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PACIFIC ISLANDS

M O N T H L Y

MAY 1993



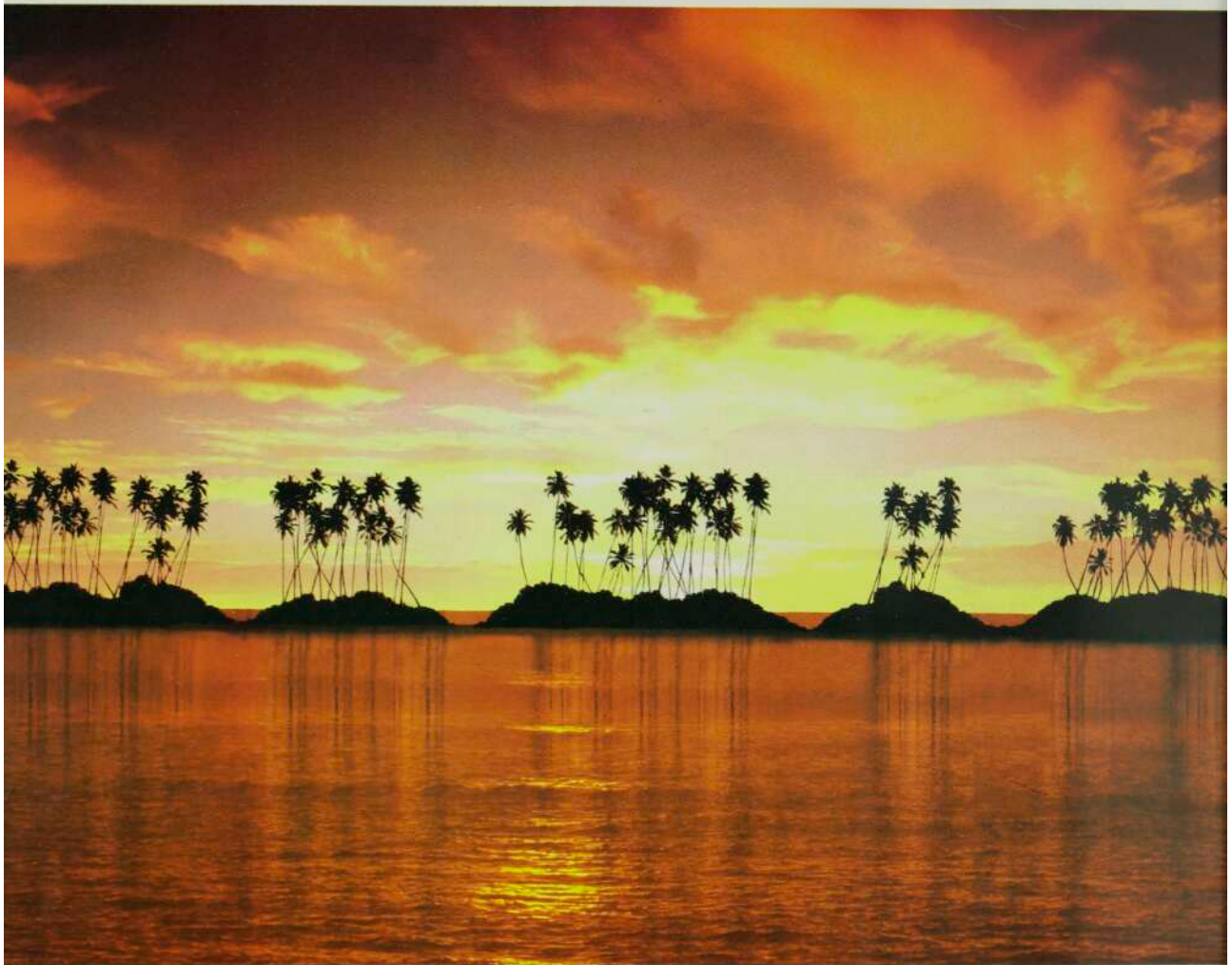
Rugby sensation

Mamaloni magic

Will he be able to conjure up another win?

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PACIFIC ISLANDS

M O N T H L Y

Vol 63 No. 5

THE NEWS MAGAZINE

MAY 1993

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Hong Kong victory: Samoa kiss the cup

South China Morning Post

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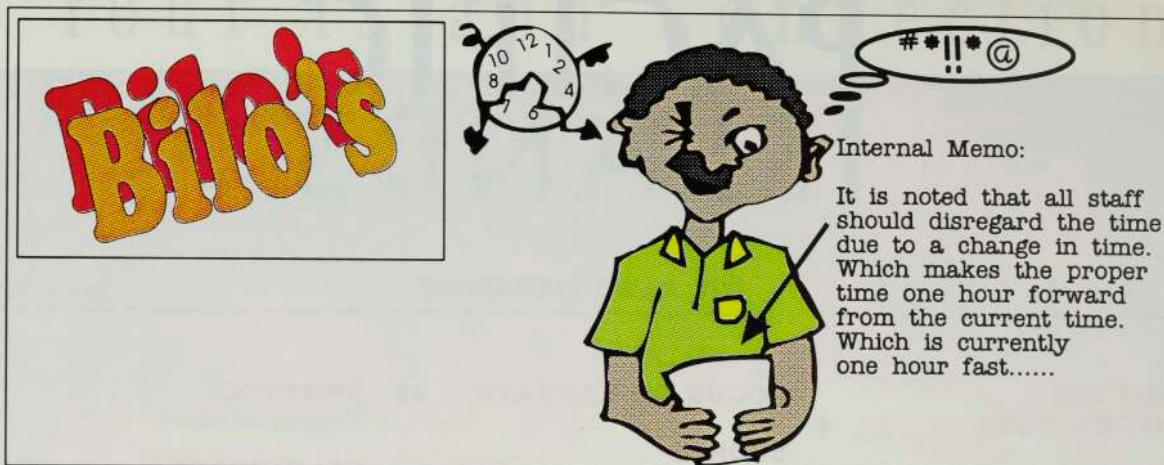
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Unbeatable Mamaloni

AS the Solomon Islands gears up for national elections later this month, there appears no strong enough candidate to wrestle the top job away from the incumbent, Solomon Mamaloni. Despite growing disillusionment with the Mamaloni leadership, the opposing forces have yet to put up someone bold enough and shrewd enough to outwit the wily prime minister.

While there are many who espouse the merits of a change in leadership and have the experience and capability, no one appears to have his act quite together to pose any serious threat to Mamaloni. So it appears that after the May 26 elections, Mamaloni could very well return as prime minister — albeit with a new band of supporters in parliament.

But then changing his band of men is not something entirely new to him. Remember his *coup d'état* in October 1990, when (just as everyone thought he was about to lose the prime ministership), in a single master stroke, he both weakened the Opposition and broke up the political parties. He resigned from the ruling party to form a government of national unity, picking the cream of the Opposition members — which got him the necessary numbers to allow him to hold on to power and at the same time cripple the Opposition. That move amply displayed his staying power.

Now in 1993, he is again being put to the test. *PIM* senior writer Martin Tiffany, who has just returned from Honiara, believes the general feeling in the capital is one for change. His assessment is that the educated and urban people are not

willing to put up with another Mamaloni term.

Among the issues they cite which have been botched up by Mamaloni are the deteriorating state of the country's economy, the appalling health sector which

has lost most of its doctors, the slipping education standards, the rising unemployment figures, as more and more school leavers find it difficult to get a job and no attempt being made to work out solutions.

Then there is the long drawn out Bougainville crisis and its spill-over effect on Solomon Islands. The crisis, which appears far from nearing an end, is taking its toll on the people of the Solomon Islands.

Mamaloni's attitude towards his job has also left a lot of people, especially senior civil servants, disenchanted. He does not take the high office of prime minister seriously enough, displaying at times a callousness which has not exactly endeared him to his own people or to other Pacific leaders.

He has been absent from regional leaders' meetings without good reason, he has not showed up for appointments with foreign leaders, including Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Gareth Evans.

But he has still managed to hold steadfastly to his post and could very well do so again after the elections.

He has just released a special fund to assist rural dwellers, bringing in support from those living outside Honiara. He is also contesting the elections as an independent which leaves him free to draw from other parties, if need be, to get the numbers to form a government.



Solomon Mamaloni: a knack for outwitting opposition

LETTERS

Mystery meats

Madam,

Pacific Islanders have been happy with fresh fish for centuries, but now the benefits of commerce are luring them to tinned meats, some of which would have made your average Neanderthal think twice about vegetarianism.

One familiar contribution to this process is charmingly called 'Roasted Goose with Bone'. The bone seems to be the selling point here — a bonus of some sort, like the prize in a box of cereal.

The picture on the tin's label (which is easily worth the thousand words you would find on an American label) shows a slab of rather red flesh. To the untrained eye, it is not obviously a goose, or at least not what I would imagine an uncooked goose to look like, though I have never actually seen one lying in the middle of the road. No sign of the bone in the picture; you will just have to take their word that it's there and hope for the best.

But with the goose, at least you know what you're getting at first glance. Some tins simply offer Meat This or Meat That — those blunt labels like corned meat. No genus mentioned, much less species.

If you don't have your reading glasses for the fine print, you can check the quick clue: the picture of placid animals grazing in the green pastures on the label. In this case, you will see reassuring old friends like a sheep and a cow. (I say old friends, but sheep, especially, are a bit out of place in the tropical Pacific and will continue to be until they swap some of that ridiculous wool for something lightweight and wrap-around.)

So, from the picture on this meat label it seems pretty clear that, for example, here is no yak or rhino meat in the tin, though who knows what lesser members of the animal kingdom are hiding behind that cow in the scene.

One of the British empire's lasting contributions to the Pacific shelves is sheep tongues. Occasionally the manufacturer assures us the tongues have been "peeled", or those of us who like our animals tortured rest.

Now, I am an American and we tend not to go for such things. We prefer having only one tongue in our mouths at a time, and tend to spew any loose ones. In America, we imagine the cats usually get our tongues, though they probably are presented to us humans in a disguised form. To accommodate sensitive American stomachs, I believe

most US companies involved in this sordid meat business put leftover parts into a big bin destined for the Luncheon Meat Department. There the parts are turned into something flat, pink, vague — looking and tasting something like a page ripped from a biology textbook. Occasionally there is a round bit — disturbingly familiar — in the middle of an otherwise anonymous slice.

Now, I have never actually seen a sheep's tongue, I must confess — except in *in situ* of course, and not at the end of a fork. I don't really care for articulate food. I can only imagine opening the tin and finding a short stack of baaaa-ing instruments neatly packed. But then my conscience would dread the day of stumbling upon a hillside of mute New Zealand sheep.

Of course, gutting fish and ripping open a pig for a feast have their own pleasures.

But why import such leftovers?

Peter Morrison

Tarawa
Republic of Kiribati

FLNKS mandate

Madam,

The Bureau Politique of the FLNKS notes that recently a very unfortunate

argument has developed in the English language press in the South Pacific by independence activists living in New Zealand.

The Bureau Politique points out that it is under its authority that the external relations of the FLNKS are organised, the spokespeople for which are the FLNKS president, Paul Neaoutyine, and vice-president, Rock Wamytan. In certain countries or conferences, other activists are delegated by the Bureau Politique to speak and act in the name of the FLNKS. Since 1985, this status has been given to Suzanne Ounei-Small who lives in Christchurch, New Zealand.

The Bureau Politique would like to make it clear that Luc Tutugoro has no mandate at all to represent the FLNKS in external affairs, even though in the past some internal responsibilities were entrusted to him. Luc Tutugoro is therefore only speaking for himself in any statements he may make.

Susi Newborn is also a participant in this debate. We scarcely know her and she is not a member of the FLNKS.

The Bureau Politique of the FLNKS therefore reminds its activists living overseas of their obligation to exercise discretion. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the people or groups who, in close contact with Suzanne Ounei-Small, have since 1985 given precious moral and material support to the liberation struggle of the Kanak people.
Chanel Kapoeri, Sylvain Pabouty, Norbert Caffa,
Victor Tutugoro,
Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front,
New Caledonia

PACIFIC ISLANDS MONTHLY

SUBSCRIPTIONS

American Samoa	US\$45	New Zealand	NZ\$55
Australia	A\$42.00	Niue	AUS\$46
Canada	US\$45	Norfolk Island	AUS\$42
Cook Islands	AUS\$46	Northern Marianas/Palau	US\$40
Fiji	F\$26.40	Papua New Guinea	AUS\$45
French Polynesia	US\$45	Solomon Islands	AUS\$46
Guam	US\$45	Tonga	AUS\$46
Hawaii	US\$45	Tuvalu	AUS\$46
Japan	US\$45	United Kingdom	Stg Pound28
Kiribati	AUS\$46	US Mainland	US\$45
Marshall/Micronesia	US\$40	Vanuatu	AUS\$45
Nauru	AUS\$42	Western Samoa	WS\$60
New Caledonia	US\$32	Elsewhere	AUS\$63

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HEADLINES

VANUATU



Operation Prema

Relief assistance has been arriving in Vanuatu for people in areas worst hit by *Cyclone Prema* in late March. The worst hit parts are North Efate and the Shepherds and Epi region in Central Vanuatu.

Australia has donated US\$83,000 worth of disaster relief supplies while the British government gave US\$40,000 to buy food. British high commissioner in Port Vila, Thomas Duggin has offered more help after details of the damage has been assessed by the Disaster Office.

The United Nations Development Relief Organisation and Disaster Humanitarian Assistance have pledged US\$20,000 towards the relief operation code named 'Operation Prema'. The Chinese Red Cross Society, through the Chinese Embassy in Port Vila presented a cheque of US\$10,000 to the Prime Minister's office towards the operation.

The Japanese government are providing goods and services totalling US\$132,000. This includes water tanks, water containers, plastic sheets, tents, medical kits and the dispatch of a person to assess damage and assist with relief distribution.

The disaster relief supplies are being distributed to the affected areas by Vanuatu's patrol boat, *RVS Tukoro* assisted by a New Zealand air force Andover aircraft.

COOK ISLANDS



Japanese interested in minerals

The Japanese government has expressed interest in developing the deep sea mineral resources of the Cook Islands. The Japanese ambassador to New Zealand, Kateo Iguchi, said once the minerals were brought to the surface, the country could be one of the richest in the South Pacific.

Cook Islands Prime Minister Sir Geoffrey Henry sees the possibility of putting up a joint venture with the Japanese as highly likely. He said other countries had also expressed interest in developing deep sea resources.

Vaccine shortage

A shortage of Hepatitis B vaccine is reported in the Cook Islands. Director of Public Health Roro Daniels says an expected shipment from the non-government New Zealand body, the Hepatitis Foundation, will only be sufficient for treating new-borns. Meanwhile, there are fears dengue fever may have hit Cook Islands again.

AUSTRALIA



Pacific minister



Bilney: Minister for Pacific Island Affairs

Australia has named Gordon Bilney as the Minister for Pacific Islands Affairs. Bilney will also assume responsibility for development assistance. The ministry will be part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by Senator Gareth Evans.

Bilney has previously served as Minister for Defence Science and Personnel. An Australian government statement said the appointment reflected the importance Australia attached to its relationships with its Pacific island neighbours.

THE FORUM



Japan rejects Forum request

Japan has rejected a request from the 15-nation South Pacific Forum to fund a South Pacific trade office in Tokyo.

The secretary general of the South Pacific Forum Secretariat, Iremia Tabai, said he would continue to pursue the idea. Tabai said the Forum believed a trade office would increase the Pacific's links with Japan and promote economic development in the island nations.

Japan is understood to have rejected the proposal on the grounds that it was too expensive.

AMERICAN SAMOA



Tax increase proposed

American Samoa's governor AP Lutali wants the excise tax on all imports increased from three per cent to five per cent to raise revenue for a new hospital. Governor Lutali proposes that two per cent would go towards construction of a four-storey hospital, two per cent towards general operations and education, and one per cent is to be used to repay the US Federal Emergency Management Agency.

TONGA



Kingdom in mourning

The Kingdom of Tonga was in mourning and there was sombre quietness in the capital Nuku'alofa as Tongans prepared for the burial of Princess Tupaimoheafu on March 19. The princess

died at Auckland Hospital on March 16 after after being treated for cancer for several weeks.

Her husband, Prince Tui'pelehake, is the brother of King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, and was

Prime Minister of Tonga for 26 years before resigning because of ill health last year.

The government declared a 10-day mourning period following the burial of the princess. The declaration means no festivities in the kingdom — no dances, socials, or sports, no music other than Christian tunes and no guitar playing during kava sessions.

This is the first death in the Tongan royal family since the death of the immensely popular Queen Salote in 1965 when a six-month period of mourning was observed.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Blow to investor confidence

Resource analysts say investor confidence in Papua New Guinea has been dealt a blow by CRA's withdrawal from the troubled Mount Kare. CRA said it had ended exploration of the hard rock gold deposit, amid problems with landowners and the government.

Stuart Shelley from Melbourne brokerage JB Were and Son said the investment community would not want to see too many more things go wrong in PNG. Shelley warned that one more negative would be pretty bad and would put people off PNG significantly.

CRA's departure follows the Porgera goldmine dispute, which sliced nearly US\$1 billion US dollars of PNG-related stocks last year.

Rex Adams from Hambros Equities said "anyone who announced they were putting money into exploration in PNG would see their share prices drop like a stone".

SOLOMON ISLANDS



New goods tax

The Solomon Islands government's new eight per cent Goods Sales Tax came into effect on April 1, after its implementation was postponed from March 1. The Ministry of Housing and Government Services has registered over 100 wholesalers and manufacturers who will collect the tax. And permanent secretary Mathias Pepena said the GST will be collected by the government from the wholesalers who are expected to pass it on to the retailers who in turn pass it on to the consumers.

The government said the idea behind the GST was to broaden the country's tax base so that not only those engaged in formal employment carry the tax burden. In return the government has reduced personal income.

MARSHALL ISLANDS



Symons jailed

Australian Gregory Symons has been sentenced to 90 days in jail in the Marshall Islands in connection with his scheme to sell Marshall Islands citizenship. He has also been ordered to pay back US\$1.25 million to six Taiwanese who paid him in expectation of becoming citizens.

