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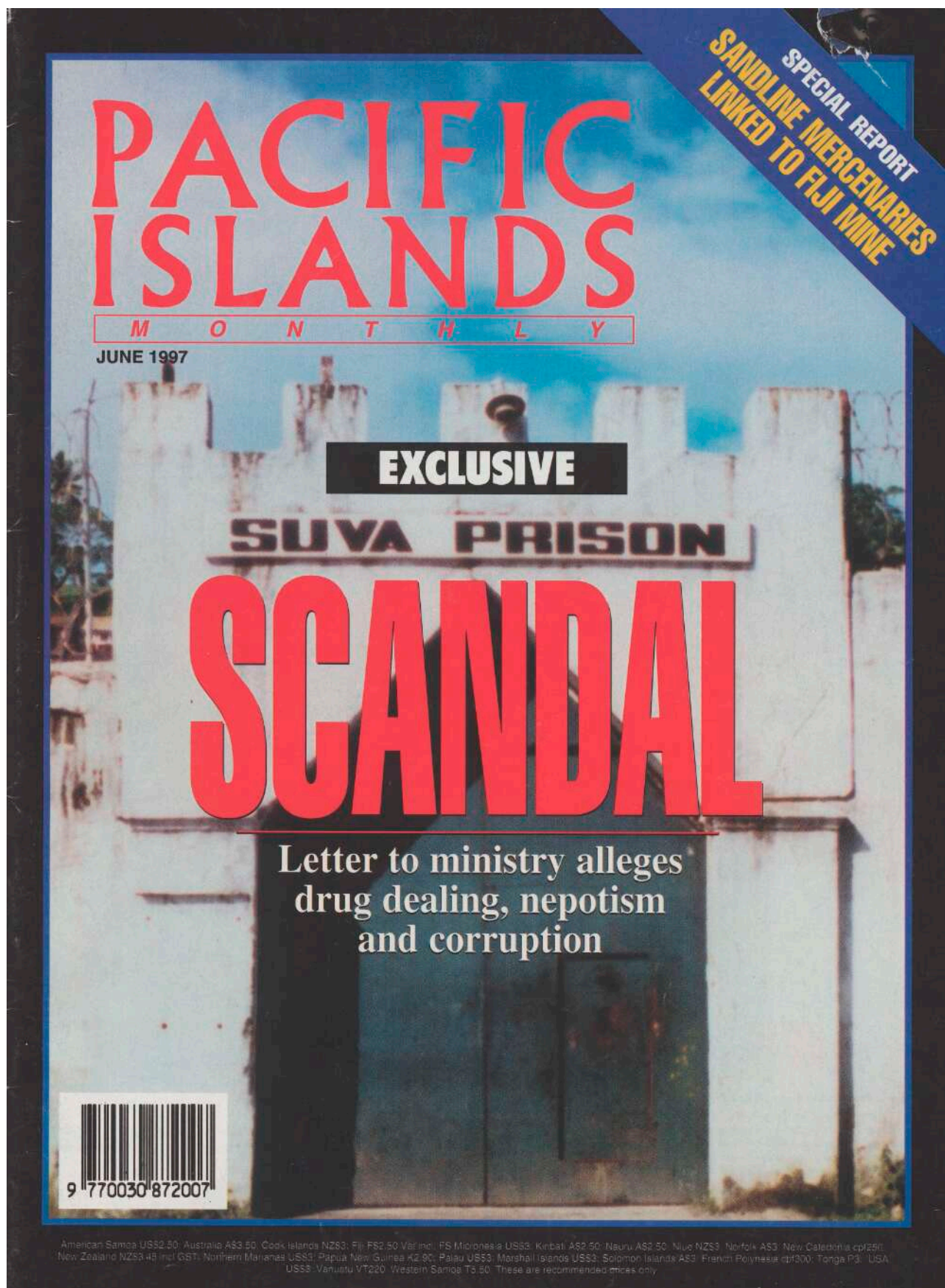
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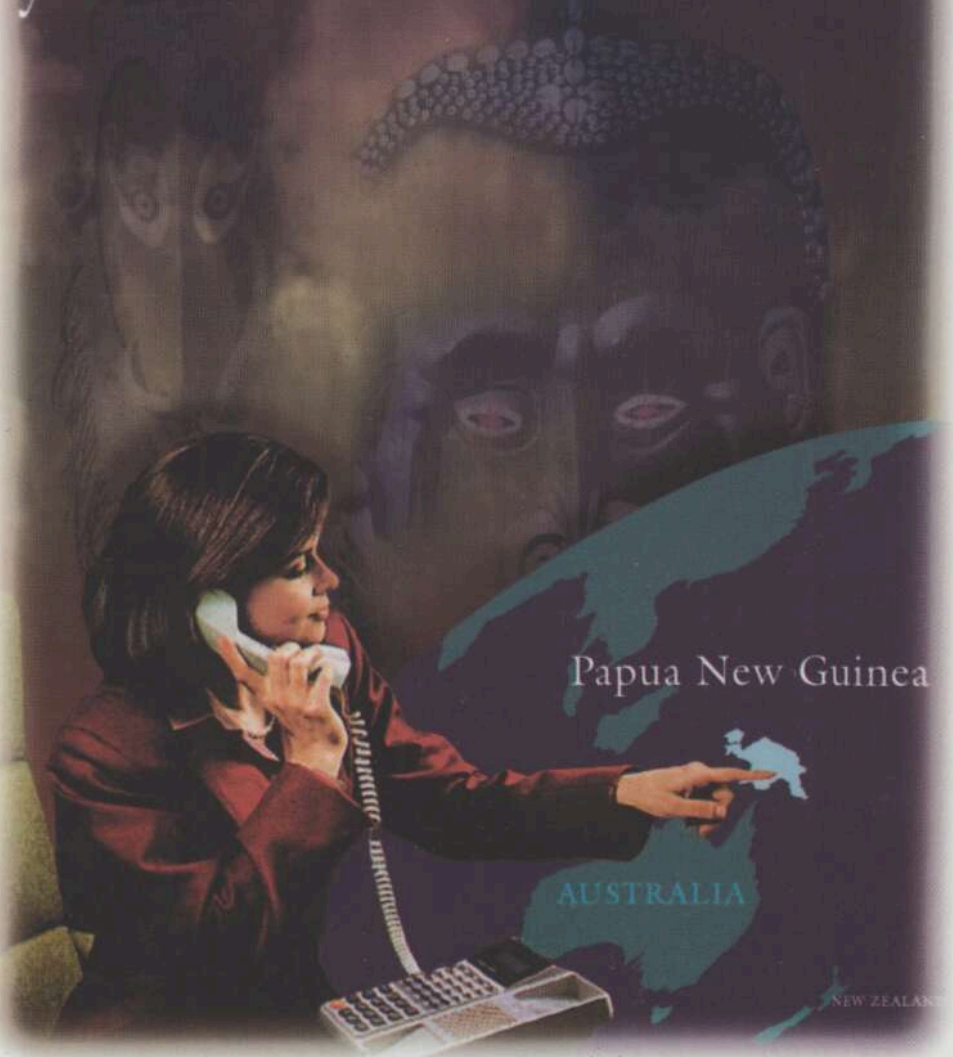
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PACIFIC ISLANDS MONTHLY	
VOL. 67 No. 06	JUNE 1997
THE NEWS MAGAZINE	
INSIDE	
Editorial	5
Letters to the Editor	6
Briefs	9
SPECIAL REPORT:	
Mercenaries and mining	11
Investigations into PNG's Sandline scandal find link with Fiji's Emperor Mines	
Mine ready to negotiate	13
Haiveta reveals PNG govt plans for takeover at Sandline inquiry	
COVER STORIES:	
Fiji's prison scandal	14
Investigations begin into allegations of drug dealing, nepotism and corruption	
Customs corruption	18
Inquiry begins into charges of bribery	
Scaring away the investors	19
The impact of Vanuatu's financial scam on offshore investment	
Caught napping	22
Govt bulldozes through with legislation on chief auditor's term	
Beyond 2000	25
Can the Saab carry Air Marshalls into the new century?	
Campaign cash for more independence	28
Creepies and crawlies	31
The problem of the Giant African Snail	
NZ's Island MPs' early impacts	34
Pressing for freedom	36
FSM editor faces deportation	
Western Samoa Independence feature	37
SPORTS:	
Beatrice to break another barrier?	44
Vidiri waits	46
Culture Review	49
The meeting point	
Music Review	51
The magic of Telek	
Book Review	53
Misfits, magic and mementoes	
Yachting	55
On our way to Poverty Bay	
OPINION:	
Simmering relations	57
Aussie foreign secretary visits the SPC	58
Layout and design by James Ranuku. Cover picture by Arin Chandra	



