Even with careful packaging, it was not uncommon for the bottles to arrive broken, thus necessitating repetition of the procedures and further delays.³¹

By mid-1895, seven years after the search for a drinkable water supply commenced, the Board and ratepayers lost their patience with the lack of success and numerous delays: they irritably advised Brisbane that the supply obtainable from the new site at St. John's Wood was sufficient and a pumping and quality test unnecessary.³² Ironically, such obstructionism to what Thuringowa interpreted as Brisbane's interference in Thuringowa's liberty and decision making, caused further delays to the "long promised water scheme"³³ as two of the wells were found to be contaminated.³⁴ Brisbane was further convinced that parochialism needed cold, procedural guidelines which should be administered from a distance, thereby reinforcing Brisbane's propensity to weaken local government's independence in decision

30 Coane and Clarke were the Charters Towers analysts in 1890; Report by R. Jobbing, 9 October 1890, Thuringowa Reports Book, 1889-1891; J.R. Bradshaw, Charters Towers charged £5/5/- in 1893; J. Bradshaw, Bow Street to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 27 November 1893, Water Supply Correspondence Book 1891-1896; Brownlie Henderson, Government Analyst, to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 28 August 1895, *ibid.*

31 Thuringowa Reports Book 1889-1891; Water Supply Correspondence Book 1891-1896.

32 Resolution from a "largely attended meeting", *NQH*, 26 June 1895, p.11; Under Secretary, Treasury to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 10 July 1895, Water Supply Correspondence Book 1891-1896.

33 "Ratepayer", Hermit Park to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 9 September 1895, Water Supply Correspondence Book 1891-1896.

34 Thomas Rutter, Analytical and Consulting Chemist, Brisbane to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 20 September 1895 and Government Chemical Laboratory, Brisbane to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 6 January 1896, Water Supply Correspondence Book 1891-1896.

making. Local residents became so engrossed in local issues that their critical judgement disappeared. Indeed localism, during the era of North Queensland secessionist agitation, was not always in the interests of people's liberty.

Financial considerations were another critical factor in the abandonment of apparently workable schemes. For instance, in 1890 Thuringowa's Board despondently closed down a well at Stewart's Creek originally sunk by the Caledonian Coal Mining Co. as it could not find money from general revenue to make it operational.³⁵ The engineer's suggestions in 1892 for dams at Mt. Stuart and Five Head Creek were grandiose, and even, in the latter

35 In 1890 the Board decided against buying the shaft as the price was too expensive at £5 000; Report, 18 March 1890, Improvement Committee Reports. The Caledonian Coal Mining Co. believed the figure quoted was £3 500 and not £5 000 as stated by Hodel; *NQH*, 11 November 1891, p.14. Anxious to recoup some of its investment, the Company dropped the purchase price to £1 500 in 1892. With an extra main, pipes and land for the pipe track and road approach, the cost was now a manageable £2 160 - manageable that is with a government loan. Unfortunately, due to the current economic depression, the Treasury was refusing local government loan applications; *NQH*, 8 February 1892, p.16. To 1906 four shafts (named Henderson, Haswell, Elliot and Stallon), five wells (named Divisional Board, Flemming, Meehan, Reddon and Netterfield) and 12 bores (named Twaddle Nos.1-4, Simpson and Rodger, Haswell, Townley Coal Company Nos.1 & 2, The Caledonian Coal Company Nos.1 & 2 and the North Queensland Collieries Company Nos.1-3) were put down near the cutting near Ayr Junction Railway Station at Stuart, in various locations about Stewart's Creek (particularly in portion 100, Parish of Beor) and north-east of the Toonpan and Elliott Railway Stations; L. Ball, "Geological Survey Report: The Coal Measures near Townsville", *Queensland Government Mining Journal*, 7, 75, August (1906), pp.407-409. Another seven Prospecting Licenses for Coal were issued between 1900-1905; Register of Prospecting Licenses for Coal, Mining Warden Townsville, MWO.11C/2. The assistant government geologist, Lionel Ball, was "not favourably impressed as to the probability of coal seams of workable size and purity" being found in Thuringowa; Ball, *op.cit.*, p.409.

case, prophetic.³⁶ Nearly a century later Five Head Creek became the site of the Ross River Dam, the major water supply source for Townsville and the western suburbs in Thuringowa. In 1892, however, the cost of constructing dams and connecting mains to the distant suburbs from either source was far too high for a tiny Divisional Board, so the search continued within the suburbs.

Between 1958 and 1960, Councillor Innes persuaded Wordsworth's Council to plan for the future. A £500 loan for preliminary investigation of Black and Bohle Rivers resulted in an impractical scheme which could only be viable if there was a population of 3 000. At that time Thuringowa could only muster 400 in discrete pockets of settlement in a wide arc curving away from the source of water.³⁷ Although Bluewater Creek had good prospects, the costs of servicing an area with a sparse and dispersed population proved too high.³⁸ Drilling was discontinued at Saunders Beach in 1963 because of the expense involved in using special methods to drill in the sand dunes.³⁹ The last two areas had to wait until the mid-1970s when they were connected to the Mt. Spec pipeline.⁴⁰ In 1979 a suggestion that a dam be built on Alligator Creek to service this growing rural/residential suburb was thwarted by Councillor Dan Gleeson who argued that it would be too expensive; moreover he was convinced that residents did not want such a scheme.⁴¹ Cost was always an important deterrent to the various Boards and

36 *NQH*, 11 May 1892, p.14.

37 *TDB*, 1958-1960, Press Clippings Book.

38 Exerpt from Minutes, *TDB*, 21 December 1963, p.7.

39 Exerpt from Minutes, *TDB*, 21 December 1963, p.7.

40 McIntyre and Associates, *Report on Chlorination of Shire Water Supplies*, p.4.

41 Minutes, *TDB*, 10 July 1979, p.4.

councils in their attempts to provide water for their constituents.

Ratepayers also delayed water projects. This reinforced Thuringowa Councils' belief that participatory democracy was inimical to progress. The Councils saw no ambiguity between this stance, which saw itself as the promoter of modern living against a backward constituency, and its road works policy which reflected a bumbling conservative group of men opposed to petitions from progressive-minded ratepayers clamouring for good roads, another requisite for contemporary life.

One such incident occurred in the 1960s. The enthusiasm shown by Brabon's Council for a Giru water reticulation scheme, first mooted in 1960, was abruptly dissipated by Giru residents who voted overwhelmingly against the project in 1963, even though the cost was only £12/11/0 per household per year.⁴² The Council was stunned since Innes Estate and Ross River residents were prepared to pay triple that amount for reticulated water.⁴³ However Giru was a sugar mill town; most workers were seasonal and therefore wary of financial commitments. An hepatitis outbreak in 1964 caused the town to reconsider because water reticulation was needed for septic installations. Thuringowa Council, still smarting from the 1963 poll decision, insisted on a petition which would be adopted if "the signatories were all valid, that is, local residents". A petition with

42 ? November 1960; 17 June, 19 August, 2 December 1961; 20 January 1962; 13 April 1963; Press Clippings Book.

43 The charge to Innes Estate and Gearney's Lane residents was £38 p.a. and £36/11/0 p.a. for Upper Ross inhabitants; TDB, 19 October 1963, Press Clippings Book; excerpt from Minutes, TDB 21 December 1963; TDB, 3 January 1964, Press Clippings Book.

175 signatures was duly lodged in June 1965.⁴⁴ It then took three years to check the *bona fides* of the petitioners, obtain government approval, raise the loan, sink the bores and lay the water mains.⁴⁵

However doubts about the adequacy of existing water sources led to the abandonment of Giru's reticulation scheme and the subsequent search for a better, long term supply. The Shire's initial suggestion in 1960 of a concrete well and two submersible pumps was shelved in favour of two bores in 1968 when the community finally decided to go ahead with a water reticulation project.⁴⁶ In 1970 Giru's underground water resources were severely strained due to drought and the two bores had to be abandoned: one of the bores was contaminated by salt seepage from the Haughton River⁴⁷ and the other bore dried up.⁴⁸ Water had to be carted from Spring Creek, which also petered out. Giru residents then had to pay for water haulage from Ayr.⁴⁹ The township was being strangled by lack of water; eight cane farms had to be sold and their peaks transferred out of the district.

44 TDB, ? November 1960; 2 December 1961, Press Clippings Book; TDB, 20 January 1962, p.5. Giru and District Progress Association to Thuringowa Shire Council, 14 September 1964; 21 June 1965; Thuringowa Shire Council to Giru and District Progress Association, 28 September 1964; 2 July 1965; Correspondence Giru and District Progress Association.

45 Water reticulation was connected in September 1968; By-laws Giru Water Supply, QGG, September-October, No.10, Vol.229, 21 September 1968, pp.201-203.

46 TDB, ? November 1960, Press Clippings Book; Giru and District Progress Association to Thuringowa Shire Council, 21 June 1965; QGG, 21 September 1968, September-October, No.10, Vol.229, pp.201-203.

47 TDB, 16 August 1969.

48 One was situated near the railway bridge and the other a few miles north on the right of the road. Ayr Advocate, 19 August 1970, p.1.

49 Ayr Advocate, 7 August 1970, p.1.

The situation was critical as only 159 tons of cane were produced by Giru farmers in 1970 compared with 926 tons in 1969.⁵⁰ To meet the emergency, the Department of Local Government allowed Thuringowa Shire Council to reallocate funds from a proposed sewerage scheme to the sinking of bores and the laying of eight miles of mains from a waterhole in Ayr Shire. The Council's delegation to Brisbane returned home only to find that residents and a few Councillors were reneging on the newly negotiated scheme as the cost would be £44 per year per household for 40 years.⁵¹ Nevertheless, after some stormy meetings in and outside Council, the bores and pipeline went ahead.⁵²

The tenacity displayed by Thuringowa's Councils to the provision of water reticulation was tested by local geographical and economic setbacks in the search for water. The second set of frustration, attributable to Colonial, and later, State Government, were, perhaps, more difficult to manage. To Thuringowa, Brisbane's manipulation of the shared-exclusivity division of local government powers was usually biased as they were too solicitous of Townsville's needs and disdainful of Thuringowa's.

In 1888 and 1892 the Government refused Thuringowa's applications for incorporation as a water authority because the designated boundaries did not exclude the areas around municipal water sources and therefore "might" disadvantage Townsville.⁵³ The decisions were interpreted as particularly unfair to Thuringowa because

50 TDB, 19 August 1970, p.3.

51 *Ayr Advocate*, 21 August 1970, p.1; 31 August 1970, p.3; TDB, 19 November 1970, p.7.

52 *Ayr Advocate*, 26 July 1971, p.2.

53 TH, 20 July 1889, p.13; Report, 4 February 1892, Water Supply Correspondence Book 1891-1896.

Townsville's three sources were, after all, well outside the Municipality's boundary in suburbs under Thuringowa's jurisdiction.⁵⁴ Besides, under local government legislation, Thuringowa, even if it had wished to, could not interfere with the operations of the Townsville Water Authority.⁵⁵ In consequence, Thuringowa had to abandon the 1888 Ross River source which was ample for Thuringowa's water needs. It took eight years to find another suitable supply. The 1892 decision, accompanied by the refusal of a water loan, led to a temporary cessation in Thuringowa's search for water and the sacking of the Board's water engineer.⁵⁶ Again, proximity to Townsville and priority to the city's needs had proved detrimental to Thuringowa's interests. Both factors increased the Board's outlays on, and delays in, the search for water.

Bureaucratic rules laid down by a centralist government further frustrated the Board's efforts to provide water. As previously mentioned, the Boards felt harassed by the drawn out testing procedures. Government demands for reports on the land usage, drainage and soil properties of the well sites and their immediate environment caused additional and, in Thuringowa's eyes, wasteful delays.⁵⁷ Further red tape involved the ratification of loans. It took the Treasury from May 1894 (when it indicated approval of the application lodged in November 1893) to January 1896 to grant a £5 000 loan for the Board's incorporation as a water

54 Townsville's wells were located in the suburbs of Aitkenvale (Ross River and Hubert Wells) and Mundingburra (Willmet Well).

55 Minutes, NQH, 16 November 1892, p.13.

56 Minutes, NQH, 8 February 1892, p.20.

57 Under Secretary to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 16 July 1895; Government Chemical Laboratory to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 6 January 1896; Water Supply Correspondence Book 1891-1986.

authority.⁵⁸ Thuringowa had to wait 18 months for Brisbane to ratify the new Paluma water scheme - conversion of a World War Two reinforced concrete igloo - and then another year before the loan (£533) and subsidy (£267) were granted in 1957. It had been "a long hard fight".⁵⁹

State Government's direct links with business and industrial clients disadvantaged the Shire. Thuringowa believed, justifiably, that the Shire's needs had been ignored in the Government's negotiations with Queensland Nickel leading to the *Greenvale Agreement Act* of 1970.⁶⁰ The right to sink bores and wells in the Black River catchment area from Stoney Creek to the south and Christmas Creek to the north allowed the company to pump a daily maximum of five million gallons. Apart from existing bores, the Council, graziers and land developers were not allowed to tap further underground supplies.⁶¹ Development was thus stifled. As one Councillor put it: "We are being held by the throat and throttled by this agreement".⁶²

During the lengthy negotiations over the 1975 and 1978 water sharing agreements, Brisbane took little notice of Thuringowa's claims that Townsville's proposals discriminated against the people of Thuringowa Shire.

58 Minutes, NQH, 15 November 1893, p.18; 9 May 1894, p.17; 19 February 1896, p.27; Secretary, Treasury to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 17 January 1896, Water Supply Correspondence Book 1891-1896.

59 Minutes, TDB, 19 October 1955; 22 May 1956; 17 August 1957; Press Clipping Book.

60 Minutes, TDB, 16 December 1977, p.6.

61 TDB, 24 February 1971, p.4; 8 April 1971, p.6.

62 Minutes, TDB, 15 November 1978, p.3; also see TDB, 11 December 1979, p.5.

Thuringowa nevertheless had a convincing case.⁶³ Its solution lay in the establishment of an *ad hoc*, statutory authority to control the supply and reticulation of water to both local authority areas. The Shire Councils under deCourcey and Gleeson argued that the transfer of one of the major functions of local government to an independent authority would ensure equitability for Thuringowa ratepayers and allow Councils to spend their time and money more profitably elsewhere.⁶⁴ With a little artful lobbying, the Council persuaded the Thuringowa Residents and Ratepayers Association to petition Brisbane separately.⁶⁵

Neither the Thuringowa Councils nor their ratepayers would concede that their solution was less than practicable.⁶⁶ Townsville would not surrender its \$60 million investment on water supply to a statutory authority; nor would Brisbane take on the substantial loans outstanding on the reticulated water projects of both Councils.⁶⁷ Although statutory authorities had been established to manage state wide or district activities - for instance, electricity - the two Councils could not agree on a joint solution to the water problem. Thuringowa interpreted Brisbane's adamant refusals to consider a statutory authority as further evidence of the Government's pro-Townsville attitude. In this instance, State Government was more protective of the liberty value of, and retention of power by, local authorities than the local authority.

63 See TDB, 19 April 1973, p.5; 19 October 1978, p.3; 15 November 1978, p.3.

64 See TDB, 18 January 1973, p.7; 19 April 1973, p.5; 16 April 1975, p.7; 25 September 1976, p.5; 21 October 1978, p.7; 15 November 1978, p.3.

65 TDB, 21 October 1978, p.7.

66 Tucker, "Queensland", p.466.

67 TDB, 24 October 1978, p.1.

For Thuringowa, Brisbane's bias reached unconscionable limits in 1978. It provoked an appropriate response from the Shire Chairman, Dan Gleeson. In 1976 Thuringowa, Townsville and Brisbane had agreed that the water dispute should be placed before an independent arbiter, the Chief Engineer of the Department of Local Government. To Thuringowa's dismay, not only Townsville but Brisbane ignored the arbiter's recommendation in favour of Thuringowa. The report stipulated that water resources must be equitably distributed among consumers who geographically share a particular water source and that the supplying authority should not include in its charges any profit for the supply of bulk water to a purchasing authority. Ordered back to the negotiating table by Brisbane, Thuringowa and Townsville eventually agreed in 1978, after two years of tortuous haggling, to abide by the arbiter's decision. However, the agreement was subverted by a State Cabinet amendment to the Local Government Act empowering the Governor-in-Council to settle local government disputes. In the event Thuringowa was allowed 880 kilolitres per dwelling, which meant that Shire householders subsidised hotels, schools, parks and businesses while Townsville residents had different allowances for various categories of usage. Thuringowa's Chairman, Dan Gleeson, saw the whole situation as highly discriminatory and for several months refused to sign the agreement.⁶⁸ Thuringowa's Councils had been slow to realise that, in this instance, economic reality was more important than ideology in a State National Party Government's support of Townsville's Labor Council.

For Hodel, his fellow Board Members and ratepayers, centralist decisions and red tape obstructing the Board's

⁶⁸ The above information is taken from the *TDB*, 15 August 1978, p.5; 13 September 1978, p.13; 18 October 1978, p.5; 24 October 1978, p.1; 25 October 1978, p.3; 15 November 1978, p.3; and Tucker, "Queensland", p.466.

efforts to provide one of the main social needs of a community kept alive their commitment to a separate state for North Queensland.⁶⁹ For Gleeson, Brisbane's favouritism of Townsville prompted a desire to ensure that Thuringowa would not remain the perpetual poor relation; the reclassification of Thuringowa as a City in 1985 was the realisation of that desire.