Symons pleaded "no contest" to 15 counts of forging official documents as part of an agreement with the Marshall Islands attorney general's office. The agreement requires him to serve three months in jail and places him on probation for 10 years while he pays off his debts to the Taiwanese. It also involves the Australian government agreeing to give the Marshall Islands the right to extradite Symons if he does not comply with the terms of the agreement.

NEW ZEALAND



Abuse program

New Zealand's social welfare minister Jenny Shipley has agreed to fund a pilot program to fight sexual and physical abuse in the Samoan community in that country.

Members of the community met Shipley at a workshop to discuss sources of funding to prevent abuse. Pacific island affairs minister Don McKinnon also attended. They wanted Shipley's commitment to programs aimed at raising awareness, stopping violence and preventing child abuse.

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FISHERIES

The tuna dilemma

IT is only five years now since the nations of the Forum Fisheries Agency signed their first multi-lateral fisheries access agreement with the United States. That treaty was a landmark and brought to an end virtually a decade of acrimony, vitriol and open confrontation that many feared would push the island states of the South Pacific into what was then the Soviet camp. All this is history now but once again tuna fish diplomacy is ready to become an issue in the region's affairs. As is fitting the 1990s actors are different, the conflict is now with the Asian distant water fishing nations (DWFNs, pronounced Dwifins) and relations with the US are back on an even keel.

The new problem with tuna is much like the old one. The Pacific island nations (PIN) have since the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea had official international recognition of their 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The problem was that the US, under pressure from its tuna boat lobby and Congress, never recognised the right of nations over highly migratory species of fish in those EEZs. The argument went that because tuna migrates long distances, the Pacific island nations had no rights over fish that happened to be in their EEZ.

For very obvious reasons, PIN did not quite see it that way, for while they did not own the fish, they certainly had clear legal rights to sell rights to catch those fish while they were in their EEZ and some PIN decided to use the powers they had under the Law of the Sea Convention to seize US tuna vessels that were illegally fishing. Papua New Guinea seized the *Danica* in 1982 and under the infamous Magnuson Act the US threatened to impose mandatory sanctions on PNG in retaliation. This was followed by the *Jeanette Diana* episode when in June 1984 the Solomon Islands seized another US purse seiner fishing illegally in its waters. What followed was a rude lesson in tuna diplomacy for the island nations. Under pressure from the American Tuna Boat Association the US imposed an export embargo on Solomon Islands fish products as well as other retaliatory measures.

It was only when relations between PNG and the US began to sour and resident Ieremia Tabai of Kiribati signed a fisheries access agreement with the Soviets that alarm bells started to sound in Washington. This was soon

The debate continues on what is a fair return from the islands' only real resource — its ocean. Economist Roman Grynberg reports.

followed by an agreement between Vanuatu and the USSR. It became clear in Washington that a change in policy was necessary and after several long years of negotiations the US signed a multi-lateral treaty with the 16 members of the Forum Fisheries Agency. This treaty was certainly the Forum's most successful effort at regional co-operation. The 1987 treaty gave the island nations an agreement whereby the US paid

were paying PNG in their bilateral negotiations. In large measure as a result of the USA-FFA treaty, negotiations between Japan and PNG collapsed in January 1987 and Japanese vessels have never returned to PNG waters to fish for tuna.

Following the treaty, relations with the US have improved dramatically. The Soviets left the Pacific soon after the initial agreements expired. Ironically, in

Estimated Catch by Purse Seiners in the South Pacific (metric tonnes, 1991)

	Japan	Korea	Taiwan
Log book entries	94,000	11,000	26,000
SPC estimates	170,000	242,000	176,000

Note: These are estimates of purse seiner fleets and do not include catches by Longline and pole and line fleets operating in the South Pacific.
Source: South Pacific Commission.

approximately nine per cent of the value of their catch as access fees to PIN. Clearly, there was no way in which the American Tuna-Boat Association (ATA) was willing to pay nine per cent of the value of the catch, so in order to solve the problem, the US decided to pay almost 75 per cent from aid money. In effect, the ATA would only pay two per cent. The actual fees paid by the association amounted to US\$4 million per annum in the revised 1991 treaty. This amounted to less than two per cent of the value of the catch. The rest, made up of \$14 million per annum, was in the form of grants from the US aid budget.

Under the current treaty arrangement US vessel owners pay only US\$50,000 per vessel for the first 40 vessels and then after that US\$60,000 per vessel up to a maximum of 40 vessels. The industry also pays \$250,000 per annum into a technical assistance fund.

This nine per cent figure was unprecedented — over twice what the Japanese

the last month Russian purse seiners have returned to the South Pacific. A Singaporean company has leased 10 Russian purse seiners which are in Honiara and will be fishing in Solomon waters.

Since 1987 PIN have seen the nine-per-cent figure as a good but probably unachievable benchmark. With the exception of the US no one except Taiwan (which only four FFA members recognise) has been willing to consider discussing a multi-lateral treaty. The reason is simple. For the DWFNs it is better to negotiate with one poor under-developed island country than with all 16 of them.

In 1991 the FFA estimated the DWFNs took over one million tonnes of tuna from the waters of its member states. Of this the US fleet took an estimated 205,000 tonnes and there is little doubt about the accuracy of this figure. The same cannot be said of Korea and Taiwan who massively under-report their catches.

FISHERIES

The Japanese have tended to under-report relatively little. The table presents what the three countries report on their log books and what the South Pacific Commission (SPC) that they are actually catching. Korea has been told that its purse seiners caught 11,000 tonnes of tuna in the South Pacific in 1991. According to the Korean authorities concerned, there is no report on the alleged figures. And the figures of 242,000 tonnes is also a groundless allegation.

"Whenever Korea catches the tuna, it pays proper access fees, so that there is no reason to report the false figures on the amount of fish they can catch."

It is noteworthy that while they deny the SPC estimates, they have provided no figures to *PIM* that they considered accurate.

How does SPC make these estimates? The actual log books are given to the SPC/FFA member countries so they can determine what is declared. The estimates of what is actually caught in the region comes from what is declared on shipping and transshipment documents in each of the importing countries. It must be added that the discrepancies between the log figures and the transshipment figures are not all fish caught and not paid for in the South Pacific. The fishing vessels do not have to report to the SPC fish caught in international waters or what is called near-international, waters although this situation is changing. Approximately 10 per cent to as much as 30 per cent of the figures above are legitimate under-reporting, the rest of the difference is not.

It is felt by the SPC that Japanese records in the area are probably close to accurate as the differences between recorded amounts on log books and actual transshipment data can be explained by their fishing in international waters. The same cannot be said of the Koreans and the Taiwanese.

One reason why the Americans do not under-report is that their purse seiners are often accompanied by observers from Pacific island countries. These observers check that what is recorded in log books is accurate. The Asian vessels are nowhere near as well policed.

In order to improve the policing and in part to show just how serious the under-reporting is, the FFA has sought a new high-tech solution to the problem. The FFA is currently seeking US\$5 million funding under the Lome Convention for transponders which would beam the position of tuna fishing vessels back to Honiara via satellite.

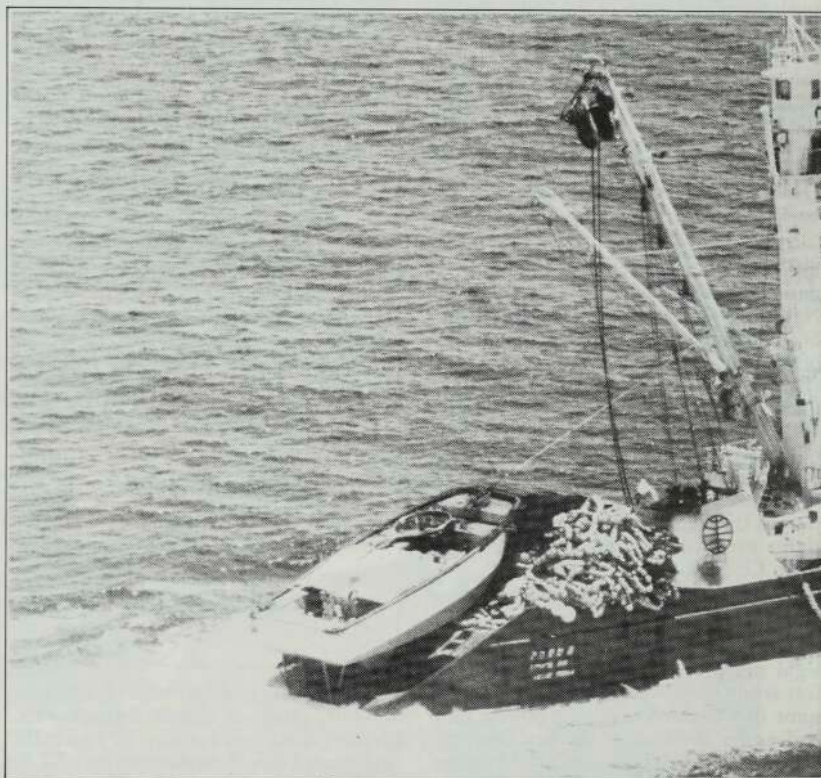
All foreign vessels fishing in FFA waters would be required to carry transponders. The transponders would also allow the FFA to check log books of fishing vessels any time they like and thus

there would not be the delay in determining whether records are accurate. It now often takes up to nine months for FFA and SPC to receive log book records. However, high-tech policing will never be a substitute for good laws though there can be no doubt that it will certainly help.

All this does not explain why the Japanese have a relatively good record in terms of accurately reporting catch. In fact Japanese fishermen have a grater incentive to under-report their catch than the Koreans or Taiwanese because Japanese bilateral treaties base access

government revenue. Moreover, some of the DWFNs have been more than willing to use their aid policy to assure their tuna vessels gain access to the EEZ of the island countries.

Japan, for example, has been very explicit in using its aid policy as a stick rather than as a carrot in the way the US has done. The government of Japan in an official response to questions raised by *PIM* denied it linked aid to fisheries agreements, but clearly admitted the state of the country's fisheries relationship with Japan would influence the



fees directly on catch while the Taiwanese and Korean treaties are less directly linked to reported catch. Part of the explanation must surely lie in the fact that the Japanese government takes a much more active role in policing their own fleets than does either Korea or Taiwan which take a far more relaxed approach.

This leads to the next question — if bilateral treaties are so bad, why are they not abandoned? If this abuse is as systematic as is widely believed then why aren't the islands screaming to defend their interests? It is here that the world of tuna fishing joins the ugly world of diplomacy and aid. The simple fact is that for some of the smaller Forum countries such as Kiribati the access fee constitutes a large portion of total

priority of a project.

"In any region in the world, the government of Japan has never linked its fisheries aid to the fishing access agreement. Japan's fisheries aid is demanded by many developing countries in the world which attach great importance to aquatic products as animal protein sources, and the aid is practised purely in order to contribute to the development of the country's fishing industry.

"However, as budgetary limitation exists (and) while plenty requests are received, there is a possibility that, in order to decide acceptance or priority of each request, the situation of the fishing relationship between the country and Japan, as well as the feasibility and the effect of the requested project, might be considered."

Stripped of the diplomatese, this

means 'no fisheries access; no aid funds for your fishing industry'. According to senior Fiji government officials, Fiji's boat building project was cut off by Japan because it refused to sign a bilateral access agreement. In response to the allegation, the government of Japan responded:

"The fisheries projects requested by the Fiji government were difficult to execute because Fiji's GNP per capita (\$1170 in 1990) exceeds substantially the standard set by the Japanese government for the countries suitable to Japan's grant

aid (\$1195 or less). The situation above mentioned has already been explained to the Fiji government and, therefore, the Japanese government never committed itself to the said projects."

The Japanese are one of the region's major aid donors and few of the smaller islands are willing to quibble over what is mistakenly believed to be a few tuna fish when much larger issues of aid and international diplomacy are at stake.

Japan has made it perfectly clear it will not sign a multi-lateral treaty like the US with the FFA. According to FFA offic-

ials, the Japanese do not even recognise the FFA, although this is vehemently denied by the Japanese. An official response from Tokyo said: "The government of Japan thinks that to keep current bilateral agreements is more reasonable than to create a multi-lateral treaty with FFA countries because Japanese vessels' demand to access (is) to EEZs of only limited countries, so that it is difficult to sign an access agreement including the countries without demand." This response makes little sense as it is possible to sign a multi-lateral treaty based on access fees for only those countries where one fishes.

The tuna issue is proof that in the end regional trade ministers will put trade in tuna on the back burner when compared to aid funds coming from Tokyo, Seoul and Taipei. As long as the South Pacific nations continue to accept the under-reporting and the poor bilateral treaties, and they are perfectly aware that is happening, they will continue.

Approximately 55 per cent of the world's canning tuna comes from the South Pacific and it is one of the few areas where the region has real clout and enough resources to one day wean ourselves from aid and stand on our own feet. As soon as Pacific island leaders stand up together and say they are no longer willing to accept the abuse of the only abundant renewable resource they have, then Tokyo, Seoul and Taipei will take the issue away from their fisheries departments and their tunaboat lobbies and return it to foreign affairs and to the prominence it deserves.

In the long run a reasonable access fee will have to be paid. That day, however, will only come when Pacific island leaders demonstrate unity and finally demand their rights to a fair return on their resources rather than accept aid as a substitute for mutually advantageous trade. □



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Bilney's point of view

"I'M not going to give you a newspaper headline," said Gordon Bilney, Australia's first ever Minister for Pacific Island Affairs, when I pressed him for the second time as to whether he still believed Australia and New Zealand should join forces as one nation. Now he's a minister, Bilney, who likes to stir the possum, is more circumspect about what he'll say in public about ideas which in the past have been something of a hobby horse.

The proposal that Australia appoint a Minister for Pacific Affairs harks back to a recommendation made in a major report by the parliamentary Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1989. Says Bilney, who was chair of the committee at the time, "We said this region was really too important to lump in with everything else and we recommended that there be a ministry to look specifically at the concerns of island countries of the Pacific and to ensure that those had a high place in Australia's overall relations with the world."

Also behind the suggestion was a desire not to be caught surprised and flat-footed as Australia was at the time of the 1987 coups in Fiji. Since then Australia has continued to have its share of minor difficulties in its relations with the island nations. Relations with Vanuatu, for instance, are still shaky after Port Vila's expulsion of an Australian diplomat last year. In Honiara a belief that Australia is not doing enough to press Papua New Guinea to stop its soldiers based on Bougainville making incursions across the border into Solomon Islands, has soured diplomatic links.

Bilney admits there needs to be more attention to the region and stresses his desire for co-operation and partnership with island countries. Despite his junior minister status, Bilney is adamant his ministry will have a central role in Australia's increasing focus on its own region. "I think it will heighten the (Pacific islands') status," said Bilney in his first interview since taking office. "After all the Prime Minister has spoken, as a central plank of the government's thrust in approaching the world, of our need to integrate more with the Asia Pacific region. He doesn't just say the Asia region. The Pacific," continued Bilney, "is a very very important part of our concerns."

From an islands' point of view, Bilney's appointment is likely to lead to better communication and a greater priority being placed on island affairs. While Foreign Minister Gareth Evans maintains his interest in the region, he has become increasingly absorbed in international initiatives such as the peace process in Cambodia and is likely to find even more of his time is taken up by his new job as leader of government business in the Senate. Bilney, who in his previous ministerial post of Defence Science and Personnel earned a reputation as a hardworking and well-liked minister, has made it clear his emphasis from the beginning will be on listening to island leaders. "The first thing I want to do," said Bilney, "is to make direct contact with my counterparts in the countries of the region and learn first hand from them how we can better co-operate to achieve the shared objectives we have."

Bilney has a trip to the region planned for early June. One issue at the top of his agenda on that trip is Nauru's case against Australia in the International Court of Justice seeking compensation for the devastation left by phosphate mining. Bilney is keen to see a negotiated settlement to the dispute.

Gordon Bilney sees most of Australia's difficulties in the region

AUSTRALIA



JEMIMA GARRETT

as only "hitches" in otherwise good relations. While that is probably true, there is one problem he may be underestimating. That is the spill-over effects from the crisis on Papua New Guinea's troubled island of Bougainville. In the past month the PNG Defence Force on Bougainville has been at its most provocative. In one incident soldiers penetrated 30 kilometres into Solomons territory and responded to a challenge from Solomons police with grenades and machine gun fire. In another they made an abortive attempt to annex the island of Oema on the Solomons side of the border claiming they needed it to resettle Bougainvilleans from their 'care centres'.

While Gordon Bilney expressed "considerable concern" over the incidents, his insistence on sticking to the Australian dogma that "Bougainville is an internal matter for PNG" is

beginning to wear a bit thin. Not only were all the boats used to mount the latest incidents supplied by Australia, but at some point there must be a purely humanitarian responsibility to the ordinary people of Bougainville.

Australia has admitted some international humanitarian responsibility by supporting a recent resolution before the United Nations Human Rights Commission which expressed grave concern about the present situation and called for access to Bougainville for a UN fact-finding mission.

While Bougainville has not yet secured a place in the world spotlight the combination of increasingly high level international concern and continued provocation by PNG soldiers on the Solomons border could easily change that.

Gordon Bilney is also responsible for Australia's development co-operation. At the top of his agenda is the ambitious plan to transform all Australia's budget aid to PNG into program aid by the year 2001. At the moment most of Australia's \$300 million in development aid goes directly into consolidated revenue.

Program aid, which will mean direct support for various Papua New Guinea government departments and initiatives, will involve a great deal more supervision and a big increase in the number of Australians working in PNG. In many cases those Australians will be on high salaries, and like many of their expatriate colleagues, will live away from the grassroots in compounds around Port Moresby.

Gordon Bilney rejects suggestions the new program aid could cause resentment among Papua New Guineans. "In general I believe Australian aid experts overseas are very well respected. They are not afraid to get their hands dirty and to pitch in with the locals."

Bilney, who spent 20 years in the diplomatic service before going into parliament, said in his many years of association with Australia's aid program, he could not remember "that syndrome of resentment between our aid experts on the ground and the locals who are co-operating with him or her".