Cover Story: Fiji's prison scandal



Page 11



Page 49

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EDITORIAL

Nipping corruption in the bud

Three months ago, *Pacific Islands Monthly* highlighted allegations of violence, corruption and drug dealing at Papua New Guinea's Bomana jail ("Crime and Punishment" March, 1997).

Now, it appears that Suva Prison, in Fiji's capital, is in a similar situation — highlighted in a letter mysteriously sent to the permanent secretary for home affairs.

Fiji is, of course, no stranger to corruption; the National Bank of Fiji scandal is enough to put to rest any debate on that.

But allegations of prison corruption, which come fast on the heels of a commission of inquiry into fishy goings on in the Customs Department, cannot be taken lightly.

Certainly, it can be argued, corruption exists in every department, country and region in the world.

Fiji's commissioner of prisons, Aisea Taoka, states as much when he says nepotism is rife the country over.

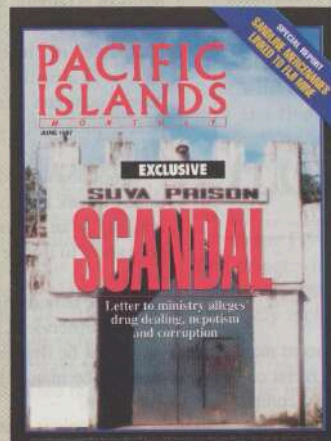
But, as Taoka also admits, this is no justification.

The Prisons Department is part of the nation's law and order system. And every effort must be made to ensure that the enforcers of law and order are above reproach. Else, what hope is there for a nation?

Just why are the region's people so susceptible to petty bribes? One senior customs officer admitted to taking a mere \$F5000.

Could it have anything to do with the generally low pay structure in the South Pacific?

According to one Customs officer, officers in Fiji are earning between \$F5000 and \$F8000 annually.



Fiji's permanent secretary for labour, Anare Jale, claims there may be reasons other than low wages behind civil servants accepting bribes, and points his finger at "greediness".

However, it cannot be disputed that there is more temptation to "greed" in a country where the levels of pay do not live up to the high costs of living.

A Senate Select Committee report on

Fiji's police force last year found that a number of police officers were on the poverty line.

A series of prison breakouts last year saw a huge public outcry in the country leading to the replacement of then commissioner of prisons, Apolosi Vosanibola, with Taoka.

This is not the first time that the country's Prisons Department has come into the spotlight of controversy.

Allegations of prison rape, highlighted last year, have still not been proven or disproven. True, an investigation was carried out.

But the last the public heard, files of the investigation were being shuffled between the office of the director of public prosecutions and the police.

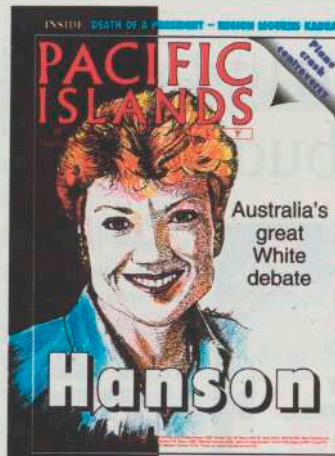
The file now sits with the police, the DPP's office says.

It is all very well to conduct one inquiry after another into allegations of shady dealings, which seem to be cropping up all over the country with alarming regularity.

However, it is equally important to take the necessary measures to "nip" corruption "in the bud", to use Taoka's own phrase. And, as the concerned letter writer says, "drastic actions are urgently needed". ■

• Cover stories on page 14

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Australia and racism

Dear Sir,
"Aboriginal elder" Rag Vincent may truly believe that Australia is "a racist country" (*PIM* March), but racism is a comparative term and it is hard to believe that Lili Tuwai or anyone who has spent time in both countries would genuinely consider Australia more racist than Fiji.

After having taught in universities in both countries I have to say, and take no pleasure in doing so, that racial resentments are rife in Fiji, whereas the overwhelming majority of Australians support equal treatment for all Australian citizens, irrespective of race or religion.

Australian political parties, whether right or left or centre, make determined efforts to give Aborigines the same opportunities and standards of life as the majority population.

It is not because of police brutality or lack of funding that life in Redfern is dangerous and unhealthy. If the problems there could be solved by throwing dollars at them, they would now be a fading memory.