The third series of frustrating setbacks in the establishment of water reticulation occurred because of conflict between Thuringowa and Townsville's elected representatives, each side jealous of its local authority's parochial needs, powers and liberty.

Initially, negotiations were amicable. In 1887 the Townsville Municipal Council sold water from its reservoir to some of the Board's residents.⁷⁰ At Thuringowa's request, the two local authorities formed a sub-committee to discuss a Joint Water Board.⁷¹ As water reticulation to the suburbs was an urgent priority, Thuringowa's Board was eager to finalise arrangements. However the Municipal Council held back, wary of losing any power to Thuringowa.⁷² As a result, Thuringowa went ahead with its various trial wells until ordered by the Government in 1892 to renegotiate with the Townsville Municipality.⁷³ Weary of the fighting between Townsville and Thuringowa and their separate representations to Government Ministers, the Treasury refused to consider their respective claims and told Thuringowa and Townsville that they had to "get together"

69 See Chapter 12.

70 TDB, 3 November 1887.

71 Minutes, TDB, 15 June 1889, p.15.

72 Report, 9 August 1889, Improvement Committee Reports.

73 Under Secretary of the Treasury to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 8 January 1893, Water Supply Correspondence Book 1891-1896.

to solve the district's water supply problem.⁷⁴ However relations between Thuringowa and Townsville soon deteriorated. Thuringowa demanded local decisions, yet was perversely irritated when Brisbane insisted on local discussion with Townsville. Liberty at work caused not only tension but polarisation in the working relationship of the two neighbouring authorities.

Townsville did not agree with Thuringowa's realistic suggestion in 1892 that two weirs be built across Ross River.⁷⁵ Economic timidity on Townsville's part cost the city and its suburbs a plentiful supply of water until the first weir was built in 1908.⁷⁶ As with the Ayr Tramway and the aerodrome ventures, Thuringowa's leaders were prepared to inject substantial funds into the scheme to meet the water needs of the wider community and not just Thuringowa's suburban dwellers.

Even so, Thuringowa would not accept Townsville's 1892 proposals. These involved the incorporation of most of Sub-division 1 into the Townsville Water Works Board, which would have meant renouncing certain rights over this area of its Division. As well, Thuringowa adamantly opposed the suggestion that its ratepayers should be taxed in addition to the proposed water charge. The tax was intended to help pay off the previous loans taken out by Townsville's Council to construct the reservoir on Castle Hill, pumping stations at Willmetts and Hubert

74 NQH, 8 February 1892. Seven months later Brisbane still adhered to its decision. Under Secretary of the Treasury to Thuringowa Divisional Board, 13 August 1892, Water Supply Correspondence Book 1891-1896.

75 NQH, 13 August 1892.

76 This was Gleeson's Weir; Aplin's Weir was completed in 1928 and a second erected in 1943; and the Black School (now called Weir School) Weir was built in 1934 by unemployed relief workers during the Depression; TDB, 18 January 1973.

Wells and the laying of water mains and pipes.⁷⁷ The issue degenerated into a written argument via the Letters-to-the-Editor column in the *North Queensland Herald* between the Board's Chairman, Joseph Hodel, and Townsville's Mayor, C.F. Sparre.⁷⁸ Still struggling to fulfil its promise to provide residents with water, the Board agreed to reactivate the Joint Water Works Committee of the two Councils in 1893.⁷⁹ An agreement was reached for Townsville to be the water authority but on terms more favourable to Thuringowa. However, on the advice of the Colonial Government that Thuringowa would regret such excision of its rights, Thuringowa reneged and decided to find and supply its own water.⁸⁰

In the long term this proved to be a bad decision. From the outset, water restrictions had to be enforced to cope with demands and this affected the daily lives of the ratepayers. In 1897 one complained that.

the meagre and poor water supply, only between 6 - 10 a.m. and 5 - 6 p.m., had lost him his tenants who were railway workers and needed a proper bath.⁸¹

Even after a second well had been sunk in 1913, the wells could only "furnish a limited quantity and the use of hoses was strictly barred".⁸² So in 1915 Thuringowa was again suggesting a Joint Water Board.⁸³ It was a sensible manoeuvre: the Townsville City Council had the

77 Minutes, *NQH*, 13 August 1892.

78 *NQH*, 28 September 1892, p.28; 19 October 1892, p.34. This in turn sparked off numerous letters from ratepayers.

79 Minutes, *NQH*, 24 May 1893.

80 Minutes, *NQH*, 6 May 1894.

81 26 October 1897, Correspondence Book.

82 *NQR*, 1 November 1915.

83 Minutes, 12 May 1915, 11 THU/D4.

area's major water supply source, Ross River, within its water authority's jurisdiction. It was unlikely that the State Government would ever give permission for wells or a dam higher up the river. By December of the same year, Thuringowa had relinquished its water authority to the newly constituted Townsville Waterworks Board.⁸⁴ The jealous protection of Thuringowa's rights (liberty) vis-a-vis Townsville City was abandoned. The fight to find and supply water to residents had been a hard and tenacious one - but the odds had always been stacked against Thuringowa.

For 20 years from 1957, Townsville adopted a parochial water policy that was entirely protective of its own interests. On the one hand, Thuringowa's Councils fought for fair treatment - water agreements for the Shire's northern townships and for Shire residents living in the city's western suburbs. On the other hand, the City's Councils blocked Thuringowa's frequent requests - for example, that its tiny northern settlements at Saunders Beach, Jalloonda, Bluewater, Toolakea, Rollingstone and Balgal Beach be allowed to tap the Mt. Spec pipeline.⁸⁵ The Townsville City Council argued that it had no responsibility to its hinterland, conveniently ignoring the fact that its water catchment area was in the northern part of Thuringowa and the City, moreover, it paid no rates to the Shire for the land appropriated for water purposes.⁸⁶ "Families and children in the Shire were being held up for a drink of water by the Townsville City Council which had adopted a Cowboys and Indians attitude", declared Thuringowa Shire Councillor, Len Page.⁸⁷ However, private industries

84 Minutes, 8 December 1915, 9 February 1916, 11 THU/D4.

85 TDB, 18 June 1975, p.5. Also see Appendix 8.

86 TDB, 16 December 1971, p.5.

87 TDB, 16 December 1971, p.5.

located in the Shire - the brickworks and quarry, for example - were given the right, denied to their Shire, to buy water from the Mt. Spec pipeline.⁸⁸ Priority was clearly given to business interests, even if located in the Shire, because they contributed to the economic livelihood of the city.

Relations between Thuringowa and Townsville became very strained during the lengthy negotiations over the 1975 and 1978 water agreements. Both Councils used the media to present their views and provoke partisan loyalty. Claims, counter charges, insults and refusals to attend joint meetings for "a cup of tea and a pack of lies" were common place.⁸⁹ Thuringowa charged the City Council with blackmail: if the Shire Council did not agree to the water proposals, the City would instigate a petition to move the boundary further west beyond the Ross River catchment area. Townsville repeatedly claimed that the Thuringowa Shire Council was "ripping-off" the Shire's Upper Ross residents by placing an exorbitant levy on top of the City Council charge to the Shire for water from Ross River.⁹⁰ Gleeson rejected such claims as they were only calculated to create disharmony. In fact, he pointed out the City Council charged Thuringowa more per kilolitre than it did its own residents; the Shire then had to add the cost of reticulation and maintenance. Not only were Upper Ross residents treated as second class citizens but they were subsidising other Townsville ratepayers.⁹¹ Thuringowa employed other tactics in its attempts to win concessions, if not a full

88 TDB, 6 September 1973, p.6; 22 December 1973, p.3; 22 December 1975, p.3.

89 The Mayor, Max Hooper, alleged that the Shire Chairman, William deCoursey, said this to his fellow Councillors; TDB, 22 December 1975, p.3.

90 TDB, 30 October 1973; 25 October 1978, p.3.

91 TDB, 19 April 1973, p.5; 25 October 1978, p.3.

capitulation, from Townsville. Besides lobbying for a statutory authority to assume jurisdiction over water supply in the area, one Councillor helped organise a Housewives' Protest March in which 50 women, waving placards, protested against the dirty, unpalatable water sold to Thuringowa Shire by the Townsville City Council.⁹² Thuringowa won some concessions in the 1975 water agreement: it was decided that Thuringowa would buy city water at the cost price to Townsville of all water from the Paluma Dam and Ross River; previously, Townsville had insisted that Thuringowa pay dearer, Ross River water prices for Mt. Spec pipeline (Paluma Dam) water.⁹³ However, Thuringowa was not so fortunate with the 1978 water agreement; as was seen, the decision was in Townsville's favour.

Water reticulation proved difficult to implement in an area in which two local authorities effectively competed with each other for a limited resource. Indeed they fought bitter battles in their attempts to ensure that their residents were not disadvantaged. In the relationship that existed between the two authorities, Thuringowa was often cast as the poor country cousin to the haughtier, more powerful and well-endowed Townsville.

The first two themes - the reasons behind supplying water reticulation and the various setbacks incurred in that provision - demonstrated the considerable tenacity and commitment in the early Boards' and later Councils' struggles to provide water reticulation. The third theme explores the extent of that commitment, which can be gauged by comparison with that of other selected authorities and the amount of revenue earmarked for the water projects. Sometimes, as we have seen, the

92 TDB, 27 November 1975, p.2; 5 December 1975, p.1.

93 The pipeline carries water from Paluma Dam to Townsville. TDB, 11 June 1975, p.7; 13 June 1975, p.5.

commitment was frustrated by Thuringowa's own meagre resources, Brisbane or Townsville - even by Thuringowa's ratepayers.

Thuringowa's progressiveness and commitment was substantial in comparison with the policies and practices of other authorities. It has already been mentioned that Hinchinbrook did not provide reticulation until the 1930s even though its population in Ingham was always larger than Thuringowa's suburban population. The town of Bundaberg which was incorporated at the same time as Thuringowa was not connected with water reticulation until 1902.⁹⁴ Monto Shire near Gladstone had a population of 3 514 in 1933, 1 214 more than Thuringowa had when its first reticulated water scheme commenced yet water was not connected until 1956 in the main town of Monto and 1966 in Mulgildie, the next largest urban centre. Cost was the reason for the delay.⁹⁵ It took 12 years from the first consideration by Council for water to be supplied to Brighton, the seaside town for Melbournites. However, unlike Thuringowa, water reticulation was not given any priority in Brighton Municipal Councils' policies and plans. Rather, Brighton Council only connected water to its residents as the neighbouring authority offered connection to its main on terms "it would have been foolish to refuse".⁹⁶

The money spent by Thuringowa's Boards and Councils on water reticulation was a measure of substantial but not disproportionate commitment. In the first few decades the Boards naturally concentrated on building roads, the economic lifelines between the rural settlers

94 Nolan, *Bundaberg: History and People*, p.187.

95 Johnston, *A New Province? The Closer Settlement of Monto*, p.156.

96 Weston Bates, *A History of Brighton*, 2nd edn. (Melbourne, 1983), p.207.

and the port; they also refused to abandon urban ratepayers and the "social needs" of suburbia.⁹⁷ Although Hodel and his Boards were sorely affected by the falling endowment, the damaging effects on revenue of boundary changes, the 1890s depression and the large overdrafts in 1890 (£3 100) and 1891 (£3 400),⁹⁸ they never lost sight of their goals. In the three year period, 1889 to 1891, the Boards spent £1 643 or 18% of the revenue from rates in order to establish the viability of various water schemes.⁹⁹ More significantly, at the height of the 1890s Depression, Board Members unanimously agreed to commit part of their revenue to interest and redemption repayments on treasury loans for water projects.¹⁰⁰ By 1914, on the eve of the handover to the Townsville Water Board, Thuringowa's Councils had connected 584 premises and outlaid £8 095/15/5 on the Mundingburra water supply system.¹⁰¹ Expenditure still exceeded receipts but, instead of

97 See Clark, "'Worse than Physic': Sydney's Water Supply 1788-1888", p.54.

98 Chairman's Annual Reports, 1890 and 1891; also see Chapter 13.

99 Monies Expended on Water Schemes
during Years 1889, 1890 and 1891.

Hamilton prospecting at Ross River near Gleeson's		£ 53.17.0
Mole's Scheme, Fulham Rd.		188.17.0
Jobbing's Scheme, Stewart's Creek		
Machinery	516.13.5	
Wages, Salaries		
Expenses to date	883.13.8	1 400. 7.1
		1 643. 1.1

Chairman's Annual Reports, 1890 and 1891; NQH, 19 February 1896, p.55; Statistics of Queensland, 1899, 1890 and 1891.

100 Thuringowa Divisional Board to Under Secretary of the Treasury, 8 February 1892, p.3, 31 January 1896, p.11, Water Supply Correspondence Book 1891-1896.

101 Statistics of Queensland, 1914.

increasing water charges, the Councils met the additional operating costs out of revenue.¹⁰² At least 74% of the dwellings in the Thuringowa Water Authority's area in 1914 were connected to the water mains.

Wordsworth's Councils in the 1940s and 1950s and deCoursey and Brabon's Councils in the 1960s and early 1970s probably displayed an even more impressive commitment to water reticulation than the early Boards - certainly in one important respect. Paluma, Geaney's Lane and Innes Estate, the Upper Ross, Bluewater and Saunders Beach had tiny residential populations compared with suburban Thuringowa's 400 dwellings in the 1890s. In 1963, Paluma, Bluewater and Saunders Beach had 46, 25 and 33 premises respectively (the majority being weekend cottages) whilst Geaney's Lane and Innes Estate had 40 premises and the Upper Ross 60.¹⁰³ To the editor of the local paper, the Shire Councils' plans for a water supply scheme for each tiny settlement was "a most progressive move".¹⁰⁴

In 1966-1967 the Council's third water scheme, providing for Innes Estate and Geaney's Lane, serviced 54 dwellings and, together with septic installation, represented a \$212 per capita cost!¹⁰⁵ Seven years later the Council was supplying 2 037 premises from its four water schemes: the Paluma Dam served a population of 100; three reservoirs in the Black River supplied 590 inhabitants in Innes Estate and Geaney's Lane; Giru's two bores supplied 730 people; and most of the 4 000

102 Statistics of Queensland, 1914.

103 TDB, 19 October 1963, p.3; in 1897 the 400 suburban dwellings made water reticulation more viable and a necessity for health reasons.

104 TDB, Editorial, 24 June 1963, p.2.

105 The total cost was \$84 656. In comparison the Paluma per capita costs were approximately \$84 (or £42). Calculated from Statistics of Queensland, 1966-1967.

residents in the Upper Ross suburbs were also catered for.¹⁰⁶ Thuringowa's Council had a loan commitment of \$520 000 for water reticulation and paid \$32 000 p.a. and \$8 000 p.a. respectively in interest and redemption fees.¹⁰⁷ Comparison with certain expenditures from rate revenue for the same financial year, 1973-1974, provide a further gauge of the commitment to water supply. Roads still received top priority (\$180 000 spent out of revenue); sanitation and sewerage services came next (\$70 000); but water had the third largest works expenditure (\$55 000). 81% of all dwellings in the Shire had water reticulation.¹⁰⁸ In 1975 Bluewater, Toolakea, Jaloonda, Saunders Beach, Rollingstone and Balgal tapped the Mt. Spec pipeline, with Thuringowa Shire Council financing the cost of the construction, operation and maintenance of the connections to the pipeline, mains to the townships and chlorinators to purify the water. To 1978 the cost was \$903 000.¹⁰⁹ In 1977 the Council committed itself to five projects in an ambitious, four million dollar scheme to progressively upgrade the mains, pumps and reservoirs supplying the Upper Ross suburbs in order to keep ahead of the population expansion.¹¹⁰ Since settlement stretched the length and breadth of the Shire in isolated pockets and the suburban population had increased dramatically, the Shire Council's achievements were not inconsiderable.

Owing to the region's physical and climatic

106 Calculated from Statistics of Queensland, 1973-1974.

107 Statistics of Queensland, 1973-1974.

108 Besides money spent out of revenue, a further \$520 000 loan was taken out for water reticulation; \$932 000 was taken out in loans for sanitation and sewerage services; there were no loans for roads but subsidies from State and Federal Government boosted road works. Statistics of Queensland, 1973-1974.

109 TDB, 11 June 1975; 1 November 1978.

110 TDB, 10 October 1977, p.3.

environment there are few adequate water sources apart from Ross River and Paluma Dam, both situated in Thuringowa Shire but under the control of the Townsville City Council's Water Authority. Thuringowa lacks other sufficient surface water resources because, with the "strong seasonal rhythm to the runoff pattern", the streams only flow intermittently through the year.¹¹¹ Thus underground sources were sought and harnessed for the water reticulation needs of the most populated areas of the Shire: the Upper Ross suburbs and Giru. The suburban booms in the late 1800s and 1970s placed substantial burdens on Thuringowa finances for the supply of water. Fighting between the Thuringowa and Townsville councils over limited sources caused numerous delays and dissatisfied, belligerent ratepayers. State decisions, many of which appeared detrimental to Thuringowa's interests, brought additional tensions, delays and costs to the three ventures into water reticulation.