"It is something I would be very concerned about if it happened but is something on which we have a second to none reputation," Bilney said.

While he is hesitant to make too many pronouncements on priorities before talking with Pacific leaders he did confirm that environmental protection would continue to have an important place in Australia's development co-operation program.

□

BUSINESS

Musical investment by Nauru government

USUALLY governments put their money in boring, safe investments, like gilt-edged securities or insured bonds.

Not Nauru, not this time.

Nauru has made a major investment comparable to buying a race horse. It expensive and very public. If it works, the world knows about it; if it fails, it is equally obvious.

Nauru has decided to invest in a London musical production called *Leonardo, Portrait of Love*. The plot deals with an imaginary love affair between the famous painter and his most famous subject, Mona Lisa. The show opens in June and the President of Nauru has invited all the island heads of state to be present on opening night. More than 150 Nauruans, at considerable expense to somebody, are to be there as well.

The delegation and the heads of state will be in London the next morning to read the reviews, and to see if the show

has a chance of making some money for Nauru, or losing a bundle, the fate of many musicals.

Nauru's investment is not only a gamble, it also apparently reflects what in other circles might be regarded as a glaring example of conflict of interest.

This is the case because their show has been written and produced by a songwriter from Liverpool (hometown to the Beatles) named Duke Minks. Minks is also financial adviser to Nauru and must have called the investment opportunity to the attention of his client. Typically financial advisers are supposed to avoid giving advice which will be financially beneficial to the adviser. It is said to be a US\$2.9 million production, that represents a lot of phosphate.

Nauru will soon learn whether its showbiz gamble will have a happier fate than some of its star-crossed real estate ventures around the Pacific. □

Cannery closes

THE economy in Samoa, already reeling from the layoffs of 1000 government workers, took another blow in late February when one of the two big tuna canneries shut down for a week, laying off another 2000 workers.

Some of Samoa Packing's canned tuna, found in California grocery stores, had small holes in the cans, and tons of the canned product was withdrawn from the market and destroyed. With government inspectors on the scene in Pago Pago, Samoa Packing decided to close down its operations until its management could be assured that the plant was producing a safe product. Once management was satisfied with the cannery's operations, it re-opened the plant. Meanwhile a disagreement broke out between two sets of federal inspectors; the Food and Drug Administration, relying on, among other things, a smelling test, was harder on the packing house than the Fisheries Management people, who use a chemical test of canned tuna. □

Keeping the Pacific Cool

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More trade expected

By Martin Tiffany

SOUTH Pacific countries should experience an increase in trade with Australia and New Zealand.

Potential Australian exporters to the South Pacific are being encouraged by a recently launched export assistance package. The package 'Export Start Up' is the brainchild of Austrade (the Australian government's Trade Commission).

According to Philip Sibree, Austrade's Sydney-based executive general manager Product Development and Marketing and the South Pacific, the scheme is aimed at new South Pacific exporters. He said interested exporters would be given training in Australia on various aspects of exporting from the basics to various peculiarities of Pacific destinations. This will include talks by exporters currently trading with the Pacific. There are also visits planned to Pacific countries. He said on a recent South Pacific marketing tour 310 companies participated.

Australia's Trade Commissioner in Fiji, Steve Ryan, returned from one of these South Pacific marketing tours in Australia in March. What they are targeting, he said, are small to medium sized Australian businesses — with an annual turnover of less than A\$15 million — under the Export Start Up scheme.

During the campaigning before the recent Australian elections, the Coalition accused Paul Keating's Labour of not encouraging Pacific trade. Indeed Keating has no history of links with the Pacific and his sights seem firmly set on Asia. Some suggested this would lead to Australian companies missing out on opportunities in the Pacific.

Sibree and Ryan disagree with this. Sibree said while the government does provide some sort of framework, business will always make up its own mind where to go. And as Ryan points out the Pacific will always be important as it gives new exporters the chance to get their feet wet before attempting the more difficult export markets such as Asia and others further afield.

At present the South Pacific accounts for about seven per cent of Australia's exports and there is good growth in Papua New Guinea and New Zealand and growth overall for the other Pacific islands. Sibree said the future looks "very cosy" with a number of opportunities present. He said they were concentrating a lot more on New Caledonia and singled

Despite Asia looming large on the horizon the South Pacific should see more Australian and New Zealand trade.

out that country, PNG, New Zealand and Fiji as countries where good opportunities exist.

The growing importance of Asia for Australia cannot be denied. For example the Republic of Korea represented 0.2 per cent of Australia's export market at a value of A\$9.7 million in 1970-71. In 1990-91 the share was 6.2 per cent and the value A\$3238.4 million. In comparison Fiji in 1970-71 had a share of 0.6 valued at A\$24.7 million, the share fell to 0.4 per cent in 1990-91 although the value rose to A\$235.3. Similarly PNG's share fell from 3.7 per cent to 1.5 per cent although value rose from A\$163.4 million to A\$775.8 million.

New Zealand's Minister for Trade Negotiations, Philip Burdon, recently led a trade mission to PNG and Fiji to "unashamedly promote New Zealand as a competitive supplier to the region".

New Zealand's South Pacific markets were worth NZ\$631 million in the year to June 1992. In that year New Zealand exports to the region grew by 18 per cent,

a faster rate of increase than exports to the rest of the world. These exports accounted for 3.67 per cent of total exports making the South Pacific a larger market for New Zealand than some much higher profile regions.

The South Pacific is also emerging as a major market for manufactured goods. This is significant as three quarters of New Zealand's export receipts (from goods) are still derived from primary products.

Burdon wants to show New Zealand exporters the potential of the region is just starting to be tapped. He says the PNG economy has been enjoying growth rates in excess of 10 per cent per annum and says if Australia can achieve exports to PNG in excess of A\$1 billion per annum, Kiwi exporters should be able to better their existing \$92 million.

Basically what Australia and New Zealand are saying is while Asia is looming larger and larger on the horizon the Pacific — the South Pacific in particular — will always be a major part of their trade and investment. □

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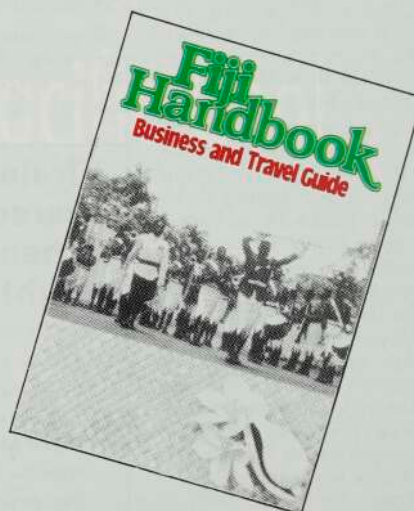
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FRENCH POLYNESIA

Going to the polls

By Bengt Danielsson

The March election in French Polynesia proved once more how unfair the colonial rule is for the islanders. It was a sort of "national" election to renew the French parliament, taking place at five-year intervals, during which only two of the 577 MPs can be elected by the islanders. Consequently, these two anti-colonial and anti-nuclear representatives of the Polynesian people have been unable, during the parliamentary sessions, to enforce the adoption of their requests and to reject any decisions and laws they consider unfavourable.

The only small reform applied this time by the French government concerned the date of the local election, which in the past always occurred after the elections had been held in France. As the first round of this new election took place on March 13 in French Polynesia, but one week later in France, the first MP elected was local candidate Gaston Flosse, who, is more metropolitan than Polynesian, as he is the son of a French businessman and for 20 years has been the leader of the local section of the French Gaulliste RPR party.

His party boss, Jacques Chirac, who has not accepted President Mitterand's nuclear moratorium and disarmament program, therefore immediately made a public statement, claiming this election proved the majority of the Polynesians are now pro-French and pro-nuclear.

The truth, however, is that Gaston Flosse obtained only a slight majority of 50 — 13 per cent of the votes in the small eastern constituency, comprising the Marquesas and Tuamotu archipelagoes and the eastern half of Tahiti, mainly because about half of the voters are expatriate French soldiers, sailors, nuclear technicians, government officials and businessmen.

But an unusually big number of Polynesians also voted for Flosse in the Marquesas and Tuamotu islands, because since being appointed prime minister of the local government two years ago, he had often visited these remote islands on government vessels and airplanes and generously offered the inhabitants gifts and advantages. As the incumbent MP, Emile Vernaude, did not have the means to begin his electoral campaign in this manner at such an early

date. This is undoubtedly the main reason why he lost his five-year seat in the French parliament.

The total number of votes that Flosse obtained in this constituency on March 13 was nevertheless not more than 15,776, and 15,692 Polynesians voted for the five other candidates, who were all in favour of independence and opposed to the resumption of nuclear testing at Moruroa.

What makes Chirac's laudatory statement that this new patriotic MP represents the majority of the Polynesian people even more untruthful is that in the other, larger constituency, comprising the western half of Tahiti and the Leeward and Austral islands, less than one fifth of the 41,369 votes were obtained on March 13 by the incumbent MP and former collaborator of Gaston Flosse, Alexandre Leontieff, who accepted the colonial system.

Even more revealing is that the most successful candidates were the mayor of Papeete, Jean Juventin, who proposed a Cook Island-type internal self-government, and the mayor of Faaa, (which is the biggest town in Tahiti) Oscar Temaru, who is a vigorous independence fighter in the colony. While none of the other six candidates shared the modest opinion of Jean Juventin, who obtained 13,822 votes, they all presented programs very similar to that of Oscar Temaru, who obtained 11,205 votes. The total number of pro-independence votes in this constituency was therefore 19,765, which made the global number in French Polynesia as high as 35,457. Considering that the total number of Polynesians in the two constituencies who abstained from voting was 37,644, it must also be said that this figure constitutes another decisive proof that the 15,776 votes obtained by Flosse do not make him a genuine representative of the majority of the Polynesian people.

Since none of the candidates in the western constituency had obtained a decisive majority of more than 50 per cent of the votes on March 13, a second round was organized on March 27. The most remarkable result was that independence fighter Oscar Temaru obtained 7854 more votes than in the first round. But at this time a greater number of French expatriates in Tahiti, Borabora



Oscar Temaru: pro-independence and anti-nuclear

and Raiatea voted for Jean Juventin, the slightly less radical candidate, who finally obtained 23,966 votes and defeated Oscar Temaru, who scored 19,059.

Quite understandably, Oscar Temaru now insists that no more elections of this type be held. Instead he prefers a referendum on independence, supervised by the United Nations. Unfortunately, chances are slim that the new French government will accept this demand, as it has been formed by Chirac's and Giscard's right wing parties, which, now occupy 85 per cent of the seats in Parliament, although they only obtained 45 per cent of the votes.

□

ELECTIONS

The Solomons call for change

But are they a match
for master politician,
Mamaloni?

By Martin Tiffany

THERE is to be a general election in the Solomon Islands this month. That much is clear. What the outcome is of these elections is not so evident. With the Prime Minister standing as an independent, new parties being formed, the economy in trouble and a general call for change, many question marks hang over these islands.

May 26 is the day circled for the elections. The man who is able to form and lead a government after this date will need every trick in the political book to solicit the numbers needed to form the government. Indications are it will be a numbers game once the results are announced.

Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni had proved time and again he is a master magician when it comes to politics and especially when it comes to the numbers game. Take October 9, 1990, for example, when he resigned from his ruling Alliance Party to form a government of national unity. He achieved this by dropping five ministers in his all-Alliance Cabinet and appointing five replacements — four from the Opposition and an Alliance backbencher. This move effectively weakened the Opposition and broke up the political parties. He remained in control of this unity until parliament was dissolved in March this year in preparation for the May elections.

Mamaloni was up to his wizardry again when it was announced early last month he would lead members of his national unity government into the national elections as the "National Unity Group". He had earlier announced he

would stand as an independent and have ties with no party. The core of his group will be his 15-member cabinet and the seven government backbenchers in the last parliament. Group members will stand as independent candidates but band together with Mamaloni as Prime Minister if the group gets into power. The group is expected to field candidates for all 47 seats. (The number of seats has risen from 38 for this election after a review of the constituencies as allowed for under the constitution. The maximum number of seats allowed is 50.)

Earlier Mamaloni showed his political craftiness when he appointed Rex Horoi as ambassador to the United Nations. Horoi, the former director of the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, was expected to contest the West Makira seat — the seat Mamaloni is contesting. It was rumoured Horoi had a good chance of winning. At present Mamaloni stands unopposed.

Another political ploy was the recent distribution of the Special Discretionary Fund by the government to each national parliament constituency. This fund was recently increased to S\$100,000 — \$50,000 of which was released in time for people to enjoy the benefits before the elections. People on out-lying islands and in remote villages now have tangible evidence — new outboard motors, a new roof for their church — the government is doing something for them.

The government has also made it difficult for civil servants to contest the elections. They now have to resign from their jobs first and, if unsuccessful, are not guaranteed their jobs back. Despite this an unprecedented 36 civil servants are contesting seats and are expected to



Criticism of government is rife:

do well — a cause of concern for Mamaloni as they are not supporting him. Most of them hold top jobs in government, so the usually slow government machinery is now almost grinding to a stop — adding to the country's many problems.

These problems include a deteriorating economy, a poor education system, the spill-over effect of the Bougainville conflict, a countrywide shortage of doctors, malaria, government corruption, the goods tax, and public service weakness. Many see the leaders themselves as creators of some, if not all, of these problems and the Mamaloni government making no major attempt to find solutions.

But despite criticisms of Mamaloni's performance in his four years at the helm, he rates the best chance in getting the job back. He is a seasoned politician who knows how to play the game, he has much grassroots support and there seems no one else who really stands out from the rest to challenge him for the job. In the end it may be a case of contending with the devil you know.



as unemployment, education, health and Bougainville become major election issues

If any one person has to be selected as Mamaloni's main rival, it would have to be former opposition leader Andrew Nori. Nori is getting support from the young, new blood of voters who are calling for a change and accusing Mamaloni of not really achieving anything during his four-year term.

Nori is the founder and president of the National Front for Progress (NFP) — the only party to move away from the typical issues for this election. One of NFP's issues is the defence of the country's borders. Nori has said the country's border is the most important priority and he will defend it against "any violations of the country's sovereignty". "Any violations of our border will be met with force, helped by our friends, to ensure that our internal boundaries are respected," said Nori.

One assumed the violations he spoke of are the spill-over of the war on Bougainville and the violation of Solomon airspace by PNG military aircraft. Mamaloni had issued orders to Solomon Island Police Field Force to shoot any aircraft intruding the country's airspace.

However these orders were suspended by Police Commissioner Fred Soaki for fear of increased border tension.

Nori's NFP also promises to abolish the recently introduced eight-per-cent Goods Tax and considers alternative means of raising revenue for the government. Nori said the revenue collected must be justified by the return in services to the people. Nori says he also plans to develop the policy of the emerging federal system of government and giving more power to the village and community leaders. The NFP had three members in the last parliament but ended up with two by the time parliament was dissolved. In mid-March the party began to aggressively campaign on radio, the first party to begin campaigning and the only one — by the beginning of April, anyway — to be doing it consistently. They expect to field candidates in all the 47 constituencies.

Another contender for prime ministership, who many give an outside chance to, is Francis Saemala. Saemala was MP for Central Malaita until parliament was dissolved and formed a

The Parties

SIX political parties, a national unity group and many independents will contest this month's general election. Most are predicting no one party will get a clear majority, thereby forcing parties to join ranks to form a government.

The parties are:

- Andrew Nori's National Front for Progress (NFP);
- The newly formed National Action Party of Solomon Islands (NAPSI) led by Francis Saemala;
- Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni's old party the People's Alliance Party (PAP) now led by veteran politician and businessman David Kausimae;
- Opposition leader Josés Tuhanuku's Labour Party;
- The Liberal Party led by Bartholomew Ulufa'alu; and
- The United Party.

The Prime Minister is standing as an independent but is to lead members of his government in the national unity group. The group will include his 15-member cabinet and the government's seven backbenchers in the last parliament.

new party to contest the elections. His party, the National Action Party of Solomon Islands boasts an "action-oriented" party and approaches development with a Christian attitude blended with traditional values and practices.

NAPSI has a draft constitution and a manifesto-like document, *Vision 2000*, which contains four major platforms of NAPSI. Saemala refers to these as the four pillars.

The first pillar is reconciliation. Saemala says geographic and cultural differences among the people need to be reconciled. The second pillar is liberation. This means freeing Solomon Islanders from the hang-ups of colonisation and allowing them to develop confidence in themselves. The third pillar is innovation which, Saemala said, is needed in all aspects of development in the country. The last pillar is action which means the party will ensure policies are implemented and the ideas behind the other pillars are carried out.

A man who could at best be described as a rank outsider in the race for prime-ministership is Opposition leader, Josés

ELECTIONS

Tuhanuku. Although not many would give him much of a chance, a few do suggest he could be a compromise choice in a government of national unity — similar to his choice as Opposition leader when Andrew Nori stepped down. Nori gave up the position saying he did not have the support of the 16-member Opposition which comprises members from the Labour Party, United Party, NFP and independents.

Many saw his election as a compromise choice. Tuhanuku has not been aggressive enough in his role as Opposition leader to make his mark as a likely choice for prime minister. He leads the Labour Party into the election and is expected to win his Rennell and Bellona seat.

The other parties in the elections are Mamaloni's old party the People's Alliance Party (PAP), the Liberal Party and the United Party.

PAP is being led into the elections by veteran politician and businessman Davia Kausimae. He will contest the West Aro constituency against Nori. PAP has pledged to set up a National Planning Commission and to push through an amendment to the constitution to ban party members from changing parties if it comes to power.

PAP spokesman Brown Saua said through legislation the planning commission would become a statutory body responsible for turning the PAP manifesto into a co-ordinated set of planned activities. Saua said PAP would back two candidates for some parliamentary seat if they thought it was necessary.

The Liberal Party is being led into the elections by Bartholomew Ulufa'alu. His chances of becoming prime minister are not high.

The sixth and last party contesting the elections is the United Party. Since former Prime Minister Sir Peter Kenilorea left the party it has been without a leader and has been somewhat unfocused. Party spokesman Augustine Manakako said his party had been keeping a low profile for the past four years. He said they planned to contest most of the 47 seats and had called for prospective candidates.