Dr Geoffrey Partington
Adelaide, Australia

Australian hypocrisy

Dear Sir,
I write this article as an Australian citizen who continually looks on with horror at the foreign policy of my own country.

Australian foreign policy seems to be defined by two conditioned responses: a manipulative flaunting of Australia's relative economic power in comparison to the smaller Pacific nations; and Australia's subservience to its "powerful friends" who are either equal or superior to Australia in terms of economic and military power.

This type of policy renders Australia incapable of interacting with Pacific nations as a partner among equals who all have a common interest in negotiating the peace, prosperity and wellbeing of our region.

If not abandoned, this policy will continue to work against Australia's long-term integrity as an autonomous nation, and can only serve to isolate Australia from Pacific nations.

Pacific nations rightly refuse to be dealt with as subservient, minor regional powers who must be dependent on Australia, and who can be manipulated simply by money and might.

So myopic is Australian diplomacy, that it does not even realise how offensive its foreign policy assumptions are to Pacific nations. Yet, even to many of its own citizens, the most striking features of the Australian government's recent dealings with the Papua New Guinean government are the hypocrisy and offensiveness of Australian foreign policy.

First, hypocrisy. It seems that Australia was opposed to the PNG government's hiring of mercenaries on moral grounds. But has Australian foreign policy ever been concerned about countries in Asian and Pacific regions who are not doing what is moral?

The Australian government's near total lack of response to Indonesia's invasion, occupation and brutal subjugation of the East Timorese gives the lie to that one. And this is after the Timorese gave Australian troops costly succour against the Japanese during World War II. Australia is in debt to the Timorese, but has continually turned a deaf ear to their pleas for help and a blind eye to the blatant atrocities of the military junta of Indonesia against the East Timorese.

Ignoring all moral issues, ignoring all issues of political sovereignty, ignoring human rights, ignoring the vile murders of its own citizens at the hands of Indonesian troops, and ignoring its own obligations, the Australian government keeps its

silence. Australia must be very careful in saying anything about Indonesia's ruling military caste – they are very sensitive people, you know, they might get offended.

With similar moral incipience, the Australian government praises Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, yet refuses to take economic sanctions against the Burmese regime, as Suu Kyi recommends.

And then there is China. Australia turns a blind eye to Chinese atrocities in Tibet, and another blind eye to China's blatant military bullying of Taiwan. Australia constantly reminds the Chinese government that it's not going to moralise about them; all Australia wants is quiet trading with the charming Chinese dragon.

But why even turn to foreign policy – recent attempts to squash the much overdue Native Title rights of its own indigenous population demonstrates how unconcerned with issues of justice and morality Australia is.

Australia has no record of moral strength in matters of foreign policy. Yet, the Australian government seemed to object to the use of mercenaries in Bougainville on moralistic grounds. This is pathetic hypocrisy.

It seems that it is not right that the PNG government should hire external troops who will use missiles to rapidly and efficiently attain their military objectives – without regard for civilian casualties.

It seems that it is morally questionable that strong links exist between Sandline, multinational mining companies, and the vast untapped gold and copper reserves in that region which Sandline was required to secure.

It seems that it is not right that such a brutal mercenary approach to PNG's problems in Bougainville should "solve" those problems.

Whilst the Bougainville problem is far from simple, it seems evident that the hiring of mercenaries was a frustrated attempt by Sir Julius Chan to simply close the Bougainville issue; an attempt fraught with serious moral, political and military problems.

Jerry Singirok's refusal to be a party to the hire of mercenaries seems to have the ring of integrity. But, from the Australian perspective, what did Australia do to help solve the problem in the right way, and what credence does Australia have as a country committed to the moral path in the

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

first place? Moral statements can't just be made when it suits, one needs to earn the right to say them by a record of integrity – a record Australian foreign policy does not have.

Australian foreign policy was never defined by morality. It has always been defined by a morally spineless form of real politik self-interest, which reduces Australia's autonomy to zero.

Where the big boys go, Australia follows blindly. And Australia will tiptoe silently through a moral minefield not to offend Indonesia or the US or China.

Trade and security, secured by subservient alliances with the powerful, are everything to Australia. Courage, integrity and autonomy are nothing to Australia.

Australia seems to assume that the small regional powers of the Pacific have the same disregard for their own autonomy and the same moral incipience as Australia has. Such an assumption – and the financial threats that flow from it – are offensive to any self-respecting nation.