The first water project, though doomed to failure because of the fickle supply, highlighted the determined and serious attitude of the Board Members to their elected responsibilities. This was again the case with water reticulation to Paluma, the second water project, which was plagued by problems of pollution, pipe corrosion, mechanical and electrical failure and the need for constant upgrading. By 1979 the Shire was operating eight different water schemes and chlorination plants. Council Minutes and newspaper reports reflect the willingness of the Councils to put aside their predominantly rural interests, and shoulder their responsibility to fulfil one of the major urban functions of local government - the supply of water -not merely to the rapidly growing Upper Ross suburbs and to the township of Giru, but also to Thuringowa's tiny isolated settlements dotted along the northern and western

111 Burchill, *Thuringowa Shire Strategic Plan*, p.15.

highways and on the northern beaches.

The provision of water and other services were politically activities and the people who were responsible for the policies and implementation of these programs were politicians. Their philosophies, backgrounds and personalities influenced the nature of Thuringowa local government. This human element in Thuringowa politics is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 17

Chairmen, Councillors and Clerks: their Attitudes and Practices

A study of local government in Thuringowa is incomplete without a critical examination of the attitudes and philosophies of the men and women who were the elected representatives¹ and employees. It was they who interpreted, judged and implemented priorities and practices. As Chapman and Wood point out, local government was an important source of power; it meshed civic responsibilities with civic privileges.²

This chapter singles out one Chairman, Joseph Hodel, to show how one person can influence the implementation of local government. As Chairman of Thuringowa Divisional Board, Hodel was instrumental in creating employment and profits through the operation of the Ayr Tramway which was hailed as the most successful private railway in Queensland. His attitudes towards the curtailment of Divisional Board expenses during the 1890s Depression affected the families of the men retrenched. Such actions were accomplished through his ability to maintain a strong cohort of supporters on the Divisional Board and, after 1902, Council. Hodel was the embodiment of the instrumentalist theory in action. The instrumentalist position argues that local government is "captured by, and operated in favour of, a particular interest group".³ The chapter on Revenue (Chapter 13) explored how the cattle lobby affectively dominated rate considerations for 40 years. However, the

1 Previous chapters discussed the backgrounds of chairmen and councillors (Chapter 10) and the outputs of council decisions in terms of revenue (Chapter 13) and services (Chapters 14, 15 and 16).

2 Chapman and Wood, *Australian Local Government: The Federal Dimension*, p.27.

3 Johnston, *Geography and the State: An Essay in Political Geography*, p.197.

instrumentalist theory can also be validly used to describe and analyse the situation where "the state apparatus", that is, local government leadership, management and functioning, is captured by the Chairman (or Councillors). Hodel's philosophies, policies and practices dominated Board and Council decisions from the 1890s to the 1920s.

The chapter also examines the Council's involvement in, and attitudes to, the political arm of local government. Thuringowa judged the North Queensland Local Authorities Association (NQLAA) and the Local Authorities Association of Queensland (LAA) solely in terms of their worth to the Shire and found them ineffectual. Their disdain highlights a century of parochial isolationism.

Analysis reveals in addition that the Councils supported the Shire's cattle and sugar interests but virtually ignored the other economic activities of the Shire's residents.

Understanding the process of decision-making by chairmen and councillors needs to include an examination of the control the shire clerks - the managerial gatekeepers - exercised in evaluating political demands and converting them into decisions, plans and policies. As the "key figure and the most important single member" on the permanent professional staff, the shire clerk could have enormous influence *vis-a-vis* short-term elected representatives who had little understanding of local government legislative possibilities and

constraints.⁴ The Chapter will examine two periods when the managerialist-bureaucratic theory characterised the functioning of local government affairs.

Through local government legislation, elected representatives intervened in a number of ways to affect the lives of the Shire's inhabitants. Yet most local histories largely ignore the chairmen, mayors and councillors or trivialise their role by listing them in tables or appendices and including the more colourful in brief anecdotes. The significance of a local authority's elected representatives as active participants in moulding and developing local government is passed over.

Too often the motives for entering local government politics are viewed cynically by the general public; elected members are stereotyped as self-important and self-interested.⁵ There is no doubt that local government service brings status and honour, allows access to power and enhances political ambitions but it also provides excitement, social relationships and a

4 In some authorities, the engineer dominates. Firstly, s/he is often better educated than the shire clerk and has the technical training to impress councillors. Secondly, the outputs from the engineer are observable - roads, sewerage, water reticulation, kerbing, recreation facilities, etc.; those from the clerk, are not. This gives them power in council decisions as their products are those that will count with the voter. Sometimes there is rivalry between the two. Jones, *Organisational and Social Planning in Australian Local Government*, pp.133-168. This thesis is not examining the role of the engineer because Thuringowa only employed one (relatively) permanently to 1918 when Hodel dominated local government decisions and then from the 1970s; by the 1980s the Shire had an engineering department. During this last period, 1970s onwards, the Clerks and Gleeson seemed to hold more continuous sway than the engineer/s.

5 M. Bowman, *Local Government in the Australian States: An Urban Paper* (Canberra, 1976), p.3.

TABLE 20
Thuringowa Chairmen 1880-1985

Year	Chairperson	Year	Chairperson
1880	William Aplin	1912 1915	Joseph Hodel
1881	William Aplin	1916	Edward Crowder
1882	Frederick Gordon	1917 1919	William Ireland
1883	James Miller; Arthur Bundock	1920	James Cummins
1884	William Clayton (to August); Arthur Bundock	1921* 1929	James Cummins
1885 1886	Arthur Bundock	1930 1948	Charles Wordsworth
1887 1888	Frederick Johnson	1949 1960	William Wordsworth
1889 1890	Joseph Hodel	1961 1966	Jack R. Brabon
1891	Joseph Hodel (to March); Frederick Johnson	1967 1969	William deCoursey
1892 1897	Joseph Hodel	1970 1972	Jack R. Brabon
1898	Joseph Hodel or Robert Mawby	1973 1975	William deCoursey
1899 1909	Joseph Hodel	1976 1985	Dan Gleeson**
1910 1911	Henry Abbott		

* From 1921, chairmen were elected for three year terms by the constituency; prior to this they were elected yearly by fellow councillors.

** Dan Gleeson lost in the 1991 election.

widening of outlook, experiences and civic obligation.⁶

According to research, the popular opinion that most councillors are there for financial self-interest is grossly exaggerated.⁷ The stereotype has no real foundation in Thuringowa. There were no examples of blatant corruption though there is some evidence of nepotism and patronage. However the examples are few, the chances of manipulating Council decisions to one's own advantage highly uncertain, and possible gains small. For instance, in 1971 the Chairman was claimed to have approved building a road past his family's property rather than in more needy locations; he was exonerated by the full Council but lost the Chair in the next election.⁸ In 1977 the Chairman reprimanded some Councillors for using "their position to their or friends' personal advantage. Decisions were being made on likes and dislikes and not on the merits of matters before them".⁹ This was a serious charge and even though it appeared in the local newspaper, there seemed to be no immediate backlash from ratepayers. It is probable that the success of Labor and the failure of four Councillors to be re-elected in the 1979 elections may have been influenced by such behaviour.

Though some Board Members and Councillors appealed against the valuation placed on their land and ensured their absence from relevant Council discussion, their objections were often, but not always, upheld. In fact, the percentage of unsuccessful challenges by Councillors against their land valuations closely approximated that

6 Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, pp.217,218.

7 See Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, pp.216,217.

8 TDB, 17 June 1971.

9 TDB, 17 February 1977.

for the general public.¹⁰ However in the 1980s the Chair permitted Councillors to remain whilst proposals in which they had a stake, for instance land subdivisions and road locations, were discussed.¹¹ Again in the 1980s it was "common knowledge" that, although they never declared their interests, certain Councillors were split in their pronounced loyalty to different land developers; one was charged with being in one developer's employ.¹² Only one of these Councillors tendered his resignation charging that "the Council and its officers were persecuting him".¹³ A few Board Members or Councillors benefited from contracts negotiated between their business and the Council. However, such an arrangement proved unacceptable to the ratepayers on only one occasion: in 1884 Clayton chose to resign rather than face further criticism from the ratepayers and press as well as the threat of a poll over his mishandling of the Causeway Bridge. Though the Board's contract with Clayton's brickworks for bricks for the construction of the bridge's foundations had not caused any initial ratepayer comment, charges of corruption and using his position for personal profit were soon used by the community in its attempts to have built a bridge of sound design.¹⁴ A few instances of possible nepotism occurred with respect to employment: relatives of J.S. Gill, a Shire Clerk, and William Wordsworth, a Shire Chairman, were appointed as Junior Clerk and Land Valuer respectively. Again the absence of any ratepayer backlash suggests the appointments were seen to be appropriate.

10 Minutes, 1880-1946.

11 Interviews with D.F. and A.H., 6 July 1987 and 18 September 1991, respectively.

12 Interviews with D.F. and A.H., 6 July 1987 and 18 September 1991, respectively.

13 TB 21 September, 14 November 1984.

14 Minutes, July and August 1884.

Jones argues that most councillors take local government seriously, contrary to the general scepticism about councillor motives.¹⁵ This study of Thuringowa supports Jones' conclusion as most of Thuringowa's Chairmen and Councillors demonstrated in tangible ways a real commitment to their elected positions.

Shire politicians are sometimes viewed as naive yokels compared with their city, state and federal counterparts. Yet Thuringowa's Chairmen and ex-Chairmen used the old-boy network with consummate skill. Oxley highlights numerous aspects of the role of mateship in local organisations.¹⁶ Thuringowa's political and economic links with Colonial, and later State, politicians were strengthened by ties of mateship, particularly in the nineteenth century: the frontier was so recent in Thuringowa that significant bonds were formed among the men who had helped create North Queensland. Mateship with the politicians in this group was manipulated to some effect.¹⁷ The usefulness of political connections with colonial government was particularly demonstrated by William Aplin, Thuringowa's first Chairman. Aplin, one of Townsville's earliest businessmen, had previous experience of local government as a member and Mayor of the Townsville Municipal Council. However, Aplin's major contribution to the

15 Jones, *Local Government and the People*, p.213.

16 H.G. Oxley, *Mateship in Local Organisation* (Brisbane, 1974).

17 The politicians were Deane, Philip, Macrossan, Browne, Aplin and later, Hodel. Though the locals did not, and could not, get what they wanted all the time - and on occasion their failures were substantial, for example, North Queensland Separation - the siting of the western railway terminus at Townsville (and not Bowen) and one of two state meatworks in Thuringowa, at Ross River, as well as ignoring the possibility of recommending the abolition of Thuringowa in the Royal Commission on Local Authorities in 1896 were due, in part, to Thuringowa and Townsville's close links with colonial politicians.

division was not so much in the bread and butter tasks of local government but in advocacy for Thuringowa in Brisbane after his election to the Legislative Assembly. Aplin became one of the Board's most ardent lobbyists.¹⁸

The general scepticism toward councillor altruism is seen in the different reactions to Bundock and Johnson's Chairmanships. On two occasions, in 1883 and 1884, Bundock accepted nomination to succeed a Chairman who had resigned in a cloud of controversy.¹⁹ Neither the sense of public duty shown on these occasions nor his effective leadership earned him any public applause. On the other hand, the newspapers lauded Johnson, his successor, as the best Chairman ever because he "got out and about" the Division,²⁰ which was what his business interests in any case required of him. (He was a partner in the substantial butchering and grazing firm, Johnson & Castling). It was clear that the rate payers felt more comfortable with Johnson's obvious mixing of private and public business than with Bundock's civic duty; what they wanted was a chairman who was seen to be cognisant of their particular road, bridge and drainage needs.

Abbott (1910-1911) was the only Chairman whose commitment was obviously self-centred. He refused to relinquish two months of the Chairman's stipend although he would be absent from the district. Fellow Councillors were irate that ratepayers would "not get any return on their taxes". He also made no effort to arrange for an acting chairman. Another Councillor subsequently

18 Minutes, 1880-1898.

19 Miller resigned in 1883 then William Clayton in 1884. Bundock served in the interim May 1883 to February 1884 and then from August 1884 to 1887.

20 TDB, 13 March 1890, p.4.

declined the acting chair on principle.²¹

Though local government conferred honour, status and recognition, the glamour was sometimes well hidden. William Ireland's chairmanship during the devastating 1918 excision illustrated the strains which local government office could impose on elected representatives. The unsuccessful fight to retain the western suburbs had been strenuous; the subsequent fight to ensure that the reluctant Municipal Council paid full compensation for the excised land, bridges and roads, as well as the loans taken out to build them, though successful, was equally prolonged and bitter.²² The battles with both Brisbane's centralist decisions and Townsville's dirty fighting²³ and the ignominy of being Chairman when Thuringowa lost its most valuable rateable land, had grave effects on Ireland's health. He resigned soon after.²⁴

James Cummins (1920-1929) was an example of the arch conservative and the occasional progressive who, in both roles, allowed the shire clerk to take a "gate-keeper" role in the administration and agenda-setting of the councils affairs.²⁵ After the 1918 excision, the Shire was fairly destitute; a state that was confirmed by the Royal Commission on Local Authority Boundaries in 1927. Cummins policies, influenced by Gill, the shire clerk, maintained the *status quo*. On two occasions however

21 Letter from Councillor Crowder to Home Secretary, 17 December 1911, COL/076.

22 *Local Government*, October 1918, p.200; January 1919, p.340; May 1919, p.502.

23 See Chapter 12.

24 Ireland was admitted to hospital in 1919 and was granted three month's leave in early 1920 before having to resign. Minutes, 12 November 1919, 14 April 1920, 11 THU/D5.

25 See below for details.

Cummins' actions were a radical departure: a woman was appointed to fill a councillor vacancy in 1924 and the region's first airport was built, operated and largely financed by Thuringowa.²⁶

The Wordsworths (1930-1960) epitomised the conservatism inherent in local government office.²⁷ They were guardians of the *status quo*; to them local government meant housekeeping tasks undertaken within strict limits set by low rating and land valuation structures. To be fair, until the 1950s, the Wordsworths probably faced the most difficult conditions of all Chairmen. They inherited a poverty-stricken Shire reeling from the excisions of its suburbs, the cattle slump, the Depression, the strains put on works programs by the increasing use of the motor car and stagnant revenue.²⁸ In their case, the reasons for being the classic local government councillor - a low spender and low taxpayer - appear vindicated.²⁹

Brabon provides an interesting example of the growth in stature and outlook that sometimes occurred in local government politicians. He entered shire politics with the express purpose of lowering rates and improving services for cattlemen like himself.³⁰ On becoming

26 See Chapters 10 and 9, respectively.

27 Chapman and Wood, *Australian Local Government: The Federal Dimension*, pp.54,55. Jones, *Local Government and the People: Challenges for the Eighties*, p.200; R. A. Wild, *Politics at the Grass Roots: The Challenge for Local Government*, Meredith Memorial Lecture, La Trobe University (Melbourne, 1979), p.25.

28 Only 50 dwellings were erected in the 10 year period 1937-1957. See Chapter 2 for details of the cattle slump.

29 Jones, *Local Government and the People*, p.142. See Chapter 13 for details of their taxation philosophy.

30 TDB, 12 March 1977, p.3; Press Cuttings Book, 1955-1964; Press Cuttings and Advertisements Book, 1964-1984.

Chairman, however, his interests and commitment broadened to include the wider functions of local government such as libraries and welfare services; he realised that Thuringowa would benefit from becoming involved in the Queensland Local Authorities Association (LAA) and the North Queensland Local Authorities Association (NQLAA); and he understood that the Shire had to increase rates and take out substantial loan commitments if it wished to be efficient and progressive in its provision of services.³¹

Naturally, the impact of individual chairmen depended on their leadership qualities and the time and effort they spent on local government affairs. The 1920 reforms to local government made it easier for chairmen to dominate if they so desired. Legislation brought in not only adult franchise but direct election of the chairman or mayor for a three-year term.³² Previously, the chairman and mayor had been elected yearly by their fellow councillors. The change ensured "a strong, high-profile, executive officer" who could leave a personal imprint and in that way acquire further power, particularly if elected for consecutive terms.³³

This occurred in Thuringowa with Charles Wordsworth (1930-1948) and his son, William (1949-1960). Brabon had only begun to consolidate his style in two terms when deCourcey replaced him: the two alternated in power until Gleeson took up the reins in 1976. Nevertheless, deCourcey continued and strengthened the development of

31 Minutes 1955-1973 and Press Cuttings Book 1955-1964.

32 Tasmania is the only other State in which the mayor or chairperson is voted to power by the electors; Power, *et.al.*, "Overview of Local Government", pp.38, 39.

33 Power, *et.al.*, "Overview of Local Government", p.38. Women were not allowed to become councillors, chairperson or mayor till the changes to the Local Government Act in 1920.



The Hon. Joseph Hodel
M.L.C.

Hodel, the entrepreneurial grazier and businessman, was Thuringowa's longest serving and perhaps most influential Chairperson.

Thuringowa as a progressive urban-rural shire. deCourcey had no personal sugar or cattle interests. He ruthlessly increased rates and loans, pushing Thuringowa further into the area of big business as one of the major employing authorities in the Shire. Gleeson proved to be all that the position allowed a chairman to be - a strong, charismatic leader with a high public profile. He showed neither timidity nor vacillation.³⁴ However, Gleeson's obstruction of joint Thuringowa-Townsville programs, which he and his electors saw as valid parochialism, was a factor in EARC's 1991 amalgamation recommendation. The support of a loyal core among his fellow Councillors and the professional staff permitted him to consolidate his position and implement his policies. The only other Chairman to have a lasting impact on the Shire was Hodel, even though he was elected yearly by his fellow councillors. Hodel served Thuringowa for 29 years between 1888 and 1922 and was Chairman for 22 of those years.