All the parties have given some indication of issues they will push for, they have made promises and set goals. But if the election is to be won or lost on issues, two issues — economy and education — stand out from the rest as the most important. There are many people disgruntled with the deteriorating economy and lack of plans for its redemption. Education is also a sore

The lead players

DESPITE the many problems the Solomon Islands faces and the government's inability to solve them, Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni must be tipped the strongest contender for the country's top job after the May 26 elections. He looks set to win his West Makira seat and with his political cunning has the ability to get the numbers to form a government.

He is standing as an independent but has the backing of the recently formed National Unity Group made up of his 15-member cabinet and the government's seven backbenchers in the last parliament.

His main rival is likely to be former opposition leader Andrew Nori who has the backing of the new young bloods contesting the elections. He is being backed as the force for change in the country. Nori leads the National Front for Progress Party in the elections.

Frances Saemala, MP for Central Malaita in the last parliament, has formed the National Action Party of Solomon Islands to contest the elections. He is considered by some to have a chance of becoming Prime Minister.

Opposition leader Josés Tuhanuku has been given a remote chance to head the new government. If the numbers game is played after the election and a government of national unity is formed, some say he could be a compromise choice — similar to his choice as Opposition leader.

The other runners in the election race are Liberal Party leader Bartholomew Ulufa'alu and People's Alliance Party head David Kausimae. Neither are favoured to win.

At the time of writing the United Party had yet to elect a leader.

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Solomon Mamaloni (left) and Francis Saemala: both fighting for the top job

point because of the lack of adequate junior secondary schools resulting in many children not being able to continue education and leading to unemployment. But as one wit commented, "Why educate our children when the economy is not growing and no new jobs are being created; we will only end up with well-educated, unemployed youths".

But Solomon Islanders are not known to vote along party lines or on issues. They tend to vote for personalities rather than what they stand for. Most people in Honiara knew who they would be voting for. However a good number of these people were unsure what party their choice belonged to and only a very small number had any idea what policies the various parties had. It will be at least 20 years before the majority of the population votes on issues or for a party concept. This is because the concept of Western-style democracy where one is swayed by campaign promises is not how they operate. You will get their vote if they know you or if you have done something to assist them, their village or their community.

So the ballot boxes are set to tell their story this month, against a back-drop of a discontented people — people who no longer want empty promises but action and a future for their children.

The major issues

ALTHOUGH many problems plague the Solomon Islands, the two issues that are of prime importance for this election are the economy and education.

The people will look to the new government to kick start the country's deteriorating economy — something the previous government has failed to do. They want to see physical evidence - more investment and more jobs.

The country's education system has come under much criticism because it is unable to meet the needs of the country's growing population leaving many children unable to complete their education. Even the building of five new junior secondary schools has failed to address the problem. This inevitably leads to children having to leave school early and face unemployment.

The new government will also face a shortage of doctors and a disgruntled medical profession. The problems in the medical sector began in August last year when the country's 26 government doctors resigned. This left the 500-bed Central Hospital with only

two expatriate doctors and reduced services. Emergency cases had to be handled by nurses.

The doctor resignation was over dissatisfaction with their terms and conditions. The Solomon Islands Medical Association and the government are still locked in a legal battle.

The spill-over effect of the Bougainville conflict that has strained relations with Papua New Guinea is another headache the new government will inherit. Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni has commendably been the only regional leader willing to speak out on the issue. This has resulted in harsh words from PNG.

The new administration will have to decide what stand it is going to take on the issue of the troubled island. If it continues attacking PNG, ties with that country will most likely be severed.

Cleaning up the government image following corruption in certain government circles and the criticism of the eight-per-cent sales tax are just two more problems waiting for the new government.

A chapter ends

By Wally Hiambohn

THE two names sound alike — Somare and Sir Maori. In 1975 one became the first prime minister and the other his deputy as they led Papua New Guinea into independence on September 16. Since then the names of Sir Michael Somare and Sir Albert Maori Kiki have remained synonymous with PNG politics.

They were both co-founders of the "Bully Beef Club" which was the beginning of the now well established Pangu Pati — the party which fought for and achieved PNG's independence from Australia and has continued to be a major force in the country's politics for the last 17 years. (Pangu stands for Papua New Guinea United.)

In March this year, quite by coincidence, the two men — Sir Michael and Sir Maori — suddenly ended their long attachment with Pangu Pati. Sir Michael, 57, resigned from the party after 27 years of loyal service, and Sir Maori, 61, passed away at his Port Moresby home. The two incidents took place only days apart — March 10 and March 13 respectively — ending a chapter in Pangu Pati and PNG history.

Somare resigned because of his backroom political squabbles which made him a "foreigner" in the party. His departure came as a surprise, or as party members put it, "a shock" to many. After handing over the Opposition and Pangu Pati leadership to Jack Genia as had been planned and agreed upon about eight months ago, he announced his resignation from the party.

The party caucus had never discussed, let alone agreed to Somare leaving the Pangu Pati; it had only agreed to the change in party leadership. Announcing his resignation, he discarded a prepared statement and came up with his own.

Michael Thomas Somare, the Chief and Father of the Nation, as he is known, said: "I am leaving Pangu Pati with a heavy heart. Pangu Pati today is not the party that I have known for the last 26 years. Although I would like to remain as an ordinary member of Pangu, I feel that the party has become foreign to me, as illustrated by incidents which have occurred in the last few days. I therefore, with regret, leave the party."

Jack Genia, then Somare's successor of only a few hours, said, "We were all surprised by his announcement. Obvi-

ously he has his reasons for doing what he did. No one can stand in his way. It was his decision and his alone. However, we in Pangu still consider him to be a part of the party. He will continue to be a guiding star to the party. Pangu is united. It is as strong as it ever was."

Genia, while expressing hope that Somare would return, said there was no danger of an exodus from the party, adding he would work on consolidating his leadership and maintaining Pangu's position.

Earlier in parliament Genia had said of Somare: "A great man, the first chief minister, later foundation prime minister, the Father of the Nation, regional member of East Sepik and the leader of the largest surviving political party". He was an "inspiration to PNG politics".

Government spokesman Roy Yaki said, "It takes a great man to relinquish power voluntarily and no doubt Sir Michael Somare fits into this category."

The next day Somare's party unanimously rejected his resignation, but he had already made up his mind. He told *Post Courier* editor Oseah Philemon he did not want to remain and be bound by party politics but to play a role that was above parochial politics.

"I want to be free so that I can talk to leaders of various parties and offer advice whenever I feel necessary. I don't want to be bound by party policies on various issues."

"Some people in Pangu say my ideas are out of date and they want me out of the way. I get the feeling that young people don't want me around, therefore I feel I should isolate myself completely from the party. I don't want to be seen as overshadowing Jack Genia ... just because I am with Pangu, some people say I am the real power behind the party. It happened when Rabbie Namaliu was prime minister. Some people said I was running the party and making government decisions."

He said he now wanted to be left alone to concentrate on looking after his family welfare and that of his electorate, and would retire from politics in 1997.

Whether he will actually retire seems doubtful. He had spoken about retiring before but still remained in politics. Speculation already abounds that he may join the government ranks and one suggestion has been that he is being considered for the Foreign Affairs portfolio. Whatever Somare's next move, one thing seems quite certain — he is no

longer a contender for the country's top job.

... Sir Albert Maori Kiki close friends said died from a heart attack. He had previously suffered a stroke which had partially paralysed the left side of his body.

He had worked as a medical officer, laboratory technician, welfare officer and patrol officer before becoming involved in politics.

While furthering his education at the Administrative Staff College for a year in 1965, he, with Somare and Sir Joseph Nombri and other students studying political science, formed the Bully Beef Club. This was the group which became the seed bed where the ideas of home rule, self government and independence began to germinate and take root.

In 1967 Sir Maori Kiki together with Sir Joseph Nombri and Sir Cecil Abel drafted a submission calling for immediate home rule and presented it to the constitutional committee. In 1972 he was elected to parliament as a member of the third House of Assembly.

He was appointed Minister for Lands and Environment from 1972 to 1974 under self government when Somare was chief minister. He was later appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and Defence and then deputy prime minister.

He was awarded the knighthood in 1977 in recognition of his service to politics and the community.

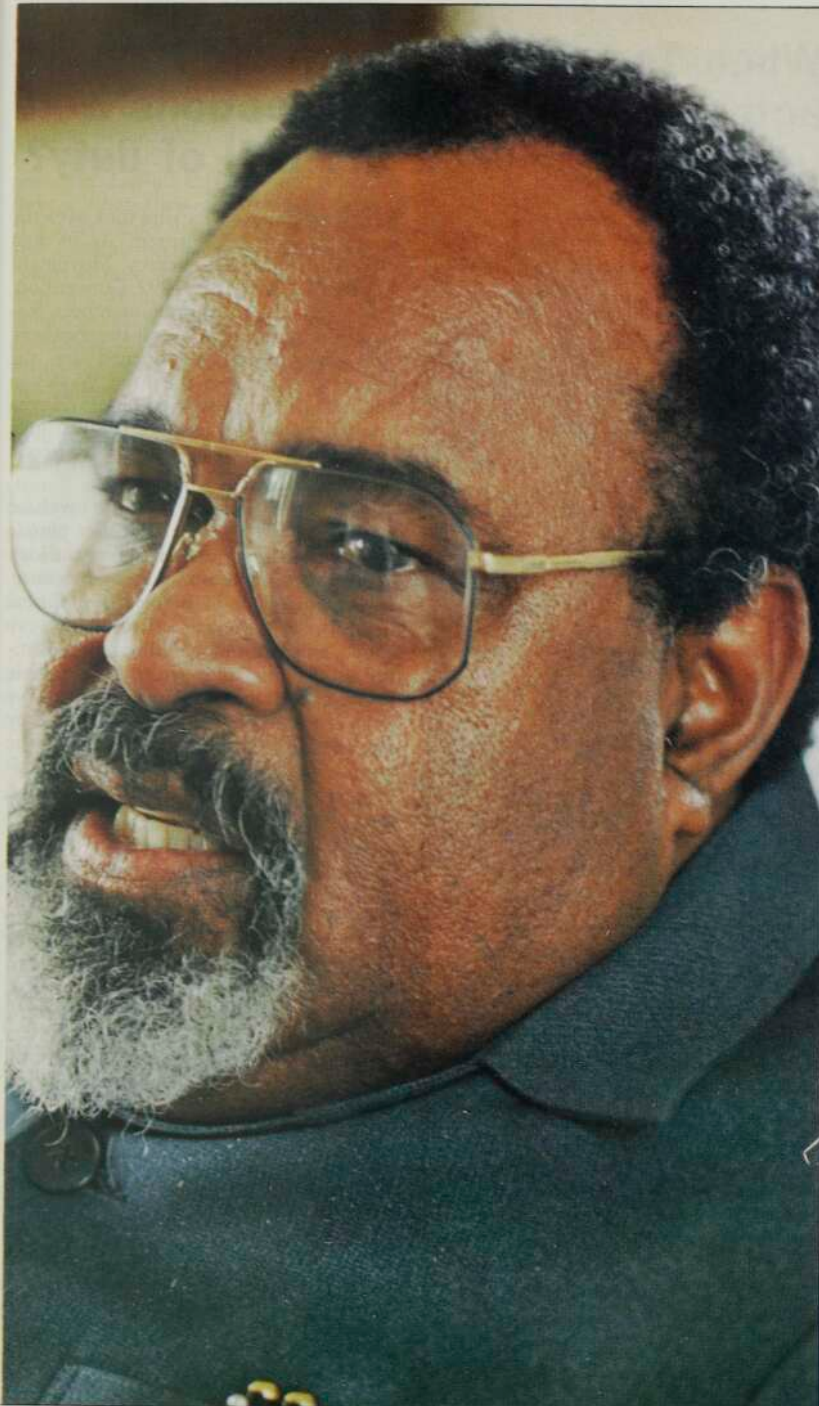
After his defeat in the 1977 elections he left politics and served in several private sector organisations, including Kwila Insurance and Credit Corporation (PNG) Ltd.

In his eulogy, Somare said, "He was seen by many Australians as a dangerous man, a disruption to the easy going pace of colonial life. To understand why he stirred so many, you have to understand the nature of those times."

"It is true that independence cost PNG no lives — a fact both Papua New Guinea and Australia can be grateful to for it has smoothed our subsequent relations. But it is not true that independence came without a struggle, without suspicion, without harsh words and without the total dedication of men like Sir Albert Maori Kiki."

Somare recalled that in 1964 at a local officers' salary tribunal he met this "vicious outspoken unionist". They teamed up with several others to later put together their thoughts and form PNG's first political party. □

for Pangu



Somare: "I don't want to be bound by party policies"

Asahi Live

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RELIGION

CHURCH and POLITICS

By Bill Morton

OVER the last six months two events have occurred in Tonga that will be remembered as shaping its future. In November 1992 the newly-formed Pro-Democracy Movement held its "Convention on the Constitution and Democracy". The convention embraced the concept of democracy and called for changes to the constitution. In February this year elections were held for the nine Peoples' Representatives to the 30-member Legislative Assembly. Election results reflected the call for change when six pro-democracy candidates were elected.

Firmly at the front of this call is one of Tonga's strongest social institutions — the Church. Key members of the country's two biggest churches, the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga and the Catholic Church have put their voices behind those of the politicians, academics and the people. Their support has added legitimacy to the politicians' cause and

When Tonga's churches took an active role in the last elections were they going beyond the call of duty?

given them an entry into the hearts and minds of the people. At the same time, it has attracted criticism and accusations that the church should stay out of politics.

One of the clearest signals of the Church's involvement in political developments came with the formation of the Pro-Democracy Movement in August, 1992. Church leaders were chosen for prime positions on its committee. Catholic priest Father Seluini Akau'ola became the movement's chairman. Fr Akau'ola is parish priest of the important Nuku'alofa parish. When he was out of the country early this year it was a member of the Free Wesleyan Church,

Reverend Simote Vea who took over the reigns as acting chairman. As its first project the Pro-Democracy Movement staged its November 1992 Convention. Past and present church members featured prominently amongst the speakers. The convention was opened by the former president of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Rev Amanaki Havea and closed by the head of the Catholic Church in Tonga, Bishop Patelesio Finau.

Bishop Finau says he became involved in the convention in order to let people know where he stands. "I believe the idea behind the convention was a just cause. It was an effort to better the political structure in Tonga. It dealt with very deep justice issues including the constitution needing changes to give people rights and dignity. I hope what I have done is a lesson to the people. When they see me there they realise 'this is the church' because I represent the church."

Bishop Finau also played a role in the recent elections in his capacity as editor of the widely read Catholic newspaper *Taumu'a Lelei*. He used his editorial column to make both pre and post-election comments. While unable to openly support particular candidates or political camps, his position was clear. Prior to the election he pointed out that, "We, the people, only choose nine representatives out of 30 members for a certain type of parliament." He went on to comment, "The majority who are politically powerless in Tonga ... are asking for a greater participation in the political process in the hope to put an end to the injustices committed against their human dignity and against their common possession." After the election he said, "The election gives a clear message from the majority of the people of Tonga to our King and government," adding that the result for the main island of Tongatapu was "a resounding vote for democracy and major changes".

Discussion of political issues has also appeared in the newspaper of the Free Wesleyan Church *Tohi Fanongonongo* of which Pro-Democracy Movement

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member Simote Vea is the editor.

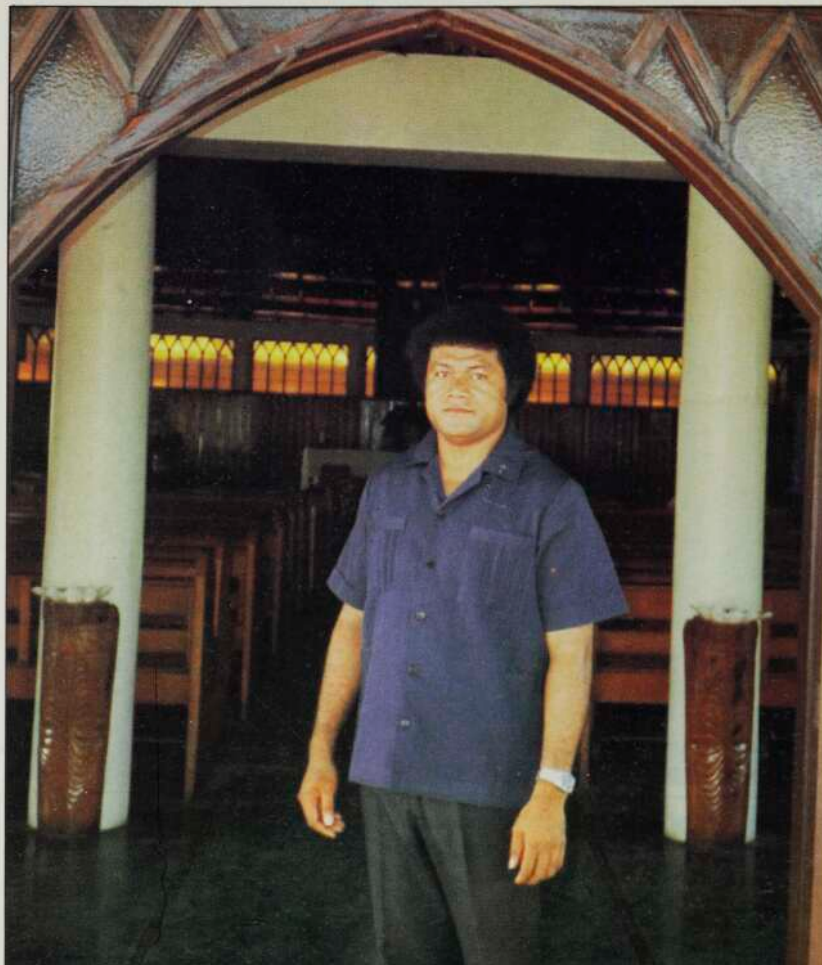
The presence of key church figures has attracted criticism from both within and without the church. The most common accusation is that church leaders have no role in the political arena and that the church should confine itself to spiritual and pastoral matters. This view appears to be held by Tonga's outspoken Police Minister, Hon Akau'ola (no relation to Fr Seluini Akau'ola) who is himself a lay preacher. Earlier this year he called on Bishop Finau through the letters section of *Taumu'a Lelei* to "refocus his considerable talents on pastoral duties" and exhorted him to "relinquish association with self centred, power hungry ambitious wolves". Simote Vea says his own discussion of democracy and change within the pages of *Tohi Fanongonongo* has also drawn strong criticism, especially from older people as well as from many areas of the church itself.