Australian foreign policy statements directed towards nations like PNG, come from the offensive assumption that Australia has a right to tell small powers what to do just because Australia is a bigger power than they are.

To threaten the withdrawal of aid after the event of mercenary hire is pointless, indecisive and out of touch with the stream of events in PNG.

Australia's aid to PNG, when weighed against the trade imbalance between PNG and Australia which benefits Australia, is chicken feed. And, given that Australia recently abstained from a UN vote denouncing the use of mercenaries (in order not to offend the US which voted against the resolution), what grounds did Sir Julius have for expecting Australia to take an interest in his actions in hiring Sandline?

But most gratingly, Australia's threat to withdraw aid if PNG doesn't fall into line, is a manipulative threat which rests simply on Australia's power to withhold something it thinks the PNG government wants. If Australia thinks it can buy its influence by threatening to withdraw money, it is severely mistaken, and it is being unbelievably insensitive and offensive to the self-respect of other nations.

This propensity towards moral incipience and manipulative offensiveness dis-

closes the psychology of Australian foreign policy. Australian foreign policy has a gutless bully psychology. Australia will bow and scrape to the will of big powers whom it cannot dominate and whose help it believes it is dependent on, but Australia tries to act the big power who can dictate terms when dealing with a smaller power.

This is an infantile, shameful and dependent foreign policy.

What would Australian foreign policy towards PNG look like if Australia did actually have some moral integrity, if Australia did respect itself as an independent power, and if Australia did treat all foreign powers with equal regard for the truth regardless of their power, status or significance to Australia's interests? Who knows? Such a foreign policy is almost impossible to imagine coming from an Australian government. But it certainly would not look like the shameful display of false moralism and offensive manipulation which we have witnessed recently.

Paul Tyson,
Queensland, Australia

FFA's fishy dealings

Dear Sir,

It's interesting to see your rival magazine trumpeting the cause for the Forum Fisheries Agency. Obviously, this must be due to the advertising dollar being paid across.

International companies which don't advertise in *Islands Business* generally cop a caning. This is something akin to the government corruption which *Islands Business* prides itself on exposing.

Let's have a look at the other side of the coin when it comes to the FFA and it's "achievements":

- FFA's economics guru is hellbent on getting more money paid into Pacific Island government coffers by the fishing industry. A great cause indeed. However, a few years ago when a bank debit tax was being mooted in the Solomon Islands, the FFA was apparently quite serious about moving funds offshore to Vanuatu to avoid this tax. Look in the mirror, boys.

- Most fishing industries almost only hear from the FFA when it comes time to pay licensing fees. For the rest of the year,

correspondence and meetings are very rare.

- FFA recruitment usually consists of selecting former government personnel, academics or project consultant types – none of whom understand the cut and thrust of real commercial fishing in the 90s.

- If a meeting or conference is to be held, the FFA or its spin-offs nearly always pick a superb holiday destination (like the Seychelles) for a two-day meeting which may last five days due to golf commitments. Why not hold these meetings in Levuka, Noro or Tulagi and see some real fishing operation first hand? Not luxurious enough?

- Some FFA personnel ask for tax/duty free prices when buying goods for their own consumption. Surely, these concessions only apply to goods purchased by the agency.

Both sides of any argument should always be presented.

Ben Feraux,
Port Vila, Vanuatu

Culture and conservation

Dear Sir,

I apologise if I have offended Timeon Ioane's sense of the sacred. I meant the phrase "to bury one's head in the sand" purely figuratively.

Otherwise, Ioane grossly distorts my argument. I did not say that killing turtles for food was mindless. I pointed out that people are killing turtles of all ages and eating eggs at a rate that will destroy the species.

When we do this, humans are not exercising the capacity for thinking ahead which differentiates us from other animals. Nowhere do I imply that "many I Kiribati qualify as animals". The destruction of the environment is a worldwide problem and over the centuries Europeans have been guilty of a great deal more mindless destruction.

It was Ioane himself who brought up the issue of man's relation to animals in his criticism "of the mentality that puts animals, fish ... on a par with people". My letter went on to suggest that, traditionally, man did not regard himself as superior and

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

still clans 'connect' with animals. Only the other day over supper with a Wan Smolbag actress, a cicada landed on the table. She believes it is an ancestor and had to call out ancestors' names until it flew away. I've a romantic idea that in pre-industrial societies, man often did see himself as equal to animals.