His philosophy of local government, his priorities and practices, his attitudes to, and relationships with, Townsville and Brisbane and his belief in his own worth had great impact on the Shire. During his terms of office he instigated and completed the following major works programs for the Shire and for the enhancement of the region's economy: substantial road work; two bridges over the Bohle River in 1889; the first council chambers in 1889; upgrading of Ross River Bridge in 1893 and 1897; a bridge over Stewart's Creek in 1893; at least eight minor suburban bridges between 1890 and 1902; upgrading of the sanitation system; the Thuringowa Water Board in 1897 (after a long fight with the Townsville Municipal Council and a concerted search for the best water supply); the Ayr Tramway in 1901; and in 1922 the £16 000

34 See Chapter 16 with respect to Gleeson's fights with Townsville and Brisbane over water resources for Thuringowa and Chapter 12 with respect to city status.

Haughton Tramway Extension Line including purchase of a locomotive and rolling stock.

The heavy emphasis and expenditure on roads and bridges in Hodel's first decade (1889-1897) reflected his background, business interests and views on the relationship between Thuringowa, Townsville and their common hinterlands. Hodel had had a rags-to-riches career since his arrival in Townsville in the 1890s. In his twentieth year, he moved from a labouring job in Undallagh to Townsville where he opened a bakery. He subsequently became a fruiterer and, in 1875, a confectioner. Within a year he was proprietor of two hotels and, within seven, proprietor of one of the local newspapers, the *Northern Standard*. He was also in partnership in a livery stables, and in 1883 became a town carter. As well, he acquired two substantial cattle properties in Thuringowa at Cluden and Clevedon.³⁵ By 1889 he was part of both the town and rural business elite and familiar with the needs of both. He understood that the provision of access between the interior and a port had been a major factor in the founding of Townsville; he also knew that adequate roads and bridges were still a necessity for the port's growth. Thuringowa's Divisional Board was therefore perceived as a necessary complement to Townsville's Council and to the livelihood and prosperity of both areas. Thus, to Hodel, the Board had a crucial role in providing and maintaining an easier and quicker two-way flow of goods, stock and people.

Hodel was praised for his astute handling of the Ayr

35 J. Manion, *Paper Power in North Queensland: A History of Journalism in Townsville and Charters Towers* (Townsville, 1982), pp.209-213; Donnelly, *The Port of Townsville*, pp.15, 31-39, 65, 97, 116-119; TDB, 3 July 1914, p.4. Hodel was born on 9 October 1850 at St. Helier, Jersey Channel Islands and immigrated with his parents and nine brothers and sisters, arriving in Brisbane 9 March 1863. He died in 1943.

Tramway from its inception to its sale. He was seen as an able administrator:

the guaranteeing bodies almost exclusively owe the sound position the concern is in today...to his devotion to its interests.³⁶

When Hodel was appointed to the 1896 Royal Commission on local government in Queensland, it was an acknowledgment of his capabilities and knowledge as a successful Chairman of Thuringowa. Later, when Hodel was appointed to Queensland's Upper House in 1914, his successor as Chairman, Edward Crowder, stressed that "it was not only an honour to the recipient but also to the Council and district generally".³⁷ Thuringowa basked blatantly in his reflected glory.

Hodel's success was no doubt due, at least in part, to his contacts with parliamentarians. He worked hard at maintaining links with Brisbane's power brokers so that Thuringowa would benefit. For instance, there were no major problems with Brisbane over raising the loan for the Ayr Tramway or getting the Treasury to waive a £1 022 loan for the survey of the Haughton Tramway.³⁸ Hodel was also a parliamentarian when Thuringowa won back the Haughton River-Woodstock-Mt. Elliott area in 1916. Of course, he did not always win. Certain issues had the support of more powerful supporters: the loss of the western suburbs in 1918 was an obvious example. Nevertheless, Hodel used all available contacts during his chairmanship of Thuringowa.

Hodel was a very able politician. He won and kept the allegiance of his electorate, fellow Board Members and Councillors (until 1922) and the press. It was rare that any spoke ill of his administration. By ensuring

36 Minutes, Ayr Tramway Joint Board Annual General Meeting, 1911 cited in John Kerr's Notes, p.3852.

37 Minutes, 8 July 1914, 11 THU/D4.

38 Minutes, 17 May 1922, 11 THU/D6.

that he was Chairman of the vital sub-committees - the Finance and Works Improvement Committees - in which policies and priorities were thrashed out for formal ratification by the Board or Council, he imposed his will on Thuringowa. Partisan loyalties also ensured that Members and Councillors were not elected to these committees if they repeatedly opposed Hodel.³⁹ Although the Haughton River Tramway Extension was first mooted by Giru sugar farmers in 1916, it was not until Hodel was re-elected to the Council (but not as Chairman) that the loan for the Tramway was agreed to by Thuringowa Shire Council in late 1921. Hodel's tactics, eloquence and ability to reactivate old loyalties (winning the votes of Councillors who had served with him prior to his 1915 resignation) won the day for Brookes, the Haughton River representative on Council, who had been consistent in his agitation for the scheme. Another, probably more important, factor influencing the "yes" vote for the Extension was the knowledge that the same engineer, Peter Minehan, who had constructed the Ayr Tramway would be in charge of the new one. Hodel had ensured his availability.

Hodel's support for the Ayr and Haughton Tramways reflected his philosophy on the roles of councillor and local government. Councillors' concerns should transcend the parochial interests of their sub-division. Hodel apparently took this view as early as 1892 when, in support of a rate increase, he admonished: "Members have a duty towards the whole Division, as well as to their

39 The parallels to 1976-1979 are strong. Sohn argued that he was purposely excluded from membership of the Finance Committee yet, as an economist, he was the only Councillor with professional financial skills: *TDB*, 2 July 1979, p.4.

particular sub-division".⁴⁰ He therefore could not understand why Councillors initially refused to consider the Haughton Tramway.

Hodel believed that a local authority must go beyond roads, water and sanitation, take calculated risks and commit the Council's money to works aiding the region's progress. In 1900 there had been no opposition from fellow Board Members to the Townsville to Ayr railway as it was seen as an undeniable boon to the area. But between 1916 and 1920, until Hodel's re-election, the majority of the Council did not want to be encumbered with the responsibility of outlaying £16 000 for the construction of the sugar tramway - despite the fact that settlers had "shown such confidence in the possibilities of their district by finding the money necessary to purchase and erect the Invicta (sugar) Mill".⁴¹ The Council's stance seemed the more incomprehensible because, on the surface, there appeared to be little risk in the scheme: it could proceed on "a benefited area footing"; that is, with sugar farmers being charged a special rate to cover the loan repayments. However, the risk was real. In 1921 there was "a large amount of rates still outstanding" among the farmers in the Haughton River District, though the Chairman hoped that "now the mill was in full swing, the farmers would soon liquidate their overdue liabilities to the Thuringowa Shire Council".⁴² If the farmers were having difficulty in paying ordinary rates, how could they afford the increase? In deciding finally to go ahead with the loan, the Shire thus showed a real commitment to improving the

40 NQH, 10 August 1892, p.29. Gleeson, nearly a century later, likewise admonished his Council: "...parochial greed will kill the Shire...as the whole Shire, not just your Sub-division, is your responsibility"; TDB, 14 April 1976, p.5.

41 Minutes, 10 December 1919, 11 THU/D5.

42 Minutes, 18 August 1921, 11 THU/D6.

livelihood of sugar farmers and thereby to the economy of the region. Hodel's leadership was mainly responsible for both railway projects.⁴³

Hodel also believed local government should be involved in issues of morality. Before vehicle licences became a matter for State Government, local authorities had the responsibility of inspecting vehicles and issuing horse-drawn cab and bus licences. It was Divisional Board policy not to grant a licence to any person unfit to hold one. A person's unfitness was based on more than his physical condition. In 1902 Hodel unilaterally revoked the licence of "Kelly (driver of sociable No.22) for allegedly using insulting, shameful and abusive language".⁴⁴ The omission of the courtesy title "Mr." and the fact that the complaint was brought by J. Lynam, an influential grazier and shareholder in Townsville's and Thuringowa's businesses suggest that appropriate deference due to the elite was a factor in Hodel's action as was favours for important friends. As Chairman of a local government authority, Hodel was able to influence adversely the livelihood of not only the Council's employees (through retrenchment) but also the Shire's residents and workers.

Hodel received many compliments, especially for his chairmanship during the 1890s Depression, from fellow Divisional Board Members, the press and ratepayers who re-elected him with a substantial majority every time he

43 In 1900 he was Chairman; 1920 and 1921 he sat on the Council as a Councillor.

44 Hodel only asked Council approval to write to the Mayor asking him to revoke the cab driver's municipal license. Minutes, 09 January 1902 reprinted in *NQH*, 11 January 1902, p.33.

stood for office.⁴⁵ When Hodel resumed office and the Chair in 1891 after a year's absence, the overdraft stood at £3 444; by the end of 1893 the debt was £10.⁴⁶ Yet during that time one minor and two major bridges were built, the water scheme was continued and the Board's roads were upgraded. Hodel reduced the overdraft by personally ensuring "the strictest economy" in the Board's general expenditure; for instance, the stationery vote was pruned.⁴⁷ However, the main saving was in wages. Hodel reacted to the Depression as other employers did by retrenching staff. The newspaper referred to the "heroic retrenchments [instigated] in order that existence might be sustained".⁴⁸ In 1894 the same policy was maintained: salaries were reduced and only two or three men were employed after June because Hodel argued that "all roads requiring urgent attention were nearly finished".⁴⁹ Hodel was no different whether managing his businesses or local government. In both areas he was the epitome of an "entrepreneurial profit-minded businessman".⁵⁰

His own honorarium stayed at £100 during the Depression. When a member moved that the honorarium be

45 Hodel was elected by ratepayers to the Board and after 1902 to the Shire Council; usually at the first meeting each February, the Board Members and Councillors voted for the position of Chairman.

46 *NQH*, 16 January 1895.

47 Chairman's Annual Report, 1891.

48 *NQH*, 14 February 1894, pp.10, 20. The Hon. W. Aplin, M.L.A., a fellow Board Member and first Board Chairman, claimed Hodel "deserved great credit for doing what he had done to reduce the overdraft".

49 *NQH*, 20 June 1894, p.24; 16 January 1895, p.17.

50 Manion, *Paper Power in North Queensland*, p.212. Hodel was openly acknowledged as a "proponent of economy" by other organisations on which he served, for example, the Townsville Harbour Board and the North Queensland Newspaper Company Limited, *ibid*.

abolished in "these difficult times", he lost.⁵¹ It was explained that the activities of the Board were growing; that Hodel spent part, sometimes most, of each morning on Board business; that he also personally supervised works in various parts of the Division; that he often spent part of his honorarium on Board works.⁵² For example, in 1890 he only drew one month's allowance from his yearly entitlement.⁵³ It was argued that since Hodel "devoted more attention to his office than perhaps any other Chairman", he deserved some monetary recognition.⁵⁴

In his first year as Chairman of the Board, Hodel allowed it to run up a large overdraft. The damaging floods of 1889 were the cause: repair money had to come from rate revenue. Subsequently, Hodel regarded balancing the books, if necessary by pruning and scraping, as a personal crusade. This was not confined to the depressed 1890s. In 1921 he was the only one to vote against a gratuity for Gill, the Shire Clerk, in lieu of the holidays he had not taken since 1910.⁵⁵ Hodel was not a total Scrooge. He voted for increased wages for staff employees; he agreed that two allotments valued at £40 on which arrears were outstanding be transferred to Gill as part payment for his holiday back-pay; and he showed concern for the rank and file

51 Minutes, 26 March 1893, 11 THU/D2.

52 The Minutes of the Townsville Harbour Board, on which he served for 25 years, showed "him to be not interested in personal remuneration"; Manion, *Paper Power in North Queensland*, p.211.

53 NQR, 25 November 1891, p.20. The parallel with Gleeson is strong here too; Gleeson has consistently either refused payment for his elected office or donated the equivalent to charities; TDB, 12 December 1975, p.3; *The Advertiser*, 19 July 1979, p.2.

54 TDB, 13 March 1890.

55 Minutes, 18 August 1921, 11 THU/D6.

employee. On one occasion he spoke eloquently and successfully in support of the reinstatement of a respected employee who had been dismissed by the Council's engineer.⁵⁶ Yet he never lost his wider "vision which was one of rigid economy" - approvingly backed by ratepayers and the press.⁵⁷

Thus Hodel's philosophy of local government was a combination of conservatism and progressivism. On the one hand, he would stress the dominant importance of balancing the books and minor works programs; on the other he would advocate the building of bridges and ownership of railways. Yet he never supported progress for the sake of progress. For instance, as Thuringowa's elected representative on the Townsville Harbour Board in 1916, Hodel voted against the proposal to build a copper refinery in the Shire until an environmental study had surveyed the implications of pollution from the plant on community health.⁵⁸ In this, he was ahead of his time.

Hodel was always conscious of his worth. In 1896 he evidently believed he was the only one capable of steering the Board through difficult financial times. He accepted the Chair (even though he at first had no intention of accepting nomination) because the drain on revenue caused by flood damage would be "so great some very careful management would be required".⁵⁹ There was also the matter of completing the water supply scheme which he had taken up with vigour during his first term of office in 1889. In 1922 he threatened to resign if he were not re-appointed Chairman of the Haughton Tramway Extension Sub-committee. Seven months later he left the

56 Minutes, 8 February 1911, 11 THU/D3.

57 NQR, 14 February 1894, p.10.

58 Donnelly, *The Port of Townsville*, p.97.

59 NQH, 19 February 1896, p.17.

Council, apparently in a fit of pique: negative remarks had been made in his absence at the previous council meeting. Most Councillors found it difficult to tolerate the arrogance of a man who repeatedly made council decisions without reference to the full council. On the other hand, Hodel could not cope with the lack of deference to his experience.⁶⁰ For Hodel, it must have been a bitter end to 29 years devoted to the Shire that he had nurtured from comparative infancy to adulthood.

Hodel had the reputation of being power hungry, though this did not become an issue until his last years with the Shire.⁶¹ Hodel served concurrently on the Townsville Municipal Council and Thuringowa Divisional Board in 1895, 1896 and 1897.⁶² In 1897 he resigned from the Municipal Council but still continued as Chairman of Thuringowa Divisional Board until 1910. In that year he refused the Chair, preferring to be an ordinary councillor because he had meanwhile re-entered city politics and won nomination as Mayor. By 1912 Hodel was again Chairman of Thuringowa and a member of the Townsville City Council. He was elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly in December 1914; one year later, the absences associated with state government representation forced his resignation from local government. From 1920 to 1922, however, Hodel was again a Councillor in Thuringowa Shire. He was President of the Ayr Tramway Joint board from 1900 to 1910 and foundation member of the Townsville Harbour Board on which he served for 25 years, seven as Chairman. There was justice in the charge that Hodel wished to be "Lord of the Land and Admiral of the Seas".⁶³

60 Minutes, 16 August 1922, 11 THU/D6.

61 Manion, *Paper Power in North Queensland*, p.211.

62 See next paragraph for a discussion of any conflict of interest.

63 Donnelly, *The Port of Townsville*, p.39.

There were several reasons why Hodel stood for election to the Municipal Council in 1895. Having retired from active business before his fortieth birthday in 1890,⁶⁴ he had time to devote to his beloved local politics and community affairs. The editor of the *North Queensland Herald* applauded his "most commendable determination to sacrifice self to duty".⁶⁵ Negotiations with the Townsville Municipal Council over the supply of water to Thuringowa's suburbs were frustratingly slow, and Hodel probably believed that his voice on the Municipal Council would expedite matters. Again, Hodel was very much part of the town and rural elite; he wanted the two local authorities to pull together more consistently for the progress of the total area. Finally, having steered Thuringowa through the Depression, he was convinced that his expertise would benefit the town council. There were no comments in the Minutes, the Inwards Correspondence files or local newspapers protesting that Hodel was serving the interests of Townsville or Thuringowa to the detriment of the other local authority. In fact, his dual involvement seems to have been accepted as beneficial to both parties and unworthy of comment. The personal ambitions, power and sense of achievement that Hodel gained from membership of both local government authorities reinforced his commitment to local affairs.

When Hodel gave up dual representation in local government, he resigned from the Municipal Council, not from Thuringowa. Although his status as a Divisional Board or Shire Councillor would presumably have been less than that of a burgeoning town council, he appears to have been swayed by his fellow councillors' deference towards him. In Thuringowa he was "a big fish in the pond"; in urban politics and social life, though

64 Manion, *Paper Power in North Queensland*, p.212.

65 *NQH*, 8 March 1893, p.14.

influential, he was merely one among many. In Thuringowa Hodel encountered little opposition. Indeed the local paper reported approvingly that Thuringowa's local authority was not characterised by "cliques pulling this way and that".⁶⁶ It was different on the Municipal Council. In the 1910 elections for Mayor, for instance, it took three meetings and 41 individual motions before Hodel was elected Mayor; he was able to retain that position for one year only.⁶⁷ Obviously the eager support that kept him in power on Thuringowa's Council was decisive in persuading him to leave city politics and concentrate on shire local government.