Finau dismissed the view that the church should confine itself to spiritual matters. "Religion should be relevant to people and the issue of the day. Our stand in the church is that we take part in things when it is a question of justice or rights... the Church has to be where the people are."

Seluini Akau'ola also uses the argument that the church becomes involved in politics on questions of justice to explain his own involvement.

Akau'ola says he also encounters criticism for his role in the Pro-Democracy Movement and that people tell him he should "stay out of politics". "But politics is to do with good judgement," he says. "It should be good decisions for the people to affect the whole people, the majority. Christianity is about the common good of all. So you cannot use politics as a front to hide what is not right and then say "do not talk politics". I am not talking about politics. I am talking about justice. In this case it has to be directed into the political arena."

Despite calls for the church to stay out of politics, it was the government itself which attempted to woo church leaders into forming a political party. Prior to the convention Prime Minister Baron Vaea called together Cabinet ministers and all Christian church leaders to discuss the formation of a "Christian Democratic Party". Bishop Finau says the government was also asking church leaders to find candidates for the 1993 election. "I couldn't believe it," he says. "The government had been accusing me of meddling in politics; now they were giving me and other churches a free hand. I think they were trying to manipulate the churches." Widely seen as an exercise in misjudgment, the



Bill Morton

Father Seluini Akau'ola: 'not politics, but justice'

meeting came to nothing. While the views of church members such as Finau, Akau'ola and Vea are clear, the Christian church in Tonga as a whole is not united in its support for change. The most notable exception is the fastest growing church in Tonga, the Mormon church. It did not participate in last year's convention and it has steered clear of any association with political matters. In particular the government has been able to point to the fact that the Tonga National Council of Churches also did not officially participate in the convention. This was because one of its four member churches (Catholic Church, Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, Anglican Church and Free Constitutional Church of Tonga) did not wish to do so. This excluded the council's attendance as a whole, despite its members attending as individuals. □



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FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA



A new nation

THE Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is a democratic constitutional federation of four states — Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap. It came into being as a distinct political entity in 1979 and became an independent nation on November 3, 1986. Under a Compact of Free Association with the United States, the FSM is responsible for its own internal and foreign affairs, while the US has been delegated the responsibility for defence.

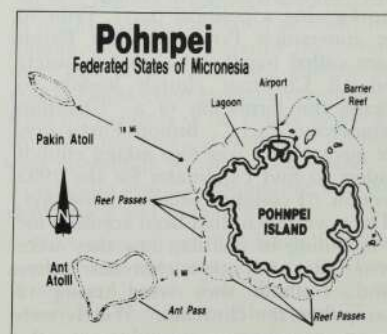
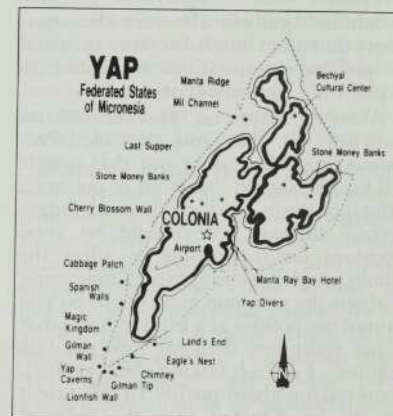
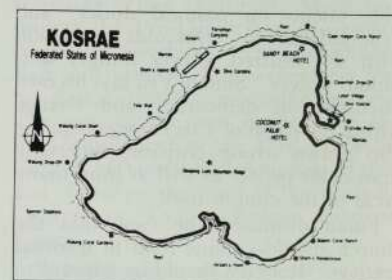
The FSM national government, which is based in Palikir, Pohnpei, and the state governments are divided into executive, legislative and judicial branches. The President and vice-President are elected by the FSM Congress from among its 14 senators, who are popularly elected to represent each state. Popularly elected governors head each state.

As a newly independent nation, the FSM is entering a period where it can consolidate the political gains made over the last two decades, develop self-reliance, and revive its people's pride in their ability to provide for themselves.

The population of FSM is estimated at around 100,500 with the growth rate exceeding three per cent per annum. But since the Compact was signed, outward migration of about two per cent occurs each year, effectively lowering the growth rate to one per cent.

The people of FSM are classified as Micronesians, although some inhabitants of Pohnpei are of Polynesian origin. The cultural diversity is typified by the existence of eight major indigenous languages. The cultural similarities are indicated by the importance of the traditional extended family and clan systems found on each island.

Each of the states has developed unique cultural characteristics. In Kosrae the Congregational Church plays an important role in everyday life, while in Chuuk clan relationships remain an important factor. Yap continues as the most traditional society in Micronesia with a strong caste system. And over the last decade Pohnpei has rapidly developed as the most westernised state in FSM.





Investing in the sea

THE economy of FSM is in many respects similar to the economies of other small Pacific islands. With the exception of deep sea fishing and opportunities for tourism development, there is a limited resource base, resulting in an imbalanced economy characterised by :

- a dominant public sector almost wholly dependent on US grants and other external aid sources for its operations;
- a heavy reliance on imports for all the country's food and other requirements, with limited off-setting exports; and
- limited development in the private sector activities outside retail and wholesale trade.

The external transactions of FSM is characterised foremost by a heavy and increasing reliance on imports, which include food, manufactured goods, machinery and vehicles and petroleum products. Exports consisting of agricultural and fisheries products have remained low. Tourism, however, has begun making an important contribution, although the growth of this industry is relatively slow. Overall, the value of exports (including tourism) is less than 10 per cent of the value of imports.

The ocean is undoubtedly FSM's most important resource. FSM's EEZ covers

2.6 million square kilometres of ocean and contain the world's most productive tuna fishing grounds. Tuna resources include both surface schooling and deep water species.

The Micronesian Maritime Authority (MMA) plays a major role in developing fisheries policies. In 1991 more than 400 vessels were licensed to fish within FSM's EEZ. More than 100 purse seiners were registered in that year and the annual catch (more than 155,000 tonnes) was worth more than US\$120 million.

The MMA continues to negotiate licensing arrangements that facilitate Distant Water Fishing Nations (DWFN) transshipment at FSM ports. Regular transshipments by Japanese and Taiwanese longliners have been carried out at Pohnpei, Yap and Chuuk. Transshipments by both countries and other flags are expected to increase substantially when airfreight problems are resolved and other facilities are put in place.

The FSM National Fisheries Corporation is the business arm of the government and was set up to commercially develop a tuna industry and to invest in the expansion and improvement of the FSM fishing industry.

The corporation, in conjunction with Yap and Chuuk have set up two new

companies, one in each state, which will be involved in the harvesting, processing and transshipment of fresh tuna.

In a joint venture with Pohnpei state and an Australian partner, NFC has created Caroline Fishing Company, which has acquired and is operating three small purse seiners. Future plans for the venture include the construction of cold storage facilities and a processing plant.

With funding assistance from the Asian Development Bank, the corporation plans to buy and operate six longline vessels to fish for **sashimi** grade tuna.

The National Marine Resources Division, which became operational in 1983 under the Department of Resources and Development, is responsible for providing technical information, training co-ordination, advisory services and support for development and management activities in marine resources including fisheries, aquaculture, coastal resource management and other marine products.

The Micronesia Maritime and Fisheries Academy in Yap was officially opened in February 1990. This privately operated institute is fully supported by the national and state governments. It will provide education and training in maritime and fisheries technologies, at college and high school levels. □

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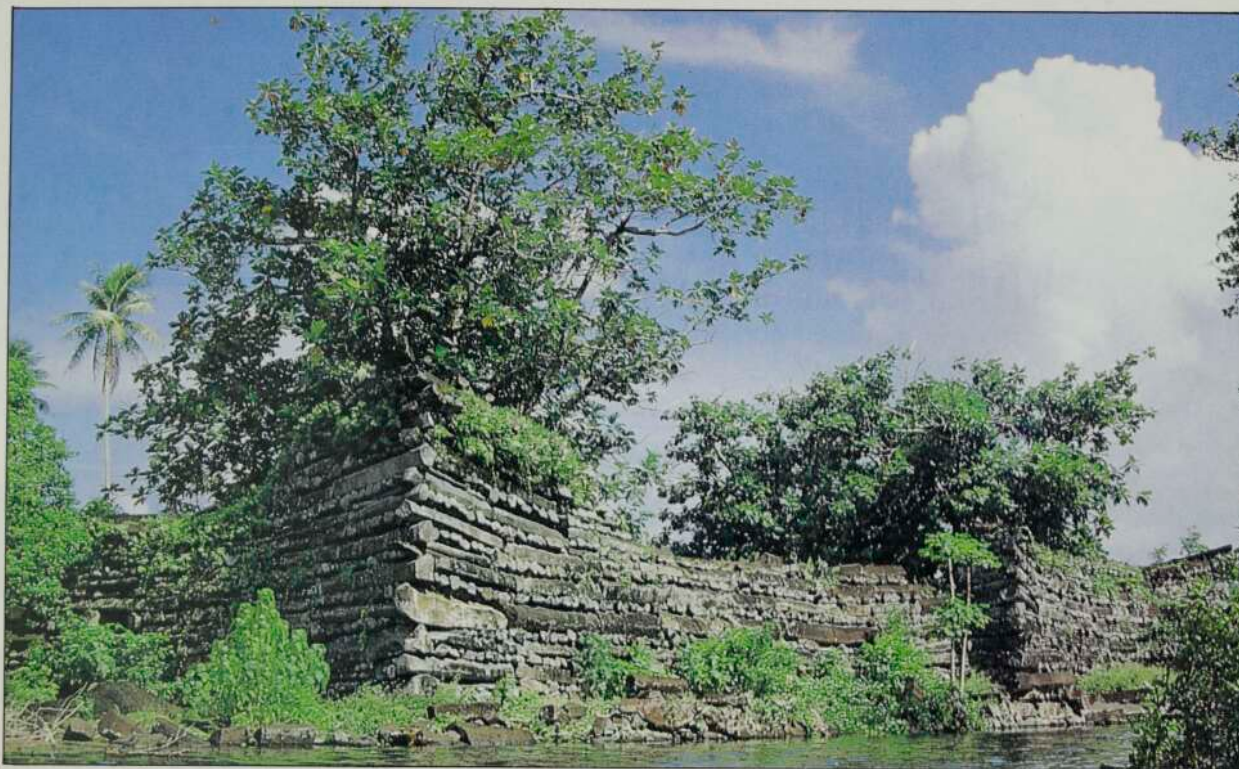
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The ruins of the ancient city of Nan Madol: Pohnpei's main attraction

A fascinating culture

THE cultural history and traditional practices of the Federated States of Micronesia dates back many centuries and is still fascinating today's generations who try to unravel the mysteries.

Yap is perhaps the most intriguing island, being a land steeped in ancient traditions, fascinating legends and peopled by one of the most distinctive cultures in the Pacific.

Yap is best known to banking and anthropology for one peculiarity — stone money. It is the only place on earth where huge stone disks were used as a traditional form of currency.

The legend of the stone money dates back an estimated 2000 years, when Yapese navigators sailed their outrigger canoes across hundreds of miles of open ocean exploring neighbouring islands. On Palau they discovered caves containing a sparkling light brown material known as crystalline calcite.

Using hand tools made of shells and sticks, these ancient mariners quarried and sculpted stone disks ranging from two to 12 feet in diameter. They loaded

these stones on their canoes and made the 250-mile return journey to Yap.

It was an excruciating effort — many canoes sank and many islanders were lost.

The value placed on a piece of stone money depends largely on the story connected with it. Each piece has its own legend and its value is related directly to the degree of difficulty in obtaining it.

The practice of quarrying stone money ceased at the turn of the century and the estimated 7000 pieces of stone money remaining in Yap are believed to be hundreds of years old.

At one time villagers could buy a piece of land or settle an old debt with a stone. Even today Yapese banks will make a cash loan to a village, accepting stone money as a collateral.

Stone money is not the only fascinating aspect of Yap. Of all the island groups in FSM, the Yapese have managed to retain the traditions, language and values of their ancestors.

The men, particularly in the outer districts, still wear the traditional loincloth (called a *thu*) and their bodies carry symbolic tattoos denoting manhood or skills as a navigator.

The Yapese language is unique and linguists have been unable to trace its origin to any other language in Micronesia. The traditional Yapese language is used on an everyday basis and particularly for legends and stories that have been handed down from generation to generation.

Another ancient attraction of FSM is the lost city of Nan Madol on Pohnpei — consisting of the stone ruins of a mysterious city built from 20-foot long stone logs. The ruins of more than 100 buildings are set at the edge of the barrier reef and accessed by an impressive network of boat canals. They are reached by boat at high tide.

The stone logs are of huge crystals of basaltic rock and had been used to construct temples, canals and walls of buildings.

□

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 **TOYOTA**

Widening our horizons

THE main purpose in setting up the Forum's office of the South Pacific Trade Commission in Sydney 14 years ago was to help island products penetrate the Australian market. The office concentrated its efforts on making Australian wholesalers and consumers aware of the variety of products available and getting them established in the market.

A lot of that early, and successful, work concentrated particularly on establishing foodstuffs of every kind, and finished clothing, mainly from Fiji.

In fact it was a surprise to Australians just what a great variety of island goods there was available for import, other than the old standbys of island crafts, with which they were already familiar from their various holiday trips in the Pacific.

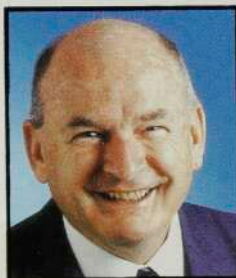
Of course not all the island goods available for export were of the quality and type that would find a ready sale in Australia, so this brought the commission into the business of product adaptation, where we suggested manufacturers make changes to their products as a result of what we learnt from market surveys, trials and importers' requirements. This, naturally enough, led to us encouraging the development of new products that would fill niches in the Australian market.

Thus inevitably the trade aims in the Sydney office have widened over the years as the horizons of island traders have widened and we ourselves have identified new opportunities for business. Even casual readers of this regular *PIM* column will know that we have been involved in finding opportunities for island trade in third countries, including Japan, the United States, Canada and Europe, and particularly in increasing trade between island countries. We also seek overseas equity partners for island business, so as to increase both capital and opportunities. All this has involved us in providing market information of all kinds — trade statistics, buyers' want lists, competitive prices, company details, credit references, etc — and we have had to build up computer programs to help us get it quickly and accurately. We've also been arranging business and trade training courses to further extend business opportunities in the islands.

Despite this great extension of our original aims, I'm very conscious of the fact that we can't afford to slacken our interest at the grass roots — that is, the trade that is available to the islands right on the doorstep, in Australia and New Zealand. Transport and communication links favour it; problems can be solved quickly and inexpensively and usually face-to-face; there are no language difficulties and our systems of government and doing business are similar.

Thus the commission's small staff still finds time to enhance island business opportunities in the Australian market place,

TRADEWINDS



**BILL
McCABE**

such as arranging island representation in trade fairs and introducing island businessmen to the right people in Australia. In fact, we find there are periods when we concentrate almost all our energies on building up this Australian relationship with the islands, such as in the past few months.

In last month's report, for instance, I told how the islands are beginning to benefit from the opening of a new doorway into Australia — the small port of Yamba, on the east coast between Sydney and Brisbane. It has been declared a port of first entry, and through it and the nearby city of Grafton, the islands are establishing direct links with Australian business that could bring abundant returns for everybody.

Business can be promoted much more efficiently, more cheaply and with greater speed than in the case of, say, a city the size of Sydney, and we've spent a lot of our time in helping it along.

This decentralisation of Australian trade away from the major cities is important and we can expect our trade opportunities to continue. In March for example, I was in the large NSW town of Cowra, on the Lachlan River west of Sydney, for part of Cowra's 10-day Festival of International Understanding.

The reason for my visit was that Cowra had chosen Western Samoa as its "guest nation" for the festival. The festivities were opened by Western Samoa's High Commissioner to Australia, Feesago Siaosi Fepulea'i, and were attended by a whole contingent of Western Samoans, including representatives of Aggie Grey's and Polynesian Airlines.

There was a Western Samoan Cultural, Trade and Tourism Exhibition and an art exhibition, and every school child in the district had spent weeks studying Samoa, and producing school projects and posters about the country. One day during the festival Dominic Fonoti and Peter Alefosio, from Aggie's, visited four schools to tell the youngsters about life in Samoa. Prizes at the festival included a trip for two to Western Samoa donated by Aggie's and Polynesian.

Festival co-ordinator was Keira Lockyer, formerly with Polynesian and well-known for her work in the islands, and now living in Cowra, where she and husband Graham run an up-market restaurant, the Ilfracombe.

The Trade Commission helped out, of course, in the trade display. Our philosophy is to cover all bases in South Seas trade matters, and not to neglect any opportunity. The islands must protect the trade it has already established on its doorstep and seek to expand it, while at the same time developing new opportunities in third countries.

□

EDUCATION

THE EDUCATION WAR

Big money is being spent as universities and colleges battle for students.

By Martin Tiffany

AUSTRALIAN Fosters larger and New Zealand lamb chops are familiar sights in South Pacific countries. As are countless other commodities from building materials to butter which are imported from these two countries. But another item, not listed in their rows of trade figures, is fast becoming a saleable item.

The hallowed institutions of education seem to be turning into just another commodity and into battle grounds as colleges and universities vie for students.

The situation in New Zealand can only be described as cut-throat. Polytechnic and universities in that country get government grants according to their student roll — the more the students; the larger the grant. The number of teachers too depends on the roll. There have been cases of institutions getting grants based on predicted student numbers, then failing to get the numbers and having to pay the grant back.