It was also significant that Hodel did not venture into State politics until appointed to the Legislative Assembly in July 1914. Ardent in his loyalties, Hodel was a staunch Separationist who had committed himself and Thuringowa Divisional Board to the fight for a new state for North Queensland.⁶⁸ To have entered colonial politics would have dissipated that allegiance to local affairs. He saw it happen with Macrossan, particularly when Macrossan supported the anti-separationist Decentralisation Bill in 1889-1890; with another Townsville-Thuringowa parliamentarian, W.V. Brown, who supported the 1891 Constitution Bill; and with Robert Philp and G.R. Burns who, afraid of the gains made by Labor with its reputedly socialist economic policies in the 1893 elections, refused to pledge themselves to "separation and nothing short of it".⁶⁹ Party politics and, undoubtedly, the concerns of the whole colony became more important to these politicians than local-regional issues. Hodel's latent hostility to centralisation in

66 NQH, 14 February 1894, p.10.

67 Manion, *Paper Power in North Queensland*, fn.31, p.275.

68 See Chapter 12.

69 Doran, *Separatism in Townsville*, pp.65-69.

Brisbane surfaced over a trivial issue which he took with him into State politics: Hodel persuaded Thuringowa Council to ignore the Auditor General's directive that it buy its accounting books through the government printer; he continued to advocate patronage of local firms (provided, of course, the price was comparable with Brisbane prices) and to oppose the "unfairness of centralising everything possible in Brisbane".⁷⁰

Hodel ran Thuringowa as he did his own businesses: retrenching staff, limiting capital works when the basic infrastructure was established,⁷¹ committing his Boards to his dreams - separatism and railways. The power, prestige and acclaim which he derived from local government office were important to Hodel - but so, too, was his service to the community. Hodel's pragmatism and progressivism were echoed in the administration of Thuringowa. His career showed that the influence of a chairman in local government could be considerable.

Of course, Thuringowa's Chairmen did not rule autocratically. Chairmen and Councillors usually agreed on common goals and priorities. If Councillors attempted to act without the prior approval of the full Council they were censured firmly, sometimes through the press.⁷² Most Board Members and Councillors were graziers, farmers and self-employed businessmen; a few were professionals and housewives. They belonged to a fairly homogeneous socio-economic group and, except for the ALP councillors, appeared to hold similar political

70 Minutes, 11 February, 8 April, 13 May, 22 June 1914 and 10 February 1915, 11 THU/D4.

71 See Chapter 14.

72 For example, Hodel in 1922; Innes in 1956; deCoursey in 1975; Crs. Sandilands, Moroney, Sohn and Tyrell in 1979; Minutes, Special haughton Tramway Committee, 3 May 1922; Press Cuttings Book 1955-1964; Press Cuttings and Advertisements 1964-1984.

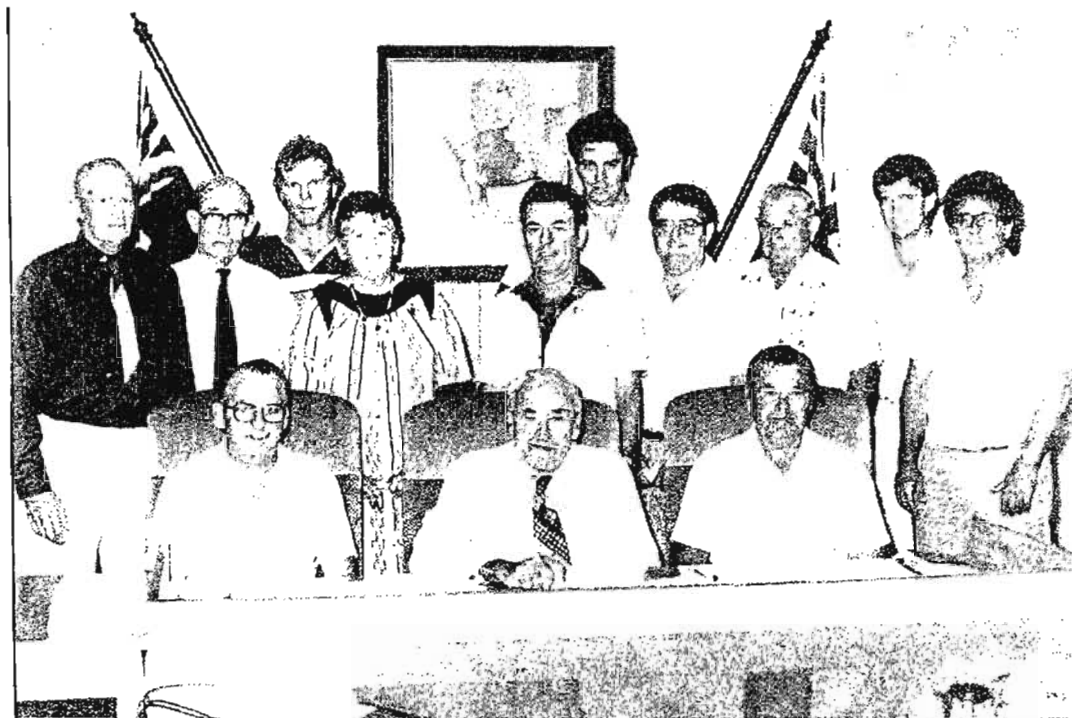


Last meeting in chamber

This was the last meeting to be conducted in the Thuringowa Shire Chambers since the move of Towns Road last October. It was held yesterday.

From left: Cllr. J. Hannon, A. Bock, G. Farnell, E. Parnell, L. Page, M. A. Lee - senior councillor, Mr. A. Webb, Shire Clerk, Cllr. J. Gleeson - Shire Chairman, Cllr. P. Hannon, Mrs. A. Hannon, L. T. G. Schindler, and Mrs. Hannon.

Mayor J. Hannon presiding, chaired, and David Welch, Mayor, in the chair.



THE old Thuringowa Shire Council and now the new Thuringowa City Council. The councillors are Dan Gleeson, chairman, John Hannon, deputy chairman, Roger Branson, Jim Coffey, Gary Farnell, Joy Cooper, Pat Machan, Eva Perotti, Harold (King) Cole, Ned Stead, Brad Taylor, L. Page, and others.

Landmark Council Meetings.

philosophies, including those on the role and functions of local government.⁷³ The similarities did not mean, however, that there was an absence of thorough discussion; on the contrary, there was frequently conflict before consensus. Each Councillor had his or her own interpretations concerning which local government practices were the most sound, or how priorities should be ordered; and each advocated the needs of his or her own constituents first. Nevertheless, the differences in the main were superficial; it was rather the uniformity of purpose and philosophy of the many Boards and Councils over Thuringowa's first 115 years of local government that stood out.

For example, over the century (apart from the Depression years and the last two decades) Thuringowa's Board Members and Shire Councillors persistently disdained involvement in the political organisations of local government. There were two local authority associations: the North Queensland Local Authorities Association (NQLAA) which operated from 1893 for a brief time, and the Local Authorities Association of Queensland (LAA) which commenced in 1896. The former was revived in 1913, lapsed again but was permanently reconstituted in the 1950s; it operated in conjunction with the latter, a state-wide statutory organisation which was renamed the

73 There was also consensus on such issues as adult franchise, conscription, retrenchment of staff during the depressions and a majority agreement affirming uranium mining; *TDB*, 4 June 1979, p.4; 31 July 1979, p.4.

Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ).⁷⁴

The general aims of both associations were to promote the interests of local government and provide legal advice.⁷⁵ The NQLAA was also empowered to pursue the North's particular concerns which were perceived as having been continually subjugated by colonial (then state) centralism.⁷⁶ The organisations lobbied state government, parliamentarians and the relevant public service departments directly and through the media. According to Robinson, their reputation for improving local government in Queensland was always sound.⁷⁷ To Viertel, the LAA was responsible for "substantial measures of progress and...greater cohesion between the local governments".⁷⁸ The NQLAA added "virility" to involvement in local government issues.⁷⁹

74 Letter from Secretary, LAA, 8 March 1897, Correspondence Book 1896-1898; President's Report, LAA, 30 March 1897; Minutes, 13 April 1893, 11 THU/D2; Minutes, 8 January 1913, 11 THU/D4. By the 1950s Thuringowa was referring to the LAA as the LGAQ; Minutes, 15 May 1953. Little evaluation of these two organisations has been done; indeed the philosophy and effectiveness of these organisations receive little attention in any work on local government. For instance, there is no mention in Power, et.al., *Local Government Systems of Australia*, except in Tucker, "Queensland", p.545, who, in fact, does not even discuss the NQLAA; Harris has one brief comment about the LGAQ in *Local Government and Regionalism*, p.194.

75 Local Authorities Association of Queensland, 37th Annual Conference, Brisbane, August 1933, COL/363 (QSA).

76 Minutes, 13 April 1893, 11 THU/D3; Minutes, 8 January 1913, 11 THU/D4; letter from Atherton Council, 6 January 1944, General Correspondence, 11 THU/J23.

77 Robinson, *For My Country*, pp.419,420.

78 C. Viertel, "The First Century of Local Government Progress". *Local Government*, LIV, 12, December (1959), pp.10,11.

79 Robinson, *For My Country*, p.422.

However, while local authorities had to be prepared "to work with increased zeal for their own salvation",⁸⁰ in Thuringowa that was a view which did not entail involvement in the LAA and NQLAA. On the contrary, involvement was spasmodic and occurred only when Thuringowa thought that it would bring direct and immediate benefit to the Shire.

Initially, the Divisional Boards were supportive: John Deane, one of their Members, was appointed to the executive of the NQLAA in 1893.⁸¹ Hodel's pro-separationist Board saw the NQLAA as another avenue of agitating for North Queensland separation. That local government concerns *per se* were not the principal motive for joining appeared evident from the Board's early withdrawal in 1895 and its refusal to join the newly constituted LAA in 1896. In fact, the North Queensland separation movement collapsed in 1894,⁸² and to the disillusioned Board the NQLAA was "unprofitable as no results had been obtained".⁸³ Separatist sentiment carried over into the Board's refusal to become aligned with the Brisbane-dominated LAA.

The Council's attitude remained cautiously and equivocally parochial. In 1913 Thuringowa joined the reconstituted NQLAA but there is no evidence to show that it attended any meetings other than the inaugural one in Townsville.⁸⁴ Thuringowa refused to countenance moves to revive the NQLAA in 1938 and 1944: it was "not in

80 Morrison, *Local Government in Queensland*, p.87.

81 Minutes, 13 April 1893, 11 THU/D2.

82 Doran, *Separatism in Townsville*, p.85.

83 Minutes, 13 June 1895, 11 THU/D2.

84 Minutes, 8 January 1913, 11 THU/D4.

favour" of this type of political lobby group.⁸⁵ During the 1950s it did join but attended meetings erratically, constantly questioning the benefit to Thuringowa. Councillors' antipathy was reinforced by the inability of the NQLAA to sway government decisions on two matters specific to Thuringowa which were put before the NQLAA by Thuringowa's representative: full representation on both the local Harbour Board and General Hospital and the installation of a telephone on Hervey's Range because of its remoteness from any urban facilities.⁸⁶ Compared with general state-wide issues, these two trivial and locally specific examples, merely highlighted Thuringowa's parochialism.

Class issues were prominent at the 1915 and 1918 annual conferences of the LAA - the first that Thuringowa attended.⁸⁷ All local authorities voiced their objection to the Labor Government's proposal to extend the adult franchise to local government. Thuringowa's Council, dominated by wealthier land owners, abhorred the idea of the non-propertied classes having access to the ballot box. One month after the Council reaffirmed its customary vote not to attend the 1920 LAA conference, the decision was reversed: it was thought to be in the Council's best interests to be represented as the main agenda item was the application by the Australian Workers' Union for the inclusion of all local government employees in a single award.⁸⁸ On this occasion the

85 General Correspondence, 27 May 1938 and 3 February 1944, 11 THU/J15 and 11 THU/J23 respectively.

86 Minutes, 17 October 1952; TDB, 6 October 1961, 20 June 1964. Their anger would have been lessened if a member of their Council had been the joint representative but it was nearly always a Dalrymple Shire Councillor on the Townsville Harbour Board; letter from Townsville Harbour Board to Council, 15 July 1960, 11 THU/155.

87 Minutes, 10 November 1915, 11 THU/D4; *Local Government*, 4, 12, October (1918), p.201.

88 Minutes, 9 June, 13 July 1920, 11 THU/D5.

Shire Clerk represented the Council, suggesting that financial, technical and legal implications for the Council were perhaps at least as important as considerations of class rule.

Thuringowa's Councils took an active interest in the NQLAA and LAA in the second half of the 1920s and from the 1960s. From 1924 to 1930, the Shire Clerk, J.S. Gill, was Thuringowa's delegate to the LAA annual conference, and with each conference Gill became more convinced that the LAA "benefits the advancement of sound local government".⁸⁹ Gill's views carried weight (he later went on to become a perennial figure in local government politics and Mayor of Townsville from 1933 to 1952)⁹⁰; certainly, the expense of sending a paid employee to conferences would not have been taken lightly by James Cummin's Council during the Depression when Council finances were also suffering from the expense of road improvements for the motor car.

The Shire's changing character was the major reason why Thuringowa's Councils were involved in the NQLAA and LGAQ from the 1960s. It rapidly became more urban with the population boom in Townsville's suburbs; it needed the advice and support of its fellow local authorities who were also coping with technological change. Above all, it needed to know more about the urban functions of local government.

Wild contends that the composition of councils affects the politics pursued in the allocation of

89 Miscellaneous Reports, 18 April 1928, 11 THU/132.

90 At its first general meeting, the 1949 Council displaced Gill from the time-honoured position of delegate to the LAA annual conference. Gill was 83 years of age when he won his last election in 1949 as Mayor; he was elected in the next two elections (1952 and 1955) as a councillor. Smith, *Roberts Leu & North*, p.88.

services and resources.⁹¹ In Thuringowa the unvarying socio-economic background of Councillors is matched by their consistency toward the economic pursuits of the Shire's inhabitants. Council action reveals the extent to which ordinary people's lives can be affected by the use of local government power by Councillors (including Chairmen).

Thuringowa's residents from time to time attempted to diversify their economy. Dairying, horticulture, small-scale one crop farming, tobacco growing, pig farming, tomato sauce manufacturing, cigar making, cotton growing, timber cutting, coal and tin mining, brick making and tanning were all tried.⁹² For a short period each had a measure of success but Thuringowa's Boards and Councils never seemed really interested in promoting development activities apart from cane farming and cattle grazing and their associated meatworks and sugar mills.

Nor were practical measures considered to lessen the burdens of the yeoman farmer. For instance, in order to realise their agrarian dream, many families were forced to decide that the wife would remain on the selection to work the land in order to fulfil the occupation and improvement clauses of the *Crown Lands Alienation Act* whilst the husband left to find work elsewhere to support the family and pay the lease.⁹³ Scant allowance was granted for these conditions which were exacerbated by the 1890s Depression and the redwater tick scourge. Consequently, high rates were charged in the 1880s and

91 R.A. Wild, *Politics at the Grass Roots: The Challenge for Local Government* (Melbourne, 1979), p.25.

92 See Henderson, *More than Rates, Roads and Rubbish: A History of Thuringowa Shire and its Council*.

93 Hind, Thuringowa's first toll-keeper who invested in grazing property in northern Thuringowa had to go as far as Thursday Island to find work; for this and other cases see Report of Bailiff of Crown Lands on Selection or Farm, Dead Farm File, Lan/DF4819-1913.

1890s (see Table 9, Chapter 13). The drop in the capital value of the land (see Table 8, Chapter 13) caused by the disastrous effects of the tick plague in 1897, helped offset, but not dramatically reduce, the rate bill. The fact that the rate was not decreased but allowed to remain fixed until 1901, merely demonstrated self-interest by the more wealthier grazier Board Members whose livelihood was also affected than any real concern for the struggling farmer.

Thuringowa's blinkered economic outlook was anomalous in view of the enthusiasm and wider commitments, financial and emotional, of so many of Thuringowa's ratepayers, the occasional flurries of success (which lasted from two to 20 years depending on the industry) and the politicians' and businessmen's hopes for the establishment of agricultural and small industrial pursuits in Thuringowa. Also, such success would mean permanent rateable income for the Councils.

Maybe the Board Members and Councillors viewed agrarianism more realistically than did their peers, and their consequent neglect in practical and promotional measures demonstrated a reluctance to waste resources on an industry that repeatedly demonstrated a lack of permanency. Of course, their attitude was also influenced by the grazier disdain for the "cocky". Another reason for the absence of interest in these economic pursuits was their lack of direct representation on Council. Councillors' concerns revolved around sugar and cattle whether in meetings or whenever they met socially.

The few occasions when Councillors did support industries other than beef and sugar, merely highlight the normal indifference. For instance, in 1913 the Council voted to spend "up to £30" for Mr. Foxlee to mark out a track from the foot of Paluma Range to Mt. Spec

which, though it was in Hinchinbrook Shire, would be money "well spent as it should materially assist in the future formation of Sanitorium for North Queensland" and be the means of opening up a large area "rich" in timber with "excellent" soil for agricultural purposes. The trade would "naturally" come to Townsville.⁹⁴ As always, Thuringowa's action was also conditioned by its close economic ties with Townsville.

Similarly, the development of a better market garden for Townsville was the major reason for Thuringowa's support of increased agricultural cultivation at Majors Creek in 1935. Naturally, Councillors were aware that the conversion of grazing land to agricultural use would also increase the unimproved capital land value, and hence, its rateable income. It was at the farmers' instigation that Wordsworth's Council, in conjunction with the local Member of Parliament, requested the Irrigation and Water Services Commission (I & WS) to investigate the possibilities of erecting a dam on Majors Creek for irrigation purposes. In addition to the 420 acres already under cultivation, a further 4 000 acres had been tested and proven suitable for agricultural and farming pursuits - provided there was sufficient water supply. However the investigation condemned the scheme as uneconomic: the 60 foot dam would provide only two to three waterings for 800 acres at a capital cost of £100 per acre.⁹⁵ Thuringowa's poor water resources and topography had again banished the dream of possible development.

94 Minutes, 12 March 1913, 9 April 1913, 11 THU/D4. Foxlee was one of the earliest settlers and miners on Mt. Spec. This area of Mt. Spec was transferred to Thuringowa Shire from Hinchinbrook Shire in December 1936; see Appendix 3.

95 Letter to I & WS, 17 May 1935, 11 THU/143; Majors Creek Irrigation Scheme Report from Mr. Mulholland, I & WS, 2 September 1935, 11 THU/143.

Rarely did the Council take action for primary producers who were not cane farmers or graziers. Two exceptions only proved the rule - the more so since they occurred 27 years apart. In 1896 the Board agreed that it would not require local dairymen to register their dairies as the law required because the farmers had been affected drastically by the prevailing tick scourge and were not in a sound financial position to pay registration fees and upgrade their dairies to regulation standards.⁹⁶ In 1923 Council requested the Weights and Measures Board to supervise the weighing of timber consignments.⁹⁷ The Council's latter action was little enough, merely political lobbying, yet even it was rare.

Quite damaging to Thuringowa's reputation were the instances of visible neglect of those whose economic interests lay outside the sugar and beef activities. For instance, in 1891 the Divisional Board eschewed any involvement in a Farmers' Market which Thuringowa's farmers and dairymen wanted. The Townsville Municipal Council, on the other hand, responded enthusiastically to the call, even though the farmers and dairymen were not part of its constituency. The Municipal Council erected a small building for the Farmers' Market at a cost of £289.⁹⁸

Thuringowa did not submit a report nor ask to give evidence to the 1929 Royal Commission on the Development of North Queensland. Future tobacco and small crop farmers, the timbergetters and tin miners had to represent their own interests without any support from

96 Minutes, 13 May 1896, 11 THU/D2.

97 Minutes, 15 May 1923, 11 THU/D7.

98 The building was situated on the corner of Flinders and Stokes Streets. The contractors were Messrs. Cheyne and Tait. NQR, 2 December 1891, p.20, 6 January 1892, p.12.

the local authority.⁹⁹ Forty years earlier, in February 1889, the Divisional Board did not attend a public meeting convened by the Townsville Chamber of Commerce for the purpose of devising ways of bringing Thuringowa's agrarian problems before the Royal Commission on Agriculture.¹⁰⁰ Again and again, if Thuringowa's citizens were not cane farmers or graziers, they were ignored.

There were many instances of this bias towards grazing and sugar producers. In 1892 the Divisional Board erected a windmill on the camping reserve opposite QME Meatworks; in 1907 and 1910 the Council built cattle dips on the same reserve and at the Ross River stock crossing near Gleesons; during World War I the Council emphatically denounced the "unwarranted" seizure of beef by the government at below market value;¹⁰¹ in 1934 it cut a new stock route over Hervey's Range; in 1943 the Council complained about the Main Roads camp's rubbish dump, not because of the maggots, mosquitoes and health risks but on the grounds that the scraps attracted dingoes and they and the jagged empty tins were a danger to cattle; in 1952, at a meeting organised by Thuringowa Shire Council, over 50 pastoralists gave full support to a series of trials aimed at eliminating botulism; and during the 1975 cattle slump, the Council lobbied the State Government to reintroduce grants to assist graziers

99 Evidence to Royal Commission on the Development of North Queensland, A/6419, A/6420 (QSA); *TH*, 2 February 1899, p.18.

100 Thuringowa lost its sugar lands to Ayr Shire in 1888; in 1916 it won back the area around Giru; see Appendix 3.

101 See Chapter 2.

to pay their rates.¹⁰² To the various Boards and Councils it was essential to support the cattle industry because Townsville was "one of the most important ports in Queensland for the export of meat".¹⁰³ Thuringowa and Townsville's interests were in so many crucial respects utterly inseparable. Of course, it was also true that the Councils collected a large proportion of its rates from owners of cattle - a very moderate rating structure, to be sure, because the Councils were dominated by cattle interests.

Support for the Shire's sugar industry was of the same unequivocal kind. Thuringowa's two-thirds contribution to the cost of the Ayr to Townsville railway is the best example of that commitment. Faster and cheaper transportation to the port facilities at Townsville enhanced the viability of the region's sugar industry. The Haughton Tramway in 1922 was a further £16 000 commitment to the sugar industry, whilst the Haughton River Improvement Trust in 1972 was a multi-thousand dollar, anti-erosion scheme for the benefit of Giru sugar farmers.¹⁰⁴ It took 12 years before Thuringowa saw the fruition of this initiative: in 1960 Thuringowa Council's feared a washout of the banks of the Haughton River would occur before a river-improvement trust was enacted as a small washout had occurred at Scarabello's Farm.¹⁰⁵ However, the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission advised that because Ayr Shire Council opposed a Joint

102 NQR, 4 MAY 1892, P.21; Minutes 13 November 1907, 10 August 1910, 11 THU/D3; Minutes 14 February 1921, 11 THU/D6; letter 23 June 1936, 11 THU/J13; letter 26 March 1943, 11 THU/J20; TDB, 31 May 1962, p.15, 23 May 1975, p.6.

103 This was reiterated often; see Minutes, 8 June 1910, 11 THU/D3; TDB, 13 December 1957, p.11; 23 May 1975, p.6.

104 TDB, 10 February 1972, p.1; *The Ayr Advocate*, 9 February 1972, p.1.

105 TDB, ? April 1960, Press Cuttings Book, July 1955 to June 1964.

Haughton River Improvement Trust, arguing that the benefits would not be commensurate with the high costs involved, Thuringowa would have to go it alone.¹⁰⁶ Gleeson warned his Council in 1979 that future development of the Shire could be jeopardised if the Council failed to co-operate with sugar milling interests by relocating a road and tramline adjacent to the mill.¹⁰⁷ Self-interest was also a factor as the viability of the mill had played a significant role in the stability of the Shire's finances, especially after the 1929 Depression.

Decisions by Councillors affected people's lives more dramatically than is usually given credence. As part of the instrumentalist areal power base, Chairmen and Councillors controlled more than housekeeping functions.

Local managerialism provides insights into the influence of shire clerks, the bureaucrat-managers, in the decisions of Thuringowa's chairmen and councillors. The role of the clerk (and other professionals) in the input, conversion and output of local government decision-making has been likened to "gatekeeping". On their decision and agenda setting, the gate is opened or closed to ratepayer and councillor demands. In terms of local government legislation, Thuringowa's shire clerks were under the direct political control of its elected members; they were servants. In practice, however, some were often the power brokers since their accumulated knowledge and ability to manipulate it put them in powerful positions relative to the part-time, short-serving politicians.

John Stuart Mitchell Gill was one such manager-

106 TDB, ? May and ? August 1960, Press Cuttings Book.

107 TDB, 16 February 1979, p.3.

bureaucrat. He was Thuringowa Shire Clerk from 1910 to 1930, and came from a background in management.¹⁰⁸ During 1910 and 1911 when Henry Abbott was Chairman, authority would have gradually devolved onto Gill because of Abbott's growing disinterest and absences. However, with the return of Hodel as Chairman till 1915, Hodel's penchant for dominance in local government affairs curtailed Gill's spreading influence. Hodel's refusal to countenance a gratuity for the holidays foregone by Gill was an indication of the tension between the two.¹⁰⁹ Hodel seemed determined to delineate the hierarchical decision-making boundary between the Council and Gill, the employee.¹¹⁰

Gill's relationship was considerably different with the next two Chairmen, Ireland and Cummins, who relied on Gill in various local government areas. The low rates in the Shire during the 1920s were influenced by the cattle slump and the Depression. However, Gill's widely known philosophy was also instrumental: he was seen in local government circles as "an ardent barracker for moderate charges".¹¹¹ In the 1920s Thuringowa's road policy was

108 Gill had been employed by Burns Philp and Co. Ltd. for 23 years during which time he progressed to supervisor of the Thursday Island shipping department (1892-1895) and the Townsville shipping manager some years before his resignation; *Local Government*, 23 April 1930, p.479.

109 Hodel had returned to local government in 1920. Minutes, 18 August 1921, 11 THU/D6.

110 This was the case, too, in Brighton politics in the 1970s. The clerk was forced into early retirement by a councillor intent on diminishing the clerk's influence. The clerk was an acknowledged leader in his field in Victorian local government and would not allow his vision of local government to be circumscribed by the alderman and his cohort of supporters; Bates, *A History of Brighton*, pp.430,431. Bates seems to support the clerk and his description of the clerk's role and power is non-theoretical.

111 *Local Government*, 23 April 1930, p.479.

one of maintenance rather than new works. It also eschewed the gazettal of main roads because the Council was then liable for a substantial proportion of the costs involved. The Commissioner of the Queensland Main Roads Commission felt that Gill was unduly influential in the formulation of these policies: Thuringowa Council's attitude to the Main Roads Board was "nothing but one of humbug" and this was due "to the bad advice given to the Council by the Clerk".¹¹² As gatekeeper, Gill significantly helped determine the form and outcome of the Councils' rating and works policies.

As Gill and the Council were in agreement on three other issues, more power over decisions and their implementation accrued to Gill. Firstly, both were adamant that adult suffrage was a threat to local government. Of course, Gill was a property owner and conservative of that group's privileges. When Gill could not contact the Chairman for his approval and signature, he took it upon himself to send a telegram to the Labor Government on behalf of the Council protesting the adult franchise in 1920.¹¹³ Not surprisingly, there was no censure of Gill's action from the Council. Secondly, Gill attended the 1920 LAA conference to present the employer's, not the employee's, view on the single union award structure for all local government employees.¹¹⁴ Gill clearly saw his position as managerial and his loyalties were not with the workers. Thirdly, in his evidence to the Royal Commission on Local Authority Boundaries, Gill supported Thuringowa's case; he adamantly opposed Townsville's request to excise 74

112 Letter from Queensland Main Roads Commission, 5 March 1928, Home Office: Royal Commission on Local Authority Boundaries - Statements and Correspondence placed before the 1928 Royal Commission on Local Authority Boundaries, COL/220, QSA.

113 See Chapters 8 and 10.

114 Minutes, 9 June, 13 July 1920, 11 THU/D5.

sq.miles from Thuringowa and add it to the City Council. This loyalty is what one would expect from a shire clerk. However, Gill was also an alderman on the Townsville City Council. Gill argued that the City Council still had room to expand and it currently could not service its outer suburbs to the satisfaction of the residents and ratepayers. Adding more territory would be an extra liability. He believed Thuringowa's rural areas would be disadvantaged because the City Council was unlikely to impose a differential rate on agricultural and grazing land: "...it is not likely that people who are working on the wharves at Townsville and are paying a high rate are going to allow cattle growers and others to be placed on a low rate".¹¹⁵ Gill, too, was aware of the effects of class on decision-making.

Ireland and Cummins sent Gill to Brisbane on numerous occasions as the Shire's representative on a wide range of concerns. That this occurred during a period when Thuringowa was struck hard by the collapse in cattle prices, the demands of motor transport and the Depression attests Gill's influence. Gill presented to parliamentarians Thuringowa's case, in reality Gill's plan, requesting that Townsville be instructed to stop its delaying tactics and pay the reimbursement figure calculated by the Government for property and construction lost in the 1918 excision and, the *coup d'etat*, interest on the reimbursement amount because payment was now overdue.¹¹⁶ He was successful. Gill's authority was further established.

Gill believed in the LAA and what it could accomplish for the betterment of local government. He easily persuaded his Council to send him to Brisbane for

115 Evidence by Gill, Minutes of Evidence taken before 1928 Royal Commission on Local Authority Boundaries 1927-28, pp.981-984, COL/224.

116 See Chapter 12.

the LAA's annual conference from 1924 to 1930.¹¹⁷ Cummins' approval was in direct contrast to Hodel's opposition to the LAA and hence to Thuringowa representation. It was also indicative of the different degree of influence exerted by Gill over the two Chairmen.

According to some Councillors and permanent professional staff, the Shire Clerk amassed undue political leverage during Gleeson's terms of office.¹¹⁸ They felt the Clerk influenced the Chairman on various matters but it was his power brokering that was the more notable. New Councillors were approached with the offer: vote for these measures and your special projects will be confirmed also. In an attempt to reinforce his point, the Clerk on at least one occasion tore-up a Councillor's memo, that is, a record which is public property, in front of the Councillor stressing that the Councillor should not make waves otherwise support would not be forthcoming. Proper council procedures were often not followed in council meetings, particularly, it seemed, when the Chair used the Clerk (and Engineer and Town Planner) to argue against any Councillor's proposal not supported by himself, his clique or, for that matter, the Clerk. When the Clerk and other professionals opposed a Councillor's scheme - for instance, the Commonwealth Employment Participation scheme - they "put obstacles in the way of Councillors, such as incomplete and slanted information".¹¹⁹ Along with a few other Councillors, Percival, who had "a strong voice", tried hard to get the

117 Miscellaneous Reports, 18 April 1928, 11 THU/132.

118 The following is based on interviews with G.D., I.C. and A.H., members and past members of the Council, 6 May 1983, 6 July 1987, 18 September 1991 respectively, and D.F. and L.D. on the permanent professional staff of Thuringowa Shire, 6 July 1987 and 18 October 1991 respectively.

119 Interviews with A.H., 18 September 1991 and D.F., 6 July 1987.

staff to stop manipulating the agenda. However, it was felt that the latter "was done in league with the Chairman".¹²⁰ Unfortunately there is no way of substantiating these perceptions through other sources because, firstly, the minutes are bland; secondly, newspaper reporters did not attend or stay at many meetings; thirdly, they often rang the Chairman or Clerk for general information; and, fourthly, taperecorders were banned from council meetings.¹²¹ It would seem that the Clerk and occasionally other professionals used their gatekeeping role to effect but not always successfully. This highlights the caveat that, although the manager-bureaucrats do have considerable discretion, they are constrained by councillor activities as well as legislative rules and structures.

Local government is often seen as "a limited, functional managerial system".¹²² In Thuringowa's case, however, it was more than that, as the impact of Hodel's and the Councillors' local government policies and practices shows. Local government in Thuringowa allowed people power, status and the opportunity for

120 Apparently the Engineer knew little about the CEP scheme and did not want the responsibility of looking after untrained staff; his attitude was based on the Shire's experiences with REDS (see Chapter 14). The Chair and Clerk in collusion with the Engineer would not agree to a special meeting at which the Councillor could present the proposal, and insisted that the matter be brought up in the ordinary meeting which was scheduled for the day the proposal had to be lodged. During the meeting, stalling tactics were used to delay the motion being put to council. The Councillor, who had worked hard to ensure that the numbers were there, had just enough time to fax the proposal before the deadline. The Councillor was vindicated as the Shire has subsequently received "a lot of money for CEP schemes". Interviews with A.H., 18 September 1991 and D.F., 6 July 1987.

121 The banning of taperecorders was reinforced: "I just don't think we should be monitored" argued Councillor King Cole; TB, 18 December 1985.

122 Chapman and Wood, *Australian Local Government: The Federal Dimension*, p.14.

public service. It also allowed them to pursue their own interests which they did, consciously or unconsciously. Generally they fostered economic growth in the beef and sugar industries but largely ignored involvement in other economic pursuits. Thuringowa's Chairmen, Councillors and Clerks managed more than rates, roads and rubbish.

CONCLUSION

Tucker maintains that the most compelling reason for researching the history of local government in each locality is to assist politicians, public servants, councillors and review commissioners to understand the territorial effects of legislation.¹ Although one might add other "compelling" reasons for such histories, Tucker makes a valid point. A history of local government in action in a rural-urban authority has much to offer the debate on local government. The case study of Thuringowa Shire demonstrates the functional nexus between theory and practice and substantiates the Thuringowa theoretical model. In addition, some important implications for effective local government can be drawn from the study.

There are two major reasons why the theoretical paradigm works: one justification is the model itself; the other is its pragmatism.

Numerous theories examine certain aspects of urban rather than rural local government. What was needed was a model that took a holistic perspective of rural-urban local government. The theory needed to do three things: explain how and to what purpose government powers are divided areally over time; determine the basis on which local government can be justified; clarify the diverse influences on decision-making, practices and mechanisms for implementation. Hence, the Thuringowa theoretical paradigm is a complex interrelation of these three major theories which also contain a number of sub-theories (see Diagram 1). This reflects the intricacy of the real world of local government.

The viability of the Thuringowa model was tested in Part II of the thesis. First, each chapter explored one

1 Tucker, "Queensland Municipal and Shire Histories", p.63.

or more theories and sub-theories in the context of themes that are relevant to local government in practice. For instance, Chapter 9 demonstrated that representativeness is not a distinctive value of local government and that the criteria for who governed was not central to the participatory value.² Class and gender were important in notions of who was considered suitable to govern: the electorate supported through their voting, the hegemonic control of power by conservative, British-Australian, male, middle class employers. Second, certain themes were reiterated in other chapters but related to different theories and aspects of theories. Thus Chapter 17 returned to class to examine the influence that chairmen, councillors and clerks had on the Shire's residents. It highlighted not only the usefulness of the instrumentalist and managerialist sub-theories within the broader modified systems analysis model but also revealed the variability within the value of liberty as a justification for local government existence. It cautioned that constituent liberty fluctuated internally, particularly with respect to the philosophies and practices that affected people's economic livelihood. Third, Thuringowa was located within its wider context. All three theories, particularly the shared and exclusive areal distribution of government powers, had much to offer in the analysis of regional, state, national and international influences on decisions, policies, practices, failures and successes in Thuringowa politics.³ Continual emphasis was given to the fourth factor establishing the worth of the Thuringowa paradigm: local government is more than rates, roads and rubbish. Political, economic, physical and aesthetic qualities of life, together with issues of

2 Other studies will have to test the value of representativeness to state and federal government.

3 The Chapters on focus of pride, secession, revenue, services, roads and water explore aspects of Thuringowa's outside links and influences.

liberty, participation and power, were all affected by local government in Thuringowa. Lastly, the case study over time confirmed that the model has historic and current applicability.