A fine example of the fierce competition is Massey University building a big new campus (in record time) in West Auckland to enable it to compete head-on with the University of Auckland.

Otago University recently spent big money on a marketing video as it adopted the hard-sell approach taken by many other institutions to woo students.

Marketing videos are nothing new in Australia and most of the country's 41 universities have one. As Bev Willatt, manager of the Australian Education Centre in Suva, commented, "We would probably have to sit here for a week to get through all the videos we have."

The whole university promotion situation is an advertising person's dream. There are videos to make, advertisements to create and brochures to design. And



Selling education: Suva's Australian Education Centre

as Willatt rightly said, "The quality gets better every year."

There are certainly more advertisements around — in newspapers, and magazines — trying to lure South Pacific students. And in Fiji, television is now being used to get the message across.

Australian and New Zealand education has for decades been important for Pacific students. And judging by the number of adverts aimed at the Pacific students, they are important to Australian and New Zealand education, too. Compared to the whole Australian student population the number of Pacific students is not significant, said Willatt. But they do come in sufficient numbers to help fill the universities and colleges which is what's important.

Willatt said each year a number of places in Australian institutions are set aside for Pacific students. New Zealand too accommodates many Pacific students. The two also cater for a fast growing number of Asian students. Asked if there were cases of overseas students taking the place of local students, Willatt said although it was difficult to determine year-to-year the demand for courses she did not think there was any problem.

Competition is most fierce as the institutions battle for their share of the overseas student market. Local students have a fair idea of the universities and colleges but students from abroad have

an open mind and will most likely make their choice based on the promotional material that is available.

The educational institutions in Australia and New Zealand get added promotional help for organisations specifically set up to promote their education opportunities.

The Australian Education Centre is part of the International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges. This organisation has offices throughout Asia while the Pacific is serviced through the Fiji and Australian offices. IDP is a private, non-profit company set-up by Australia's universities and colleges to "make available the teaching, consultancy, and research services of Australian education and training institutions to overseas countries, institutions and individuals".

New Zealand has the New Zealand Education International Ltd. The organisation is partly government funded and partly funded by educational institutions. It was established to "coordinate the promotion and marketing of quality educational services to international students, institutions, governments and international organisations".

Both unashamedly promote their countries and the quality of their education. The educational standards of the two countries is very high and their qualifications are recognised worldwide.

The competition can only make the quality better and in the end this will benefit the students. □



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Out with the old guard

THE winds of change are blowing through the South Pacific and they will require careful handling by the island states and a great deal of understanding by neighbouring countries like New Zealand and Australia.

The changes we are talking about involve people and pressures to modify constitutional systems the island nations inherited from their colonial past.

The old guard of island leaders who steered their countries into independence and oversaw their emergence as sovereign nations is passing. Men like Fiji's Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, Head Chief Hammer deRoburt, of Nauru and Niue's Sir Robert Rex, who dominated their nations and were in many ways fathers of Pacific independence for two decades, have gone.

Now Tofilau Eti Alesana, who became active in politics in 1957, long before any political parties were formed and five years before Western Samoa gained independence, has said he wants to quit when his Human Rights Protection Party decides on a successor.

As the old leaders depart, the appropriateness of their countries' systems of government and economic development to today's world is increasingly being questioned by a new generation of citizens and leaders.

This is hardly surprising. The island states, territories and dependencies in the region have a myriad of political and legal systems stemming from a variety of colonial influences that govern the lives of their people.

Three years ago, the New Zealand government's South Pacific Policy Review Group noted: "It is clear from all the change now abroad in island country region that political evolution in the Pacific, which had its beginnings before colonisation, did not stop at the time of independence.

"Most Pacific island countries have now lived with their constitutions for one or two decades. In many countries there is a wide perception that constitutional reform or adaptation is needed, even though there is not, in many cases, any consensus on the direction and form that reform should take."

The pace of change has increased since then. Western Samoa, for instance, introduced universal suffrage in 1991 (though members of the *Fono* must still be *matai*), Fiji has a new constitution under which elections were held last year and Nauru has abolished its local government council.

In Papua New Guinea, there is pressure to abandon the provincial government system which some see as costly, wasteful and an impediment to national development.

The Solomon Islands and Tuvalu, which both maintain the British Queen as Head of State, represented by governors-general, are talking increasingly about becoming republics.

Vanuatu, whose transition to independence was complicated by the existence of two colonial administrations and was less peaceful than most, has been considering for some time constitutional changes to provide for democratic participation different from the Westminster-style parliamentary model it inherited, and more in line with traditional

WELLINGTON



DAVID
BARBER

decision-making processes. The focus for change in recent years has been on Tonga, where there appears to have been something of a groundswell of public opinion in favour of political reform to reduce the power of the hereditary nobles and give commoners more say.

Crown Prince Tupouto'a, the heir to the throne, held out the prospect of reform recently in an interesting interview with *Matangi Tonga*. Asked about democracy, he said: "I think it is something that has to evolve eventually".

He indicated his willingness to see political parties established, saying: "If there were formal party structures, with manifestos, researchers, economic research, who could then put up a platform and say this is what we stand for...then that would be a more reliable heir to the power of the present King."

In other parts of the Pacific, including Guam, French Polynesia and New Caledonia, new constitutional arrangements with metropolitan powers are still evolving.

Closer to home, for New Zealand, Niue continues to debate constitutional reform. There is no better example of the pace of political change than here — having had two prime ministers in three months following the death of Sir Robert Rex, who was the island nation's leader for 18 years.

Change has even come to Tokelau, which remains formally administered by New Zealand. Last December it acquired a more formal and comprehensive measure of self-government, deciding to establish a Council of *Faipule* to act when the General *Fono* is not in session.

The *Faipule* selects one of their number to be the *Ulu o Tokelau*, or titular leader, for a rotational 12-month term, giving Tokelau's 1600 people a recognised leader of government for the first time.

More pressure for change in the region is inevitable. Economic development — slow but inevitable — better education, the emergence of a middle class as privatisation increases and the numbers of Pacific island people travelling and living overseas all provide democratising influences.

With the days of the old guard of leaders over, it will take time for a country like New Zealand to re-establish the easy familiarity that existed on a personal level and made relationships so comfortable.

The challenge for New Zealand is to encourage those influences, while not dictating their course or outcome.

Some New Zealanders, discomfited by the sight of Sitiveni Rabuka getting a military guard of honour when he visited Wellington and unhappy about Fiji's constitution, are impatient for change.

"The point is," counsels Prime Minister Jim Bolger, "the systems of democracy practised in the Pacific are somewhat of a variant of what's practised in New Zealand, Australia or Great Britain. I think we should understand that."

□

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AIR CALEDONIE
International

US presence remains

IN JANUARY/February this year, I was in a group of international visitors who toured the United States to study its changing role in world affairs.

It is an open-ended question and one which seems to have implications for just about every country or region of the world since the elevation of the US to the position of the world's only military superpower — thanks to events in the former Soviet Union.

Funded by the US Information Agency (USIA), the tour was an opportunity to get the feel for America's resolve to maintain a presence in the South Pacific.

This multi-regional program, with participants from Barbados, Egypt, Estonia, India, Kazakhstan, Kenya, South Korea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Nicaragua, Nigeria Paraguay, Solomon Islands (myself), South Africa and the West Bank covered some of America's foreign policy breeding grounds — educational institutions, think-tanks, lobbyists and so on, to discuss with academics, diplomats and others questions surrounding the changing role of the US in world affairs in the aftermath of the fall of communism.

The United States will maintain a presence in the South Pacific — that's the gospel from Washington, DC. Just exactly what this means is not precisely clear. But it appears the assurance is intended to allay fears that changing international landscape in Eastern Europe and elsewhere and the competing demands that accompany it could divert America's attention from the plight of island countries in the South Pacific.

Perhaps there is some merit to fears or rather the uncertainty over the US's resolve to protect its strategic interests in the South Pacific. For until the fall of communism, there was a school of thought that the South Pacific could become a battleground for superpower rivalry between the US and the former Soviet Union.

That, according to this school of thought, was a plus for Forum Island Countries. The threat of allowing the Soviet Union a foothold in the region could persuade the US to take greater interest in the Pacific.

Of course that threat, hence the island countries' strongest bargaining chip, has disappeared with the disintegration of the communist system. Essentially, it means that the United States is now the world's only military superpower. Such a position can be interpreted differently by different people.

Competing demands also mean that Washington has to reassess its position, weighing up strategic interests on a region by region basis.

According to one argument, competing demands for US attention could place Washington in a position where it can choose to ignore the plight of Forum Island Countries which dotted the vast expanse of water called the South Pacific.

Not so, says a State Department official.

"The US will continue to maintain a presence in the South Pacific," the official said.

Regular (military) ship visits are planned to friendly island countries. Former President George Bush's proposal for a US-Pacific Islands Joint Commercial Commission (JCC), while

THE FORUM



ALFRED SASAKO

not Forum project, was raised in general discussions.

According to the State Department official, since a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) on the proposal was signed last January, Washington expects Island Leaders to discuss the matter further at the next Forum Meeting in Nauru later this year.

It is perhaps worth noting the odds Forum Island Countries are up against in terms of seeking funding assistance either directly or indirectly from Washington. Continuing upheaval in the former Soviet Union, hence, the demise of communism poses a greater challenge of US

foreign policymakers and defence strategists, not to mention the strain this places on US foreign aid budget.

For until the trouble in the then Soviet Union began, it can be said with almost total certainty that US foreign policy and military planning revolved around one thing: the threat posed by the military build up in the USSR.

This is no longer the case.

In fact, today due to the changing international landscape in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, security challenges facing the US appear to be coming from just about every corner of the globe, posing a headache for US foreign policymakers, military strategists and analysts.

After years under the Republicans, American voters have decided on the Democrats to lead them, perhaps into the 21st century.

It was clear throughout the tour that foreign policy is not quite so high on President Bill Clinton's Administration's priorities.

Indeed, the new Administration has identified three areas in the order of priority: Economy, Reforming the US military and Humanitarian involvement.

With a \$4 trillion-plus deficit, President Clinton's first and foremost priority is fixing the US economy. Experts agree that if the American economy falters, so too will the underlying source of its international power.

The second priority is the downsizing of the US military to reflect the shifts in defense policies. This has begun and will continue for some time.

America's third priority, in pursuit of its foreign policy, is through humanitarian involvement.

Emphasis placed on the importance of the UN system during the tour appears to be signalling that all future US international involvement, either in peace-keeping or peace-making duties would be in concert with United Nations' resolutions. However, in the event that its national security interests are threatened, the US will be forced to act alone.

It seems from this policy shift that, financially, the US can no longer maintain its perceived role as the world's number one policeman. In other words, it is time every UN member starts paying for peace-keeping or peace-making duties provided by the US military through the UN system.

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FOCUS ON VANUATU

GOING NOWHERE

WHEN you walk down the main street of Vila it is hard to imagine Vanuatu still maintains what is called 'least developed country status'. To many in the development business it looks like a bit of joke. It remains like that until you get out to the outer island and then it is no joke. The French restaurants, five star hotels and duty free shops mask a rural economy that has not changed much over the last ten years of independence. Vanuatu like most of the Pacific is going nowhere and maintains a real growth rate that does not even keep up with population growth. Over the period 1983-90 the rate of growth of real GDP was 2.3 but over the same period population was increasing at approximately 2.8 per cent every year. As a result Vanuatu, like its two Melanesian neighbors has slipped backwards over the years with declining real GDP per capita. In the last three years however there has been a change in fortune with growth rates for 1988-1991 at approximately 4.3 per cent on average. What makes Vanuatu quite deceptive is if you stay in Vila you will never get the sense that it is just not growing — in the Solomons or Tonga or Western Samoa that powerful stench of no growth right there on main street.

The arithmetic of low real growth and high population growth have not put the squeeze on Vanuatu as it has increasingly PNG where the resulting impoverishment of the population has caused serious time problems. Vanuatu remains a haven for many ex-PNG expatriates who have moved to 'Melanesia without the violence'. How long Vanuatu will be able to remain so is a question of conjecture but still for the moment it is a place where there are no fears of walking down the street or sitting in bars and there appear as yet none of the hideous disparities between rich and hopelessly poor as exist in PNG.

Since independence Vanuatu has relied heavily upon three or four main sectors to be engines for growth. Traditionally the main source of revenue for the bulk of the population has been selling copra but the export of copra has declined in relative importance and has been supplanted by other exports. The main ones have been exports of cocoa, coffee and hides which have over the years following independence grown to over 80 per cent of Vanuatu's copra. Copra has decreased in importance from the point where it constituted some 70-80 per cent of exports to where it is less than 40 per cent of exports. In large part this has been a

Vanuatu's economy may be stable but for the moment it is not going anywhere.

result of the decline in copra prices over the years. The problems of Vanuatu copra has been seriously compounded by the fact it has over the years suffered from aflatoxin problems because of poor drying and storage. The result has been

principle source of money income and with declining commodity prices the principle reason for the failure of the rural population to be able to generate improved money incomes.

Copra has an utterly abysmal future in



Vila: masks a rural economy basically unchanged since independence

not only decreased demand for Vanuatu copra but all copra from other Melanesian countries which have suffered from the bad reputation that Vanuatu copra has gained from the aflatoxin problem.

What is particularly different about Vanuatu is the degree to which copra and other tree crops have developed into smallholder crops. Approximately 80 per cent of Vanuatu's copra production comes from smallholders rather than from plantations. For the average rural Ni-Vanuatu cutting copra remains his

Vanuatu and the rest of the Pacific. The World Bank projects that copra prices, which peaked in 1988 at some US\$390 per tonne will only rise very slowly and even by the year 2005 long term copra prices will still be lower than the real 1992 level and will be less than 80 per cent of the 1988 peak.

The future of copra, or more precisely its lack of a future has been predicted throughout the entire 1980s. In the early 1980's the cocoa planters used to say that the only future of coconuts was to act as shade tree for cocoa. In the mid-1980s



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Vanuatu
The Untouched Paradise

FOCUS ON VANUATU

many countries invested heavily in new cocoa plantings, these included countries such as Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and PNG in particular. To their misfortune so too did Indonesia and Malaysia which were responsible for the bulk of the world's increased production.

The situation that existed in the mid-1980s with cocoa prices in the vicinity of US\$3,000 per tonne have given way to much more depressed prices now with cocoa trading at a third to one quarter of its peak price. Those who planted cocoa in those heady years of the early 1980s are now looking to turn their plantations into hotels. The cocoa planters were right in one thing — the future of coconuts will be as a shade tree but for tourists, not for cocoa.

Cocoa has grown rapidly in Vanuatu over the last few years but in many outer islands there is simply no readily obvious substitute to cutting copra and it will remain of significance for years to come. Cocoa went into rapid decline as wage rates rose. In large measure as a result of the increase in wage rates many of the plantations shifted to beef production which was decidedly less labour intensive. Beef and hides have expanded enormously in the export market which for years had access to the very lucrative New Caledonian market. It has however been predominantly exported to the much less lucrative Japanese markets.

Despite the growth of exports, imports have grown far more rapidly. The trade deficit in Vanuatu is not only chronic but widening. This in itself is not a problem. In large measure the trade deficit in Vanuatu does not constitute as serious a problem as it does in other Pacific island countries because of the surplus the country has on its invisible accounts. This is caused by tourists arriving in the country annually. Tourism has grown in some 14 per cent of GDP in 1983 to 18 per cent in 1990 and is now the leading sector of the economy. While by international standards the numbers are small at some 40,000 arrivals in 1991 they constituted foreign exchange earnings that were worth twice as much as commodity exports. What this does

mean is even with tourism foreign exchange earnings the country is still not covering the import bill. Nevertheless tourism remains Vanuatu's one serious hope for sustained economic growth.

The foreign exchange is coming from somewhere if not just from commercial activities. Certainly by Melanesian standards Vanuatu is the most dependent country upon foreign cash grants of any country in the region. In 1988 some 21 per cent of the Vanuatu GDP came from cash grants which made it among the most aid dependent countries in the region but by Pacific standards the figure is quite modest when compared with the high aid dependent countries of Polynesia and Micronesia. This aid has been

economy remains the tax haven, which while miniscule by international standards is responsible for upwards of 15-20 per cent of GDP, depending upon whom one talks to. It is by far the country's most controversial sector and has had its fair share of press coverage which like most has not tended to be the most flattering. Nevertheless despite several difficulties caused by what was perceived as political instability in the mid-1980s the tax haven provides an important source of employment for locals.

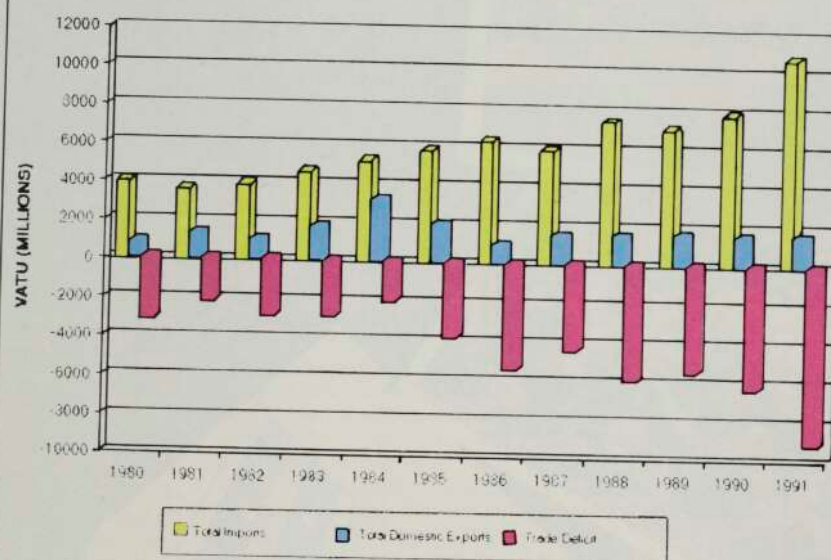
Exchange rates in Vanuatu have depreciated in real terms since independence when weighed against a basket of trading currencies but due to relatively high inflation in Vanuatu in the last year there has probably been a real appreciation of the vatu in the past year or two.

The government of Vanuatu itself is certainly large by regional standards with government expenditure constituting some 60 per cent of GDP which is even large by world standards but the government has been able to avoid debt problems by balancing its budget and funding development from its quite substantial aid flows. As a result the external debt to GDP stood at about 12

per cent in 1988, which is very low by international standards. There can be no doubt that Vanuatu would certainly be unable to sustain its trade imbalance and its large government without the generosity of foreign aid donors a fact common to almost the entire Pacific region but is frequently and conveniently forgotten by most Pacific island states.

In the end the economy of Vanuatu will depend crucially upon tourism as the agricultural sector is, like in so many other parts of the Pacific slowly being killed by the better opportunities in other sectors of the economy. Tourism will sustain high wages and a relatively high living standard for the increasingly urbanised Ni-Vanuatu population. The only question is whether Vanuatu society will be able to tolerate the social stresses created by the development of the tourism sector. □

EXPORTS, IMPORTS AND BALANCE OF TRADE



important in providing the nation with enough foreign exchange to meet the trade deficit. However, aid in Vanuatu has tended to be very expatriate and advisor intensive. These advisors would not be used if they were not provided *gratis* by the donor community and they tend to add substantially to the import bill.

Despite all these difficulties Vanuatu has an enviable foreign exchange position with the Reserve Bank of Vanuatu holding in foreign exchange reserves over six months import cover. Some of its neighbors such as Solomon Islands would surely view such a reserve position with envy. The position is the result of foreign exchange earnings of the tax haven and should it ever take fright then Vanuatu's Foreign exchange reserves would surely take flight with it.

One of the main sectors of the

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The advertisement is set against a dark, textured background of a jacket. A light-colored suitcase with 'GUADALCANAL SOLOMON ISLANDS' printed on it is in the upper left. Two vintage-style photographs are placed below the suitcase: one shows a tropical beach with palm trees and a person, the other shows a group of people in a tropical setting. A pair of dark sunglasses is on the right. Two airline tickets are in the foreground, both featuring the Solomon Islands flag and the text 'Solomon Airlines' and 'Solomon Islands National Airline'. The tickets also contain smaller text about baggage checks and conditions of the contract.

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FOCUS ON VANUATU

Vanuatu's Shining Star

Tourism is seen as the one real hope for the country's economy.

THE only truly shining star in the Vanuatu economy is tourism. It is here that despite its very high cost structure the country has something that is quite unique by comparison with other countries in the region. The asset is it is possible to visit traditional villages in safety and then return to a town such as Port Vila where services, while not quite up to five-star level everywhere, are as close as one can find in the Pacific. While Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea have probably just as much if not more diverse cultures, they both have disadvantages that make them difficult locations for tourism. PNG is simply not perceived to be safe and Solomon Islands has almost no tourism infrastructure. Further to the east in Fiji and Polynesia the vast bulk of what was traditional culture has been destroyed by the onslaught of Western culture.

In the mid-1980s the tourism sector did not appear so secure. The combination of political instability, cyclones and a fairly neutral government attitude combined to make tourism look as though it was going to go the same way as the tourism sector in PNG. Despite predictions of its imminent demise the tourism sector is growing from strength to strength and tourist arrivals have now reached their pre-independence levels. Even with six cyclones battering Vanuatu in 1992 the tourist arrivals appear to have shown no decline. The attitude of the government has changed perhaps out of necessity or perhaps out of the understanding that while tourism-led development may not be perfect, it is certainly preferable to no development at all. The government has begun to push tourism as a top priority sector and one any officials see as the one real hope the country has for sustained economic growth in the future.

In the last few years the rate of occupancy of hotels has increased drastically and the government is doing everything in its power to try to push new hotel developments. Within the industry it is widely accepted that at high season the hotels are generally operating at pretty close to full capacity and Air Vanuatu has made it perfectly clear the



Club Med 2: weekly trips from New Caledonia

principle constraint to the expansion of its operation is the fact that there are simply not enough hotel beds in Vila. At present the airline is leasing a 737-400 from Australian Airlines for three days a week. This flexible leasing arrangement is one of the things that has differentiated the airline from other carriers such as Solomon Airlines, whose committee to full lease arrangement and low capacity utilisation has created severe financial difficulties for the firm. Air Vanuatu used to own a 727-200 but has switched to a lease arrangement to take advantage of the advanced technology of the 737-400.

The airline is also planning some regional expansion. First it is planning to lease a Bandeirante to fly to New Caledonia on the days that Air Caledonie does not. The small aeroplane has the advantage of flying directly to Magenta airport in Noumea rather than to Tontouta airport which is a 45-minute drive from town. However it is yet to be resolved that the French authorities allow the airline to operate to Magenta. While the Bandeirante is considerably slower than the jet service the shortened journey to town will make the two services of approximate equal duration. Air Vanuatu is also planning to purchase

a Dash-8 for the regional east-west service which will offer the airline the frequency that is needed in joining Vanuatu to Fiji as well as to other parts of Melanesia. The service could be of great importance depending upon what will eventually happen to the Solomon Airlines east-west service.

For a new airline and by regional standards Air Vanuatu has been remarkably successful. It has however received a great deal of government assistance. The Vanuatu government arranged a loan of 765 million vatu to assist it to purchase its B727. The airline also received a grant from the government of Australia of A\$6 million, of which A\$1 million was used to promote Vanuatu in Australia and New Zealand. In 1990 and 1991 the government injected a further 200 million vatu into the airline. The airline has shown remarkable growth of sales of 300 per cent from 1989 to 1991. The government of Vanuatu on its side has shown a willingness to back the airline and a realisation that if the tourism sector is to be the backbone of the economy then there will certainly be a need for further capital injections in future. It is fairly evident that if the industry will expand as it presently seems

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FOCUS ON VANUATU

quite likely to do, the level of government injection into Air Vanuatu and the tourism sector in general is set to increase.

The peculiarity of the tourism sector is the fact that while all over the world it has been in decline throughout the present recession, the sector has been booming in Vanuatu. In large part this has been because the sector was recovering from its near fatal decline in the mid-1980s but also because by world standards the industry is relatively small. Yet despite the high levels of hotel occupancy rates some hotels have been doing better than others. In the last year the Radisson Royal Palms resort and casino in Port Vila went into receivership.

Why did a hotel with the only casino in town go into receivership? It is widely rumored in Port Vila the hotel was bought by its present owners for \$3.5 million and the new owner injected some US\$8 million into the renovations of what was one of Vanuatu's fine hotels. However the project became overly burdened with debt. Westpac is believed to hold some \$3.5 million of the debt and there is a second mortgage on the property of some \$1.5 million which is held outside Vanuatu. The real danger is that of the total \$8 million debt of the hotel some \$2.8 million is unsecured debt held against local contractors involved in the hotel's renovations and the government is deeply concerned that should the hotel be sold at below US\$10 million, the effect on unsecured creditors would send major ripples through the small Vanuatu economy. According to normally well informed sources the government has made it perfectly clear that it will not permit the sale of the hotel at a price of less than 1 billion vatu or US\$8.5 million.

The government is desperately looking round for new hotel developments. The most likely appears to be a huge US\$30 million proposed project by Club Med which is currently negotiating with the government for necessary concessions in order to make the project viable. According to local Med representative Moana Cassart the company will be looking for

a major expansion of the routing of Air Vanuatu so that it flies to Tokyo which the huge company views as the major new market for its product in the region. When asked why the company could not fly Japanese tourists in through Nadi, Cassart replied Japanese tourists take very short holidays and they want to fly in directly and certainly do not want to transfer. The company will also be looking for a major upgrade of Bawer Field airport so it will be able to take 747 aircraft or at least 767. In the case of the former it would cost some US\$70-80 million. However if Club Med is willing to accept a 767 upgrade of the airport then Air Vanuatu estimates that the upgrade can be done for around US\$2 million. That is not all. Cassart also indicated Japanese tourist would also expect an up-grade of the Vila hospital to standards closer to those with which

including three islands located just off the main island of Efate.

In the meantime Club Med's ship *Club Med 2* is presently sailing into Vila harbor from New Caledonia on a weekly basis. However, because Club Med is so effective in capturing a substantial portion of tourists spending by including the cost of food in the price of the cruise from New Caledonia there has been what many proprietors and shop owners see as little direct benefit to them from the arrival of *Club Med 2*. According to Cassart, "It depends upon who you talk to because we ferry the people right into the centre of town from the boat, they don't need taxis and so the taxi drivers complain. In part the complaint of the shopkeepers about *Club Med 2* comes from the fact that the type of clients that Club Med attracts would not normally buy the sort of products that are available in most of the duty free shops in Port Vila."

There are other major developments occurring in the tourism sector in Vanuatu. The Iririki Island Resort located in Vila harbor is undergoing a major expansion and face lift to accommodation with a minimum expected increase of 30 bungalows to as many as 50. It is expected there will be some actual contraction in the number

of rooms at Le Lagon. According to Le Lagon general manager Lloyd Daser. The hotel is effectively on hold for all intents and purposes. The hotel is going to reduce the number of rooms and get rid of some of its smaller down market accommodation. Other hotels such as the Windsor are also planning a major expansion with 53 extra rooms planned.

While the government is actively encouraging the development of tourism there has to be serious questions asked about how many tourists the country should aim for without destroyed its authenticity and charm. What is clear is most policy makers in Vanuatu do not think the country has reached that point yet nor is it anywhere near the point where the Ni-Vanuatu will stop smiling. □



Air Vanuatu: planning regional expansion

they are familiar.

When asked why the government should invest so much money in order to assure the viability of the Club Med project, Cassart replied, "We are a very progressive company—we were the first in Bali and Phuket and look what happened there." That is precisely the risk as well as the return of the expansion of Club Med into Vanuatu. It will almost certainly result in other major hotel chains taking a good long look at Vanuatu as a possible sight for investment. This is why the government is so keen to see the 300-bed hotel complex go ahead. The government has done everything possible to facilitate the project and there is every indication the facility will be completed by 1996. The company has purchased some 200 hectares of land

FOCUS ON VANUATU

Two timing Vanuatu

Pacific time is notorious — but it is consistent — consistently late. Vanuatu time is consistently confused. In the last few months the new government of Vanuatu has finally abolished the Summer Time Act which introduced daylight saving and brought to an end months of utter confusion in Port Vila. Normally Vanuatu used to introduce daylight saving at the beginning of October and it would continue throughout the southern summer months. The government of Fiji is also considering the introduction of summer time and the lessons from Vanuatu may be worth considering. In developing countries the concept of daylight saving is problematic especially in urban areas where a large portion of the population living on the edge of town have no electricity. Daylight saving meant many workers who would have to be at work in Vanuatu at 7.30am every day would have to wake up in the dark in order to be able to arrive to work on time.

In the tightly censored press in Vanuatu this was one of the few complaints that the government run newspapers were permitted to print. As a result, the new government decided to abolish the Summer Time Act. However, according to government sources there was insufficient time for parliament to pass legislation at the beginning of the summer time period in 1992. As a result the government announced its intention to repeal the act at

the earliest possible moment but nevertheless changed the clocks in late 1992. The trouble occurred when the government changed the clocks but in order to demonstrate its seriousness about the repealing the act it allowed the public servants to stay on the old time. The pandemonium that followed was something that brought back memories of the many similar absurdities of the colonial condominium when Vanuatu had two colonial governments.

All hell broke loose in October 1992. Government began at 8.30 and continued to 12.30 for the lunch break. The private sector which moved on to summer time began at 7.30 and finished at 11.30. Memos flew left, right and centre trying to explain to confused government employees what was going on and what time it really was. Parents with one child in government school and another in private school were late for work. At the docks at Port Vila you either had customs officers with no customs agents or vice versa. After three months of chaos the government finally repealed the summer time Act and Vanuatu has now happily returned to Pacific Time. □

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From: _____

Re: _____

Subject: TIME CHANGE

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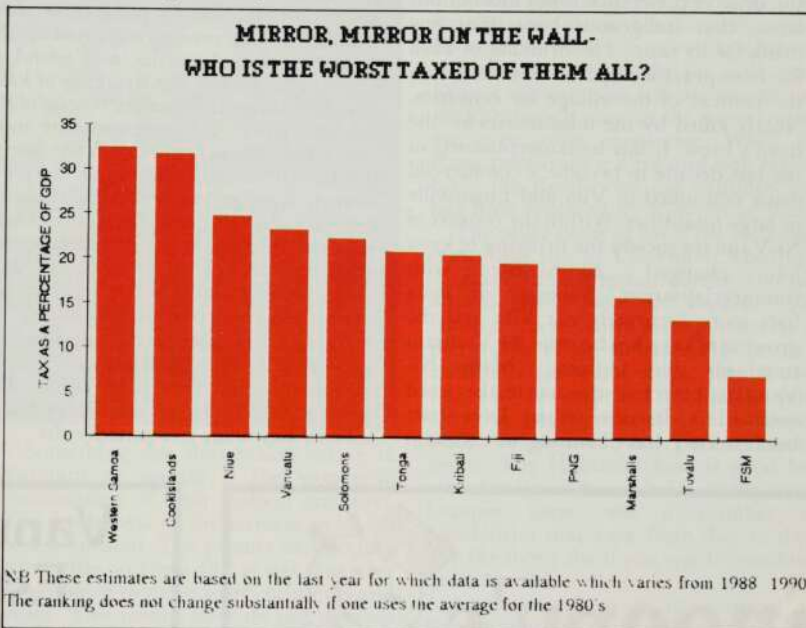
TAX PARADISE?

WHEN one thinks of Vanuatu the first thing one thinks of in terms of its economy is its absence of direct taxes and its tax haven. There are presently five tax havens in Pacific Island Countries. Western Samoa, Cook Islands and Nauru all maintain active tax havens. However, what makes Vanuatu exceptional is it is one of the few tax havens where not only international companies but local companies pay no company taxes.

Not only do firms pay no company tax there are virtually no other direct taxes in the country. No income tax, no death duties, no capital gains tax. Tax paradise? Not really. What the government does not take in direct taxes it has traditionally taken in the form of import duties and business licence fees which are increasingly becoming a form of sales tax. So what the government does not take in direct tax it takes in indirect taxes.

The real question that arises in the minds of many is when will the government eventually abandon its current policy of no direct tax? The government has already started to edge in that direction. The gaining tax on the Radisson casino is actually based on net earnings and the rent tax was as close to a progressive tax as you can possibly get without introducing one. So will the government of Vanuatu introduce income tax? In the words of the Minister of Finance Willy Jimmy before parliament when he presented the 1993 budget ... "I have no intention of introducing income tax in the short-term. In the meantime we will continue the current policy of pursuing less fundamental sources of diversification in the tax base." In loose translation from bureaucratised this means "Not tonight Josephine but soon." Then how soon? The accountants in Port Vila have made no secret of the fact that the government of Vanuatu has been under increasing pressure from both the IMF and the Asian Development Bank to abandon the current policy of no direct taxes. Such a change is fundamental and no finance minister who likes his job is likely to voluntarily go before the council of ministers (cabinet) with such a proposal unless he is confronted with a financial crisis. As yet there is no such crisis and when such a crisis does come about as it invariably will there can be no doubt that the IMF and the Asian Development Bank will be there to assure

The real question that arises is when will the government abandon its current policy of no direct tax?



the change in taxation policy. To those accustomed to IMF structural adjustment policy this desire of the major multilateral agencies to impose direct taxes on Vanuatu may have something of a strange ring. What however must be understood is that because of the absence of income tax Vanuatu has some of the highest rates of import duty in the region. Moreover the absence of direct taxes has meant the only tax lever that the government has to effect policy of firms operating in Vanuatu is the remittance of import duties which it has used fairly liberally over the years. The very high rates of import duty have led to very high prices for consumer goods in Vanuatu and hence a broadening of the tax base is seen as a possible way to alleviate pressure on the price structure.

Vanuatu also has a system of export taxes which continues to be of significance as a source of revenue raising. Such export taxes have frequently been the subject of attack by some of the major international donors and banks because they act as a disincentive to exports. In a country with as chronic a trade deficit

as Vanuatu any further disincentive to exports seems counterproductive.

There is persistent rumour that the government is likely to introduce a 10 per cent payroll tax while not introducing a tax on profits or dividends of companies, either local or foreign. The difficulty with this proposal in the words of one long time accountant is in the private sector they would simply adjust their affairs in such a way to pay themselves profits and no wages which would in effect render such a tax 'voluntary'.

Furthermore, to introduce income tax in the way it exists in other countries would necessitate the creation of a bureaucracy that few feel could be adequately staffed from the local Ni-Vanuatu accountants. As a result such a tax office would require a substantial foreign bureaucracy that the government may not be willing to countenance.

In the end however the ones most likely to pay any income or payroll tax will be the Ni-Vanuatu bureaucrats and politicians who would not be able to rearrange their affairs to avoid the tax.

□

FOCUS ON VANUATU

From kava to cordon bleu

PRE-DINNER drinks have an entirely different meaning in Vila. Increasingly for the local and expatriate population the drug of preference is not alcohol but kava, that indigenous brew that few drink for its taste. The drinking of kava has been practised by Ni-Vanuatu within the context of the village for centuries. Nearly killed by the missionaries as 'the devil's brew' it has metamorphasised in the last decade to become a commercial drink consumed in Vila and Luganville in large quantities. Within the context of Ni-Vanuatu society the drinking of kava has changed enormously with commercialisation. *Nakamals* or kava bars more accurately dot Vila and the growing of kava has become, by Vanuatu standards, big business. (Many Ni-Vanuatu object to the use of the word *nakamal* to describe urban kava bars because they have nothing in common

with the traditional kava house which is so steeped in Melanesian culture) The kava bars themselves are fascinating. The proliferation of these bars has provided an important meeting place after work but they are increasingly divided on the basis of political parties and island of origin. For women the drinking of kava has also changed. There are several of the *nakamals* where the educated elite meet and where women are perfectly free to drink. In some traditional societies women were prohibited from drinking kava or even being in the presence of men who are drinking kava. To some women drinking kava is a symbol of their liberation from some of the more restrictive strictures of traditional society.