One of the criteria judged as important to the viability of a local authority by the 1896 and 1928 Royal Commissions and EARC is "community of interest". The study of Thuringowa suggests that this emphasis is unrealistic and misplaced. Firstly, local government was enforced on communities to administer basic services. Why then expect that local authorities should possess the more elevated values of creating and sustaining a focus of pride? Secondly, groups and districts used "community of interest" to promote self-interest: the many demands for severance from Thuringowa, especially the transference to Ayr Shire and back again of the Giru and Haughton River District in 1892-1893 and 1916, are exemplars. The value was used for pragmatic purposes; it was never a penetrating ideological need at the local level. Thirdly, neither focus of pride or community of like-interests was essential to the governing process. Thuringowa proved this. It survived as a local authority despite the fact that it lacked a centre of gravity inside its boundaries which encompassed a multiplicity of interests: rural, suburban, sugar cane, beef cattle, horticulture, industry and seaside and mountain villages. In fact, the times that Thuringowa's ability to govern was seriously questioned were not because it contained a diversity of interests but because of poverty (1921-World War II) and stagnation which was linked to insecurity caused by threats of amalgamation (1945-1962). Economic viability and stability rather than community of interest and identification with the local authority are more important to effective government.

Indeed, the historical study of Thuringowa acknowledges that economic considerations cannot be

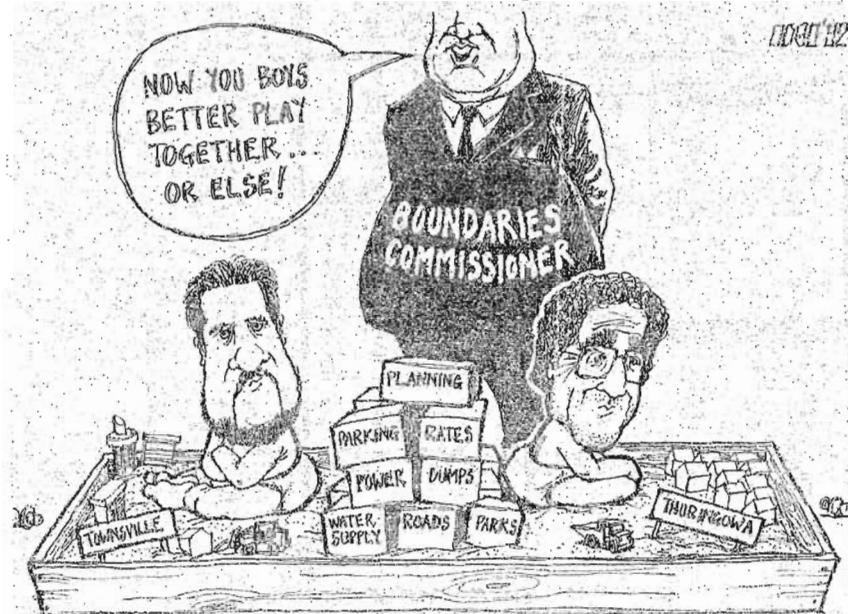
ignored as a justification of local government existence. Without a healthy revenue base, effective progressive decision-making and implementation are impossible. Thuringowa's years of stagnation substantiate this point.

The Goss Government has changed EARC's recommendations for the amalgamation of a number of authorities, which included Thuringowa. The Minister for Local Government stated that amalgamation will not occur if the identified councils establish "workable, formal, permanent and accountable" joint committees to ensure coordination of local affairs. The arrangements would have to be legally enforceable and unable to be terminated at the whim of any council.⁴ Three points need to be made about the Government's reversal in the light of a 106 year history of local government.

Firstly, the Government's ultimatum highlights the centrality of efficiency as its major determinant of the existence of local authorities. It is not surprising in an age of economic rationalism. Even so, the concern for inter-council co-operation is vindicated if Thuringowa's relationship with Townsville is typical. When the Councils co-operated, residents of not only both authorities but also the wider region benefited. The Ayr-Townsville railway would have to be the best example: this joint local government initiative diminished the isolation of distance and enhanced people's financial well-being and leisure pursuits. Other winners were regional and state economies. Unfortunately, refusals to co-operate and compromise became increasingly entrenched within local politics. The bickering and obstructionism of the two Councils over water agreements extended into other areas, such as road closures and library resourcing that affected the physical, recreational and intellectual well-being of both authorities' citizens. The opposing

4 TB, 31 March 1992, p.1.

Cartoon on Most Recent Government Policy on Thuringowa's Status



This cartoon comments on the history and continued tradition of poor, obstructionist relations between Townsville's and Thuringowa's Councils; the Goss Government has warned them to co-operate more closely or else amalgamation will take place. (Odgo, *Townsville Bulletin*, 31 March 1992, p.1).

philosophies of the Councils concerning the role of local government also prevented necessary compromise: Thuringowa believed that Townsville's welfare activities were socialist and not the province of local government. Parochialism was increasingly used to justify divisive personality power-plays, and the loser was very nearly Thuringowa. Lessons learnt from Thuringowa's past would benefit joint planning and the provision of amenities that could also enhance community pride.

Secondly, the changed decision could be seen as another triumph of rampant parochialism. Obviously, Townsville City Council could administer Thuringowa City - and visa versa. Yet as Part II revealed, the Government has rarely enforced amalgamations. On the other hand, instead of viewing the Goss Government's decision as localism overriding objectivity, it could be seen as ratifying the strength of grass-roots participation. The case study of Thuringowa has repeatedly established that, although participatory democracy and issues of liberty are lauded mainly at times of threat to the authority's boundaries, this in no way diminishes the genuineness of the participation and cries for justice. Hence, unlike community of interest, participation and liberty cater for an important ideological need at the local level. This confirms their place as central values in effective government, even if a major part of their role is to provide a safety net against abuse by State Government and other local authorities.

Thirdly, even though they are not openly acknowledged in the reversal of EARC's proposal, the Minister for Local Government is conceding three points. One is that State Governments have much to answer for in creating and maintaining disharmony between local authorities and consequent inefficient practices. Examples from Thuringowa's history confirm this. A

second recognises that it was Parliament's veto of local government decision-making and unsolicited manipulation of internal and external electoral boundaries that led to EARC. In Thuringowa, the most obvious abuse of local liberty by State Government was with respect to separatist agitation: substantiated charges of corruption did not deter Parliament from changing Thuringowa's boundary in 1892-1893 and 1918 nor was Cabinet's manoeuvrings to grant city status to Thuringowa checked by charges of lack of consultation with constituents and neighbouring local authorities. The third point reveals that the right-wing State Government's increasing abuse of liberty and participatory devices allowed conservative councils like Thuringowa to deliberately manipulate the National Party's fear of Labor to their own advantage. The history of local government in action in Thuringowa reveals the spiralling effects of the collaborative abuse of local autonomy, liberty and participation.⁵

Local government action and efficiency was often circumscribed by legislation. For instance, Government legislation concerning internal financial divisions and policies on funding main roads condoned and even reinforced the continuance of short-sighted local practices such as Thuringowa's penny pinching emphasis on road maintenance rather than new works. The case study underscores Tucker's point that legislators need to examine the outcomes of legislation on local practices. This area was omitted from EARC's charter and points to the penchant to engage in victim blaming by only focussing on certain aspects of local government and not the whole. Thuringowa's experiences would caution against this approach as each aspect of local government philosophy, policy and practice affected others and the ripple often resulted in perpetuation of the *status quo*.

5 Other examples would be the collusion between Townsville and State Government over the 1918 boundary change and water agreements.

Local government was imposed on Thuringowa and other communities to administer parochial functions and legitimate the state apparatus through participation and electoral representation. It was emasculated from its inception. The establishment of quangos to administer local functions further limited and even weakened local autonomy, but such action maintained the *status quo* with respect to the distribution of governmental powers. Nevertheless, within its legislative limits, local government has had the power to implement works and welfare programs that have at times enhanced or hindered the quality of life of its own citizens and those in the wider region. It is fair to argue that local government in Thuringowa has managed more than rates, roads and rubbish.

Appendix 1Recorded European Deaths by Aborigines 1861-1897¹

Date	Person	Site
1862	Humphries	Below Haughton River
1862	Skeletons McDuff and Ross dead 5 years; found 1867	Base of Mt. Stewart Townsville
Early 1867	1 of 2 missing men (counted as 2)	On or near Woodstock Station
June 1867	Pastoral employee, clothes found	Woodstock Station
Oct. 1868	Chinaman	Jarvisfield
1870	Pacific Islander	Waterview Station
Nov 1870	Robert Thompson, cook	8 miles from Haughton River
Feb. 1880	George Neumanee visiting and "antagonising black's camp"	Ross Island, suburb Townsville (in Thuringowa Divisional Board area)

1 Loos, *Invasion and Resistance*, pp.189-247; C&C, May 1931, p.19; Morrill, *The Story of James Morrill*, Chapter II; P. Mercer, "Pacific Islanders in Colonial Queensland 1863-1906" in B.J. Dalton (Ed.), *Lectures in North Queensland History* (Townsville, 1974), p.114.

APPENDIX 2

Home Deliveries in the "Good Old Days"¹

milk	daily except Sunday
ice	daily except Sunday
meat	daily except Sunday
bread	daily except Sunday
goat meat	3 times per week
fruit and vegetables	Monday, Wednesday, Friday
groceries	weekly
soft drinks	weekly
insurance collection	weekly or after payday
library books	weekly
Warren's Tea	fortnightly
materials, clothing, hats, etc.	monthly
shoe repairs	every six weeks
wood	whenever order is placed
fowl and animal produce	whenever order is placed
mending pots and pans; sharpening knives and scissors	whenever tinker felt like it
doctor, dentist, midwife	when necessary
piano teacher	weekly, for the wealthier

Interview Mrs. A.J. Litster, 2 May 1989.

APPENDIX 3

67 Secession Movements and Boundary Changes 1880-1985

Petitioners	Demands	Year	Opposition from Thuringowa	Win
Ross Island	Annexation with Townsville	1882	No	Yes
Townsville Council	Causeway and West End Estate (incl. Toll Gate)	1882	Yes	No
Lower Burdekin	Own Shire	1882	Yes	No
Thuringowa Divisional Board	Severance between Haughton and Burdekin Rivers - new Shire	1884	Instigator	No
Boundary Ratepayers of Hinchinbrook and Dalrymple	Inclusion into Thuringowa	1885	Yes	No
Townsville's populous western suburbs of Hermit Park & Kelvin Grove	Own Shire	1886	No	No
Ditto	Annexation with Townsville	1888	Yes	No
Lower Burdekin (Haughton River-Burdekin River)	Own Shire	1888	No	Yes
Haughton River-Major Creek-Woodstock	Annexation with Ayr Divisional Board	1892 - 1893	Yes	Yes
Vanmen, cabmen, draymen in West End Estate	Annexation with Townsville	1894	Yes (unconcerned)	No
Thuringowa	Annex small area near Cromarty	1896	Instigator	Yes
Royal Commission	Boundary inquiry; no change	1896		Yes
Townsville Council	Annexation Western suburbs to Ross River	1902	Yes	No

Property owners eastern side Mt. Elliot and Haughton River, and Thuringowa Council	Annexation back to Thuringowa from Ayr Shire	1909	No	No
Cromarty selectors	Annexation back to Thuringowa from Ayr Shire	1910	No	No
Haughton River-Mt. Elliot-Woodstock-Cromarty	Re-annexation by Thuringowa from Ayr Shire	1916	No	Yes
Magnetic Island	Separate Division or transferred to Division 3	1916	Yes	No
Townsville Council	Annexation Western suburbs to Ross River	1918	Yes	Yes
Dalrymple Shire	Transfer some land top Hervey Range to Thuringowa	1923	Yes	No
Royal Commission on Local Authorities Boundaries	Thuringowa left as is because of its "peculiar circumstances"	1928	Objected to any change	No
Giru	Annexation with Ayr Shire	1928	Yes	No
Townsville Council	Annexation of Oonoomba, Stuart, Fairfield, Idalia Estate, Upper Ross to Five Head Creek	1928	Yes	No
Farmers in Hinchinbrook Shire between Little and Big Crystal Creeks	Transfer to Thuringowa	1931	No comment	No
Ditto	Ditto	1933	No comment	No
Giru	Transfer to Ayr Shire	1935	Yes	No
Townsville Council	Annexation of Oonoomba, Stuart, Fairfield, Idalia Estate	1935	Yes	No

Royal Automobile Club of Queensland and T'ville and District Development Association	Abolition of Thuringowa Shire	1935	Yes	No
Townsville Council	Annexation Oonoomba, Stuart, Fairfield, Idalia Estate	1936	No	Yes
Department of Health and Home Affairs for farmers between Little and Big Saltwater Creeks	Saltwater Creek to Paluma transferred to Thuringowa from Hinchinbrook Shire	1936	No	Yes
Giru	Transferred to Ayr Shire	1937	Yes	No
Thuringowa Council	Request Dalrymple to cede some of its land to compensate for lost revenue if above Giru petition succeeds	1937	Instigator	No
Townsville Council	Annexation outskirts Stuart	1938	Yes	No
Giru & District Progress Association	Transferred to Ayr and remainder allocated to adjoining authorities	1950	Yes	No
Major Creek - Woodstock	Annexation Ayr Shire	1950	Yes	No
Giru & District Progress Association (supported by C. McCathie, MLA)	Transference of Giru to Ayr Shire	1952	Yes	No
Giru and Ayr Shire	Transference Giru to Ayr Shire	1953	Yes	No

Townsville Council	Annexation adjacent land to western boundary (Bohle R.); southern (Brookhill) and eastern (Alligator Creek meatworks)	1955	No	No
Settlers top Herveys Range	Transfer to Thuringowa	1956	No	No
Townsville Council, Department Local Government, Thuringowa	Garbutt to Bohle River, section near Stuart, portions 63, 71, 103, 155 Parish Coonambelah	1957	No	No
Giru	Transference to Ayr Shire	1958	No	No
Townsville Council	Annexation Garbutt to Bohle, portions 132, 135 Parish Beor, portions 151, 177 Parish of Stuart	1958	No, then yes to some:- T'ville gave no security for stock owners	Yes
Department Local Government	Transfer upper reaches Crystal Creek from Hinchinbrook	1959	No	No
Department Local Government	Alter boundary Hinchinbrook, Dalrymple, Thuringowa	1960	No	Yes
Townsville Council	Extension of its boundaries to north and west	1960	Yes	No
Graziers Mingela (Cardington, Haughton Valley, Kirk River)	Annexation with Thuringowa	1961	Yes	No
Dalrymple Council	5000 acres border near Mingela	1963	Yes	No
Townsville Council	Part Mt. Stuart (incl. all road TV stations)	1964	No	Yes

Giru & District Progress Assoc. & Invicta Mill Suppliers C'ee.	Annexation with Ayr Shire	1966	Yes	No
Townsville	Part Mt. Stuart	1967	No	Yes
Mass Meeting Division 1	Disbanding Council and dissolution Shire	1969	Yes	No
Townsville Council	Annex urban areas Thuringowa	1973	Yes	No
Residents Giru	Annexation Ayr	1973	Yes	No
M. Hooper, MLA (supported Editor, TDB)	Maiden speech called boundaries tribunal	1975	Yes	No
Giru & District Progress Assoc.	Annexation by Ayr	1976	Yes	No
Ald. Griffiths Townsville Council	Gave notice form C'ee annex Upper Ross & Black R.	1978	Yes	No
Ayr Council	Thuringowa to annex small area from Ayr	1981	Yes	No
Editor, TB	T'ville Council should consider "land grab" from Thuringowa	1982	Yes	No
Ald. Benson, Thuringowa Councillor	Govt. inquiry to ascertain "once and for all", feasibility Shire	1984	Yes	No
Ald. Gleeson, Chairman	Independent boundary tribunal	1984	Yes	No
Editor, TB	Debate amalgamation Townsville and Thuringowa	1985	No comment	No
Canefarmers Giru	Secede; join Ayr	1985	Yes	No
Mayor, Townsville	Independent tribunal to examine boundaries	1985	No comment	No
Deputy Mayor, Townsville	Abolition of Thuringowa	1985	Yes	No
110 people public meeting	1 year's public debate amalgamation	1985	Yes	No

Townsville Council	Investigation benefits creating "greater T'ville"	1985	No comment	No
Group major landholders Thuringowa	Secede from Thuringowa and join Townsville	1985	Yes	No
Cr. Brabon, Thuringowa	Residential area transferred to Townsville	1985	Yes	No

Minute Books 1888-1985; *TH*, 1876-1879, 1886-1891; *TDB*, 1883-1984; *TB*, 1881-1883, 1985; *WOR/N18*; *COL/076*; 11 *THU/140-141*; 11 *THU/G1*; Correspondence, Giru and District Progress Association; *GG*, 1936, Vol.2, p.2527.