At least three *nakamals* are worth a visit in Port Vila though there are 130 to choose from in Port Vila alone. The famous Red Light — the white man's *nakamal* has what is reputedly the



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strongest kava in the South Pacific. There are two others worthy of mention — the Firelight and Fabro. The backdrop at Firelight is simply exotic with ducks, pigs and chickens scurrying around the yard. Fabro is a beautiful spot with remarkable sunsets that only help that warm feeling of well-being associated with drinking kava.

The most striking feature of a *nakamal* is just how quiet it is. You can sit in a *nakamal* of big hulking men and hear very little except occasional spitting and conversation in very low subdued tones.

From Papeete to Port Moresby there are few restaurants where eating is a pleasure — most of the Pacific is a culinary wasteland occupied by third rate Chinese restaurants. Vila, one can gladly say is a veritable culinary oasis. The reasons are simple — it is one of the few countries that has not only a wealthy expatriate population but also a booming tourist industry that can afford to patronise restaurants. The real reason for Vila's excellent culinary pedigree stems from the French influence. In the words of one of English resident "Vanuatu is the one place in the Pacific where the French came, left their culture, left their food and then, thankfully, left." The French will tell you that in the other parts of the Pacific the English and their arrogates left their food and their culture and left-quickly before anyone put them on trial for crimes against the human palate.

Something else that makes eating in Vanuatu so special is the wonderful combination of fresh seafood and beef. The tenderness of the natural grass-fed beef is unusual. The pasture in Vanuatu is so fertile, so green and so wet that steer do not need to move to get nutrients and water. This means steer do not develop the tough muscle needed to survive in less pleasant climates. Few droughts mean steer do not suffer weight fluctuations. So even if you are not particularly sure where you are eating in Vanuatu the beef is usually a safe option.

At the top end of the market is the Rendez-vous restaurant. Without doubt the best restaurant in Vila. The food is exquisite. The view of Vila harbor is almost as good but if you are skinned its not for you. Dinner will cost you vatu 2,000 [\$US18] at a very minimum, if you choose from the special list a normal a la carte dinner for two without alcohol will cost around US\$80. I never regretted a meal or a penny spent there. The hostess, Hanna Biber is one of the most charming restaurateurs in the South Pacific.

Normally dinner at five star hotels simply leaves one cold — not so at Port Vila's Le Lagon where dinner at the Lafete Restaurant is truly a taste experience. It is also one of the few restaurants in Vila with a reasonable wine list where the options are not between the standard Australian house wine "Chateau Pissaire-1992" that immediately lacer-

ates the palate or a French table wine that leaves you wondering whether you should have taken a bank loan before dinner. After dinner at Lafete restaurant one can go next door to the Tam Tam which since the demise of the Radisson has become the only up-market disco in Vila.

At the middle level are two wonderful restaurants. The best and probably most famous is the Rossi which sits on the waterfront and is a popular luncheon place. The food at the Rossi is good and still well within the French tradition though the menu has over the years become more eclectic reflecting whatever the middle of the market will bear. Dinner without wine will run you around US\$20 though some of the main courses are even more reasonable. While the Rossi restaurant is alive and well regrettably the Rossi hotel has vanished and has been replaced by a shopping plaza.

The other place to eat is the Houstalet restaurant run by Claremont Martinez. A classic French restaurateur who will always greet you in French. The Houstalet is in many ways just barely in the middle of the market. The menu is essentially pizza but if you turn it over you will be surprised to find a quite tolerably good menu of quality French food, on par with any decent French bistro. The Houstalet food is good but ask what is recommended from the menu because there are a number of possibilities that vary from day to day. Try the flying fox if you want something quite special.

After several years of working in English pubs I managed to develop a visceral antipathy for what the English so boldly call their cuisine. The first time I went to Vila Chaumiere I was dragged kicking and screaming by English friends. It is nice to be wrong. Vila Chaumiere is unashamedly a British Pub but it has the distinction of having some of the best food that I have had in Vila — try the poulet fish — and is located on the lagoon with a view that is the most romantic in the South Seas.

The French are fond of saying that it is impossible to get a good meal in England after breakfast. One of the fine points about the Vila Chaumiere is the English brunch available on Sunday morning with some of the best eggs benedict in the South Pacific.

The opinions for where to eat in Vila are not endless but the variety will certainly justify a week in Vila. The nice thing about Vila is that you can go out into the villages and outer islands and can be sure there is something to look forward to when you return. From good Chinese and Vietnamese to at least four French restaurants it is one of the few places in the Pacific where dining is a pleasure. □



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FOCUS ON VANUATU

Capital value on property

THE heady days of the middle and late 1980s are well and truly over. Those were the days when legendary Japanese buyers would pick up properties in Port Vila for hundreds of thousands of dollars without even having seen them or without ever having visited Vanuatu. Worldwide, those who abandoned the stock market in 1987 after the crash for the supposed safety of bricks and mortar were bitterly disappointed after 1990. While Vanuatu has not entirely escaped the slaughter in real estate markets it certainly has not been as badly effected as other countries. There is always a certain up-market clientele who want to buy there and even though the Japanese are out of the market there are other, often Asian, buyers who are still buying.

Buying real estate in Vanuatu is not a simple matter and is complicated by the fact freehold land was abolished at independence in 1980 and replaced with 50-year leases. It is useful to note the measure had devastating effect on buyer confidence in the real estate market for the first half of the 1980s. The market did recover from the post-independence shock but it took almost five years. Now, in municipal areas, the lessor of all property is the government which acts on behalf of the people.

When you look for a property in Vanuatu certain costs have to be considered. You pay five per cent stamp duty and two per cent registration fee to government and the solicitor's costs of one per cent of the transaction cost. However, the buyer does not pay the agent's commission. There are on-going expenses as well. There are municipal taxes which in Vila run to about US\$220 per annum for a three-bedroom house. Because there is no freehold the same property would pay an annual property rent to the government of approximately \$US120.

If you are purchasing property outside the urban configurations of Vila and Luganville property acquisition gets more difficult, especially if no lease exists. Before you can obtain a lease you must first seek permission from the Minister of Natural Resources who will issue what is called a 'negotiator certificate' which allows you to negotiate with the customary landowners. This is to ensure no other parties are negotiating with landowners over the same land.

If you want to build in Port Vila or elsewhere you will have to acquire land which, especially around Vila harbour, is becoming more difficult to obtain and more expensive. The construction cost



Vila real estate: good returns are still possible

for an up-market property is about 80,000 (US\$700) vatu per square metre. A quality property on the first or second lagoon in Port Vila now costs about US\$200,000 and as much as US\$300,000, though cheaper properties are available.

As Vanuatu is a tax haven there are no capital gains tax nor any taxes on inheritance so a trust can hold the property without any tax implications.

What has actually happened to the value of properties? Vanuatu real estate was hit fairly hard by the effects of the global recession. Property values leveled out but, according to real estate agent Douglas Patterson, the number of sales declined but prices have tended to remain stable. While real estate values peaked in 1988, in Port Vila properties with water frontage along the harbour still continue to rise in price — according to Patterson, "by approximately 15 per cent per annum".

What can you expect as a gross return on a property if you buy in Vila? Some agents will tell you that the best you can expect is in the vicinity of 12 per cent gross return but others feel 15 per cent is still achievable on rental properties. In part the aid agencies and international banks which are the market leaders have tended to lower the amount they are willing to pay in rent for their staff in Port Vila. The Asian Development Bank which runs its regional program for the South Pacific in Vila used to give its staff a housing allowance of about \$2,200 per month but has now lowered it to around \$1,600 and this had the effect of capping

rents in the town.

The best returns on rental property in Vanuatu are not at the top end — in large part because the country does not have the very large diplomatic service needed to support this market segment. The best returns are gained on medium priced property. The very best rents that can be obtained in Vila are now in the vicinity US\$2,500 per month. This will give a poor rate of return on a US\$300,000 property. The rates of return are higher for slightly lower cost properties according to Patterson. But there is a trade off. At the top end the rents are not that good but the capital gains potential is higher.

On the commercial property market there is a definite shortage of street level properties in Vila and good rates of return in the vicinity of 12 per cent gross per annum are available. However because there is a surplus of property available above street level overall returns are not that good. Vila commercial real market has peculiarity. Normally you pay more rent for commercial property the higher up you go. It seems in Port Vila people do not want to walk up stairs and as a result rents actually decrease 10-15 per cent with every floor you go up.

Despite its oddities and peculiarities the Vila market still is yielding decent returns to judicious investors. The days when you could buy anything and make money are over. Good returns are still possible but investors must now be much more careful about where and what they buy. □

SPORTS

Sevens sensation



South China Morning Post

A dream come true: Anatelea Aiolupo hoists the coveted trophy

By Samisoni Kakaivalu

IT was dubbed the Battle of the Pacific, though on totally alien ground and hundreds of miles from home.

Victor Western Samoa, for so long the nearly-men at the Cathay Pacific HongkongBank Sevens in Hong Kong, heralded another milestone in their new rugby era with a no-booze, no-party tour law.

The Samoans, still smarting from their commendable performance in the 1991 World Cup, ended a three-year reign by Pacific neighbours Fiji at the Hong Kong government stadium on March 27 with a sweet 14-12 win.

It was their first Cup win at the 18-year-old sevens, regarded for long as the unofficial world rugby sevens championship.

It marked a total domination by the Pacific islanders on this abbreviated version of rugby.

- Fiji and Western Samoa met for the Cup finals, the first time two island countries of the South Pacific had done so.

- Tonga won the second-tier Plate competition for a record fifth time beating the enterprising Italians 38-28.

- Papua New Guinea were just pipped 17-14 by defending champions Romania for the third-tier Bowls, after leading 14-0 at halftime.

"Although the Fijians were beaten, the Cup remains in the South Pacific and it shows just how strong these South Pacific islanders are when it comes to sevens rugby," observed veteran radio commentator Bill McLaren.

Scotland sevens coach John Jefferey,

who spent some time with the Scots in Suva during the Fiji International Sevens last month, said the depth of rugby sevens know-how and skill among South Pacific islanders was tremendous.

"Spend some time with them and watch them play and you can see how far ahead they are in sevens," Jefferey said.

"Even Scotland, home of the sevens, will need a couple more years to catch up with Fiji, after what we saw at the Suva tournament."

The only other occasion the Samoans had reached the Hong Kong Sevens finals was in 1979 when they were beaten 39-3 by Australia.

After years of playing in the shadows of Fiji at the Hong Kong tournament, Manu Samoa struck gold.

They matched Fiji try for try but kicked both conversions while the defending champions managed to slot in



Falsele Serevi: Fiji's star

South China Morning Post

only one in an otherwise tense and uncompromising final.

The Samoans had marched into the final showdown buoyed by their 24-14 win over New Zealand in the semi-finals while Fiji accounted for the other giant, Australia, in the other qualifier.

The central figure during the short Samoan celebration after the finals was



Western Samoa and Fiji: in a tough final

South China Morning Post

undoubtedly "mum" Marina Schaafhausen, the team manageress.

She had been the strength behind the Western Samoan teams for the past five years, and boldly predicted a Samoan victory when they arrived in Hong Kong, fresh from winning the Canberra Sevens two weeks back.

Her no-nonsense disciplinarian attitude on the team had finally paid off.

When the team left Apia in early March for the Canberra Sevens, Hong Kong and the World Cup, she imposed no late-nights, parties, booze and sex during the tour.

The mother of nine treats team members like her own children — pocket money is rationed and the rules laid down to be rigidly adhered to.

She severely reprimands, and fines, anyone caught sneaking out for a quick beer or taking it easy at training.

She said after the after-match function, "We are very proud. To me it is a job well done, winning the most pres-

tigious sevens event in the world, and we are now looking ahead.

"Prayer helped us — a lot of people find it hard to believe.

"We prayed that we would go in and play good clean rugby. Winning is a bonus."

The 56-year-old half-German and half-Samoan does not want to play up her own part in the success story. She is publicity shy.

But she is very part of the Western Samoan game — the Schaafhausen house is the unofficial rugby social centre where players, officials and spectators all stop by for a chat and a drink.

"I grew up loving rugby and most other sports," she said.

"My dad loved rugby and I sort of followed him around. I play basketball, cricket, swim and ride horses as well.

"We have a lot of rugby clubs in Samoa and they are all supported well. Everyone will be very proud that we won the Hong Kong Sevens." □

SPORTS



YACHTING

Pacific gallivanter

By Sally Andrew

FOR the past decade, Walt and Bea Guerin have been gallivanting across the Pacific in *Galatea*, a 54 foot wishbone schooner, custom-built in California. Building *Galatea* was a labour of love which took Walt and Bea 13 years to complete.

Hull construction is of ferro cement and she is equipped with a depth sounder, two sat navs, a computer for receiving weatherfax, and an ICOM high frequency all-band transceiver. She can carry 500 gallons of diesel and 200 gallons of water. Her cabin roof is specially designed to collect water via a trough and hose which fits directly into a water tank. In a good rainfall, Walt can collect ten gallons of water in five minutes. Auxiliary power is an 80 Horsepower six cylinder Hercules diesel.

Walt and Bea started their voyage in June 1984 accompanied by a daughter, son-in-law and baby granddaughter. As a family they made several trips between California, Hawaii, and the Line Islands (Kiribati). Once they brought fabric to Fanning Island for a wedding dress which was sewn and then delivered (along with a dozen wedding guests) to Washington Island, 100 miles northwest of Fanning. After the wedding, Walt and Bea crowded no less than 21 I-Kiribati passengers on board *Galatea* for the trip back to Fanning Island. Despite the cramped conditions, Walt and Bea made some very good friends.

Fanning and Washington Islands are remote atolls with no regular air or shipping contact. When an emergency medical problem threatened the life of an I-Kiribati woman, Walt radio-ed for help via his ICOM high frequency transceiver. With the help of ham radio operators in Guam and Hawaii, Walt coordinated a rescue with the American Coast Guard and, in the interim, a medical consultation between the island medical assistant and US medical specialists. After considerable deliberation, the runway on Fanning Island, almost in ruins, was deemed long and smooth enough for the landing of a C130 aircraft. A plane took off from Hawaii and 1200 miles later took a pass over the airstrip. After a second pass, everybody on the ground was afraid the Coast Guard was going to abort their rescue. But after a third pass, the airplane landed. The anxious 'ground personnel' - Walt, Bea and nearly the entire village - breathed a collective sigh of relief.

After the young women's condition was stabilised, she was flown to Honolulu where she recovered.

South of the equator, *Galatea* stopped at Penrhyn in the northern Cook Islands. Shortly after arrival, an urgent radio call and some fast negotiations had *Galatea* back at sea sailing on a south-westerly course to Manihiki, nearly 400 kilometers from Penrhyn. Five Cook Island pearl fishers, a New Zealander and a Japanese pearl culturist were

stranded on Manihiki Island and needed to get their first crop of cultured pearls to Rarotonga in time for the pearl auction. Walt's biggest regret was they were unable to go ashore at Manihiki, reputed to be one of the Pacific's most beautiful atolls. There is no good anchorage at Manihiki and they were pressed for time. The impromptu charter had a successful ending — the pearl team was rescued off Manihiki Island and the pearls made it to market where they were



Galatea: under full sail

YACHTING



The crew: Uwe, Kanabure and Bea

Sally Andrew

sold for a few million dollars!

Galatea is not set up for conventional chartering, but has proved ideal for specialised expeditions where goods and people need to be transported to remote corners of the Pacific.

Two international groups of amateur radio operators have used *Galatea* to set up field ham radio communications at hard-to-reach locations.

An international ham expedition made up of two Canadians, an American, a Japanese, a Swede and two Finns sailed aboard *Galatea* to Conway Reef where they set up land-based radio equipment in the remote southwest waters of Fiji. These seven ham radio operators "DX'd" and talked to 47,000 people during seven days of operations —

i.e. each radio operator contacted over 950 people each day! A second expedition to isolated Banaba west of Kiribati included three ham radio operators — one from Finland, one from Sweden and one from Iceland. These three Scandinavians made over 35,000 contacts in two weeks.

For Walt and Bea, the best part of cruising has been meeting and sailing with so many diverse people and personalities. Initially Walt and Bea cruised as a three generation family, but these days they "pick up" crew as they travel around the Pacific. Most crew members have been gregarious and helpful, but not all have been perfect.

In Port Vila this season, *Galatea* arrived with three crew members: Tetra, a beautiful tall German girl who sailed

So, you want to go sailing?

ON a boat, crew are expected to help stand watch, steer, cook, change sails, pull up the anchor, scrape the bottom, clean the boat, share food costs. Navigational skills, blue water experience and/or knowledge of a few basic knots will make a person more useful as crew, but the bottom line is personality and attitude. Most skip-pers agree the ability to get along with others and a willingness to learn are more important than experience.

Between August and October, boats start moving out of the tropics and head south towards New Zealand or north to Hawaii. Check the yacht clubs in Tahiti, Pago Pago, Vava'u, Suva, Lautoka, Musket Cove, Port Vila and Noumea. In April and May, hundreds of yachts leave the ports of New Zealand and Australia northbound for a season in the tropics.

from Lautoka, Fiji to Port Vila, Vanuatu; Kanabure, a young I-Kiribati man that Walt and Bea befriended in Tarawa in 1991; and Uwe Petersen, an itinerant German. Kanabure has enjoyed sailing to new places but hates leaving new-found friends, especially girl friends. His crew mate, Petersen, found himself gazing at the cruising boats anchored in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, last year and started dreaming about sailing to the islands. Both guys agree that sailing on *Galatea* is a pretty special experience — "She's a beautiful boat, and Walt and Bea are like family."

Galatea has given many people a wonderful opportunity for adventure and experience. May she continue to ply the South Pacific!

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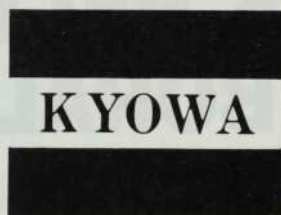
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Mitsubishi Motors and drivers who care—creating together.

The All New MITSUBISHI GALANT

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