APPENDIX 4

Nomination of Candidates and Electoral Turnout, 1881-1985

Year	Division Contest- ed	Number of Contestants per Division	Details	% Voting
1881	2 1 3	5 for 3 seats	2 appointed 3 appointed	
1882		not contested	1 appointed	
1883			members apptd.	
1884	2	2 for 3 seats	1 appointed (2 divisions)	
1885			members apptd.	
1886	1		1 appointed During year, 2 more resigned & 2 appointed	
1887		not contested		
1888		not contested		
1889		5 for 2 seats 4 for 1 seat	extraord. elect.	
1890		not contested not contested	extraord. elect.	
1891		3 for 2 seats 2 for 1 seat	extraord. elect.	
1892		3 for 2 seats		
1893		not contested not contested	extraord. elect.	
1894	1 2	2 for 1 seat	sitting member appointed	
1895	2	2 for 1 seat		
1896		not contested		
1897	1 1	2 for 1 seat 2 for 1 seat	1 sitting lost extraord. elect.	
1898 to 1906	no details			
1907		not contested		
1908	2	2 for 1 seat		69%

1909	1 2	2 for 1 seat 2 for 1 seat	1 sitting lost	39% 76%
1910		not contested 2 for 1 seat	extraord. elect.	
1911		not contested		
1912	2	2 for 1 seat		48%
1913	1 2	2 for 1 seat not contested	extraord. elect.	54%
1914	1	2 for 1 seat		57%
1915	1 3 1	2 for 1 seat 3 for 1 seat not contested	1 sitting lost extraord. elect.	36% 53%
1916	1 3	3 for 1 seat 2 for 1 seat	1 sitting lost	54% 84%
1917	2	2 for 1 seat	1 sitting lost	71%
1918	1 2	5 for 3 seats	1 sitting lost	70% 75%
1919	2	not contested 4 for 3 seats	new election *	90%
1920	2 2 1	2 for 1 seat not contested not contested	1 sitting lost extraord. elect. extraord. elect.	72%
#1921	3	4 for 3 seats		96%
1922	3	2 for 1 seat	extraord. elect.	56%
1924	Chair 1 2 3	3 7 for 2 seats 6 for 2 seats 6 for 3 seats	1 sitting lost	71% 69% 79% 70%
1927	Chair 1 2 3	not contested 6 for 2 seats 5 for 2 seats 9 for 3 seats	2 sitting lost	67% 79% 68%
#1930	2 3	4 for 2 seats 4 for 3 seats		57% 58%
1933	Chair 1 2 3	2 5 for 2 seats not contested 7 for 3 seats		75% 83% 71%
1936	Chair 1 4	3 3 for 2 seats 4 for 2 seats		76% 71% 71%
1939	1 2	3 for 2 seats 3 for 2 seats		

1943	Chair 3	2 3 for 2 seats		
1946		not contested		
1949	Chair 1 2	2 3 for 2 seats 3 for 2 seats		
1952	Chair 2 3	2 3 for 2 seats 3 for 2 seats		
1955	1 2 3	6 for 2 seats 3 for 2 seats 3 for 2 seats	1 sitting lost 1 sitting lost	
1958	1	5 for 2 seats		66%
1961	Chair 1 2	2 6 for 2 seats 3 for 2 seats		
1964	1	5 for 2 seats	2 sitting lost	78%
1967	Chair 1 2 3	2 3 for 2 seats 4 for 2 seats 3 for 2 seats	1 sitting lost 1 sitting lost 2 sitting lost	77% { 74%
1970	Chair 1 2 3 4	3 4 for 2 seats 4 for 2 seats 4 for 2 seats 4 for 2 seats	sitting lost 1 sitting lost 1 sitting lost 1 sitting lost	
1973	Chair 1 3	3 4 for 3 seats 6 for 3 seats	sitting lost 1 sitting lost 1 sitting lost	
1976	Chair 1 2 3 4	3 6 for 3 seats 3 for 2 seats 3 for 2 seats 8 for 3 seats		{ 75%
1979	Chair 1 2 3 4	2 10 for 3 seats 3 for 2 seats 5 for 2 seats 9 for 4 seats	1 sitting lost 2 sitting lost 1 sitting lost	
1982	Chair 1 2 3 4	2 4 for 3 seats 3 for 2 seats 3 for 2 seats 12 for 4 seats	1 sitting lost 2 sitting lost	89%

1985	Chair	2		77%
	1	10 for 3 seats	1 sitting lost	
	2	6 for 2 seats		
	3	8 for 2 seats		
	4	8 for 4 seats	2 sitting lost	

Neither the newspapers, Minutes, Outwards Correspondence Files, Rate and Valuation Registers, Statistics of Queensland gave the number of electors eligible to vote for many years. In addition, in some years the number of votes rather than the number of voters was recorded; linked to the lack of details about voters on the rolls made calculations for unworkable.

Minute Books 1888-1980; WOR/N18; COL/076; *Local Government*, 1916-1918; *TH*, 1876-1879, 1886-1891; *TDB*, 1883-1984; *TB*, 1881-1883, 1985; Letter from Deputy Shire Clerk, 15 April 1992;

APPENDIX 5Loans 1880-1968

Date	Works	Amount
		£
1883	2 low level bridges Ross Ck; 1 over Causeway	2 000
1885	Low level bridge Ross River	1 500
1886	Additional culvert Causeway	500
1889	2 bridges: Upper and Lower Bohle Rivers	1 500
	Divisional Board administration building	1 026
1891	Water supply	2 000*
1893	Higher level bridge Ross River	1 362
	Bridge and approaches Stewart's Creek	638
1896	Water scheme	5 000
1897	Reconstruction Ross River bridge	1 300
	Water works extension	1 500
1900	Ayr Tramway Joint Board	31 200
1902	Bridge Charters Towers Road	863
	Drainage works	265
1917	2 bridges: Church Street, Bayswater Terrace	3 500*
	2 bridges: Crooked Waterhole & Ironbark Road	300
1919	Russel Junior Grader and No.5 Russel Plough	140
1922	Haughton Tramway	16 000
1928	3 main roads works	5 148
	Bridge and approaches Haughton River	503
	Road making plant	1 199
1932	3 main roads works	7 398
	Work on Haughton R. Bridge and approaches	470
1935	8 main roads works	7 519
1936	Work on Upper Bohle River Bridge	567
	Main roads works	1 409
1937	Diphtheria immunisation campaign	149
1938	Main roads works	250
	Motor truck	274
1939	Main roads works	176
1943	Work on Upper Bohle Bridge	974
	Culverts Giru-Cromarty Road	53
1946	Work on Upper Bohle Bridge	377
	10 main roads works	5 852
1947	Igloo for water supply Paluma	600
1950	Main roads works	235
1951	Main roads works	195
1952	Motor truck	1 411
1953	Igloo converted to water tank	450
1954	Main roads works	115
1955	Main roads works	304
	Road making plant: Grader	5 000
1956	Grader cost more than budgeted for	500
1957	Conversion igloo Paluma	533
	Drainage Giru	1 040
1960	Drainage Giru	1 073

1961	Shire Hall	50 000*
	Grader, 4 wheel loader, 5 ton truck	16 000
1963	Shire Hall	18 543
1964	Water works: Gearney's Road and Innes Estate	35 300
	Toilet block and dressing shed	9 870
1965	Truck with sanitary and refuse body: Giru	2 500
1968	Acquisition land and staff dwelling: Giru	10 000
	Water supply: Upper Ross	20 000
	Truck: combined sanitary and refuse body	5 000

* not granted

Minutes, 11THU/D1-D8; Minutes 1936-1979; Letterbooks
 11THU/G1-16; Correspondence Book 1891; WOR/N18; COL/076;
 11THU/132; AUD/S41-S334; Accounts 1933-1941; TDB, 1918-1969;
 GG, 10 April 1965, p.1221, 21 September 1968, p.167, 12
 October 1968, pp.483,484, 24 August 1968, p.1737.

Appendix 6
Comparison of Revenue Sources 1880-1985

Date	General Rates	Special Rates*	Other Sources	Loans	Subsidies	State Grants	Federal Grants	Total	% Rates Revenue
June	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	%
1880	294		129			£ 500		923	31.9
1885	889			1500		£ 1147		3537	42.4
1890	2132		138			£ 4419		6689	31.9
1893	1621		142	2000		£ 1728		5491	29.0
1895	2128		240			£ 616		2984	71.3
1902	2371	1105	800	6269		£ 512		11057	31.3
1910	1802	158	2481					4441	44.1
1920	1722	319	1760					3801	53.7
1925	4006	787	353					5146	93.1
1931	4067	1060	1047			280		6454	79.4
1934	4076	1013	396	1945		U 213		7643	66.5
1938	4016	465	440	674		U 363		5958	75.2
1940	4005	807	228			862		5902	61.5
1945	4053	658	126					4837	97.4
1953	6133	1065	164					7362	98.3
1959	11478	2590	1307			975	6264	22614	62.2
1965	61206	5616	3639	47670	545	14437	15002	148115	45.1
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	%
1968	89991	6345	17528	315620		15941	16225	461650	20.9
1971	174000	21000	5600	94000	15000	20000	18000	378000	65.3
1974	309000	S 113000 W 112000	476000	719000	204000	8000	96000	2037000	26.1
1978	1517000	All other revenue 2050000						3567000	42.5
1985	3572000		434000	1234000		899000		7481000	47.7

E Endowment
 S Sewerage
 W Water
 U Unemployment Relief
 * Special Rates includes
 Water and Cleansing
 Rates and/or Charges

 1 Statistics of
 Queensland;
 Statistical
 Survey;
 Censuses;
 Minutes;
 MOR/N18;
 AUD/S1-334.

APPENDIX 7 Road Works 1889-1985

Year	Formed not installed or otherwise prepared	Unconstructed	Paved Seal	Paved Unsealed	Not Paved	Concrete	Natural or artificial sand-clay loam	Waterbound Pavements	Waterbound Pavement Bitumen Surfaces	Bituminous Penetration Macadam	Other formed	Metal	Tarped or Metalled or Gravelled gated Main Roads	Total	Money on new works	Money on Maintenance
1889	miles 5	miles 3.2								sq. '53	* 451/2					
1924	155											5				
1925	160											5				
1926	160												2			
1927	160												3			
1928	22	138											5			
1929	160										3		4			
1930	160										8	3		171		
1936	31.5	293.5					10	13.5	4	-	Δ 6			352.5		
1937-38	34	293.5					10	13.5	4	-				355	£ -	£ 1 421
1939-40	50	265					10	1	4	25				355	-	1 801
1944-45	89	265					10	1	4	25				394	-	1 107
1949-50	51	205				0.7	10	17	2	84	3			372.7	226	2 090
1952-57	49	199				0.7	16	17	2	87	3			373.7	-	2 474
1959-59	49	219	100	28	-									396		
1960-61	-	210	122	28	34	2								396	6 389	8 208
1962-63	-	195	129	31	39	2								396	13 713	6 050
1963-64	-	180	146	45	24	2								397	22 779	7 734
1964-65	-	173	148	50	24	2								397	36 552	
1966-67	-	154	159	59	23	3								408	\$ 41 265	\$ 43 607
1970-71	24	151	194	49		3								421	000 18	000 68
+ 1973-74	km 37	km 222	km 383	unsealed 105										km 747	1 994	
+ 1977-78		212	399								Δ 142			753	557	
+ 1981-82	169	38	500											707	820	375
+ 1983-84															1 463	762
+ 1984-85	42	26	613								142			823		

Δ Composite

* 44 miles stumped; 2 1/2 miles graded

+ Includes loans subsidies.

There are no statistics or they are unreliable for the period 1889-1924.

The reason for the unequal runs from 1924 is to give a picture for the years covering Thuringowa's poverty, stagnation and growth.

Sources: Statistics of Queensland, Censuses; Minutes 1889; Local authority areas statistical summary Qld.

APPENDIX 8

The Search for Water: 1947 to 1985		
Year	Location	Description
1947	Paluma	Took over RAAF tanks
1954-58	Paluma	Conversion of igloo
1957	Along Mt Spec pipeline	TCC refused to allow Thuringowa to tap pipeline
1958-61	Paluma	Weir
1963	Paluma	New dam across creek
1958-60	Black River / Bohle River	Abandoned; viable if population greater than 3000 (currently 400)
1959-60	Bluewater, Toolakea, Saunders Beach and Jalloonda	TCC refused to allow Thuringowa to tap pipeline
1960	Woodstock	supplied by TCC
1960-62	Upper Ross and Ingham Rd	TCC refused supply to these areas
1960-64	Giru	Giru residents refused water reticulation
1963	Black River	Brisbane asked to consider Shire's interests before decision re TCC pumping from Black River
1963	Bluewater	Abandoned: costs too high
1963	Bohle River	Abandoned: poor prospects
1963-66	Innes Estate / Gearney's Lane	pumped from Black River
1963-70	Upper Ross Suburbs	Bores west of Ross River
1963-76	Saunders Beach	TCC refused until '76 to connect to Mt Spec pipeline
1964-68	Giru	Supplied from subartesian bores in Ayr Shire
1967	Upper Ross Suburbs	TCC allowed TSC erect pump in Ross River
1967	Paluma	Conversion of pump to electrical operation
1967-70	Paluma	Poor condition pipes

1969	Upper Ross Suburbs	Water from pumps and bores piped under river to reservoir on spur Mt Stuart; piped back under for use
1969	Ross River Dam	TSC gave formal approval
1969	Giru	Drought; heavy load on under ground water by farmers; one bore contaminated by salt from Haughton River
1970	Giru	Mooted additional bores
1970	Giru	Preliminary designs for 2 weirs in Haughton River
1970-75	Shirbourne	From main that supplied Giru
1970	Burdekin Dam	Raised as possibility solve Giru farmers' water problems
1972	Burdekin Dam	Re-awakened interest because TSVL and district's needs
1972	Burdekin Dam	Ayr and Thuringowa Councils discussed viability
1975	Jalloonda	Connected Mt Spec pipeline
1975	Bluewater/Toolakea	Connected Mt Spec pipeline
1975	Rollingstone/Balgai	Rollingstone Ck; searching for underground supply
1976	Upper Ross	Supplied by TCC-poor quality
1976	Ross River Dam	Second stage commissioned
1977	Upper Ross Suburbs	First of 5 projects to upgrade supply
1977-78	Burdekin Dam	TSC asked TCC to consider in lieu Stage 2 Ross River dam
1978	Rollingstone/Balgai	Connected Mt Spec pipeline
1979	Burdekin Dam	Submission to Senate Standing Committee on Natural Resources (this dam was opened in 1988)
1979	Ross River Dam	Dam seepage
1979	Ross River Dam	Stage 2 go ahead; unable to divert funds to Burdekin Dam
1979	Alligator Creek Dam	Idea abandoned as costs high
1979	Brookhill and Oak Valley	To be supplied by TCC (still not connected in 1988)

TCC-Townsville City Council; TSC-Thuringowa Shire Council

The first year indicates when a particular project was mooted, instigated or abandoned. The second year, ditto. The length between the dates usually indicates how long that decision took. McIntyre and Associates, *Thuringowa Shire Council Report on Chlorination of Shire Water Supplies* (Townsville, 1978), pp.1-10; McIntyre and Associates, *Township of Bluewater Supply Storage Tank, Report, Job No.W315* (Townsville, July 1976); McIntyre and Associates, *Township of Jalloonda Supply Storage Tank, Report, Job No.W328* (Townsville, July 1976); Giru and District Progress Association, *Correspondence, 1960-1965; Press Clippings Book, July 1955-June 1964; Minutes 1954-1961; AUD/S334, Accounts 1947; TDB, 21 December 1963, p.6, 18 January 1964, p.12, 25 August 1970, p.5, 13 July 1985, p.11; The Ayr Advocate, 7 August 1970, p.3, 19 August 1970, p.1, 26 July 1971, p.2.*

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INTERVIEWS

D.F.	permanent professional staff Council	18 July 1980
		6 July 1987
G.D.	member/past member of the Council	6 May 1983
D.H.	voter	27 February 1985
I.C.	member/past member of the Council	6 July 1987
R.R.	member/past member of the Council	8 April 1990
Karen Ehrmann,	ex-councillor	18 April 1991

A.H. member/past member of the Council 15 Sept 1991
 L.D. permanent professional staff Council 18 Oct 1991

Mr. and Mrs. Buck; Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth; Mr. Sonny Haberecht, September, Thuringowa Oral Interviews 1978.
 H. Guldbrandsen, 18 May 1979.
 John Davidson, 27 July 1979.
 D.J. Hannah, 29 September 1982.
 V. Litster and M. Griffiths, 18 June 1984.
 Mrs. V. Litster, 18 April 1985.
 Mr. and Mrs. A.J. Litster, 18 April 1986; 2 May 1989.
 Mrs. H.L., 18 April 1988.
 Mrs. Vera Litster, 2 May 1988.
 Mr. A.J., 18 June 1988.
 L.V., 18 August 1988.
 C. Pace, Rollingstone, 6 March 1989.
 Mr. and Mrs. A. Jeffrey, Mr. Brian Jeffrey, canefarmers and Mr. Ron Carty, ex-canecutter, Giru, 7 March 1989.
 Russell Macklin, 23 May 1989.
 Mr. R. Mckergow, 27 May 1989.