They needed them for food and relished killing and hunting them. In return man respected animals' intelligence and feared their strength.

Today, with a larger population, demands for cash and equipped with speedboats, spearguns, dynamite, huge nets, man is not interested in that balance. I believe in traditional practices too but they operate in a different world today. Chiefs often tell us that taboos are hard to maintain; youths come back from town, churches divide, people need money.

In his first letter, Ioane says "islanders know what's best for them, including the protection of the environment".

Often true, but can he explain why in every village we visit, many do not know that turtles do not breed until they are at least 20 and that only two out of every 100 eggs survive?

If passing this knowledge on plays a part, along with traditional taboos, in safeguarding turtle nests and the food source, can Ioane tell me why this is "culturally imperialistic"?

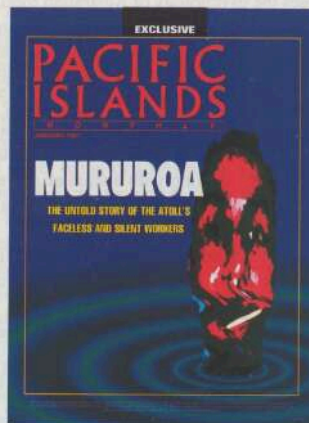
Of course, if people say they need the cash/food now, it is not our place to dictate what they should do and how dare Ioane make such an accusation without seeing the group work?

Perhaps he should spend time with us looking at the reactions of audiences and workshop participants before judging us.

As for colonialism, I would argue that today's colonialists are those who destroy the resources of the region in search of a quick profit and who have no interest in seeing the environmental damage they leave behind.

Lastly, Ioane implies that I am a fly-by-night expatriate. Well, I've been here nine years so far and feel accepted here. I don't see the need to ask Ioane's permission to express my views which happen to be the same as many Pacific Islanders' I work with.

Peter Walker,
Wan Smolbag Theatre, Vanuatu



Decolonisation vs recolonisation

Dear Sir,

When political party leaders tell Gabriel Tetiarahi what wonderful things they will do if they get elected he replies, "Your coconuts are too high!" Like many grassroots organisers in the Pacific, Tetiarahi is deeply suspicious of state power and those who would climb into its seats. He prefers leaders who come down from the coconut tree and talk with the people whose interests they claim to represent.

Tetiarahi is perhaps best known for his anti-nuclear activism, particularly the health survey his organisation, Hiti Tau, initiated among the indigenous workers on Mururoa, the former French test site in the Tuamotus (*PIM* Jan). Despite state intimidation, that report is due out this month (June) and should blow the lid off French claims not to have poisoned Pacific people's lives with radiation.

In April, he returned from a world junket that took him to Nevada, where the US has tested its atom bombs, to Washington, DC, and to speak to the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

But Tetiarahi is also president of the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) and warns that the end of nuclear testing does not guarantee freedom.

In Honolulu, Tetiarahi updated supporters of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement and also announced that at the Pacific Forum in the Cook Islands this September, a parallel forum would be held by NGOs from the region. Their goal is to establish dialogue between a variety

of grassroots movements and the heads of government meeting at the Forum.

He has come a long way from his student days at the University of Bordeaux in France, when he would demonstrate against French nuclear testing alone. He regards his educational degrees as a bridge between academia and the people he consults regularly. When Hiti Tau organised the Peace Village in Tahiti and sent protest boats against the renewed tests at Mururoa, he developed a habit of asking the whole gathering what they wanted to do. For example, Hiti Tau has created jobs for young people producing vanilla for sale, as well as conducting the health survey.

Tetiarahi's work is typical of what many people are calling the "new politics" of the Pacific people organising around salient issues, from environmentalism to indigenous rights, outside the corridors of political power. By using direct action to gain media publicity, such movements hope to put pressure on governments to change policies. NGOs also network across borders to overcome the artificial divisions colonialism created in the Pacific. Their motto is to think globally and act locally, meaning that they rely on transnational networks, just as the transnational corporations that dominate the world economy these days can call on resources beyond the borders of any one country.

NGOs must work on a variety of levels, Tetiarahi advises, in order to present their case and to make things happen on the ground, so that their cause will grow like a tree. A whole circuit of NGOs is growing to give voice to people who feel that the political process needs continual revitalising from below.

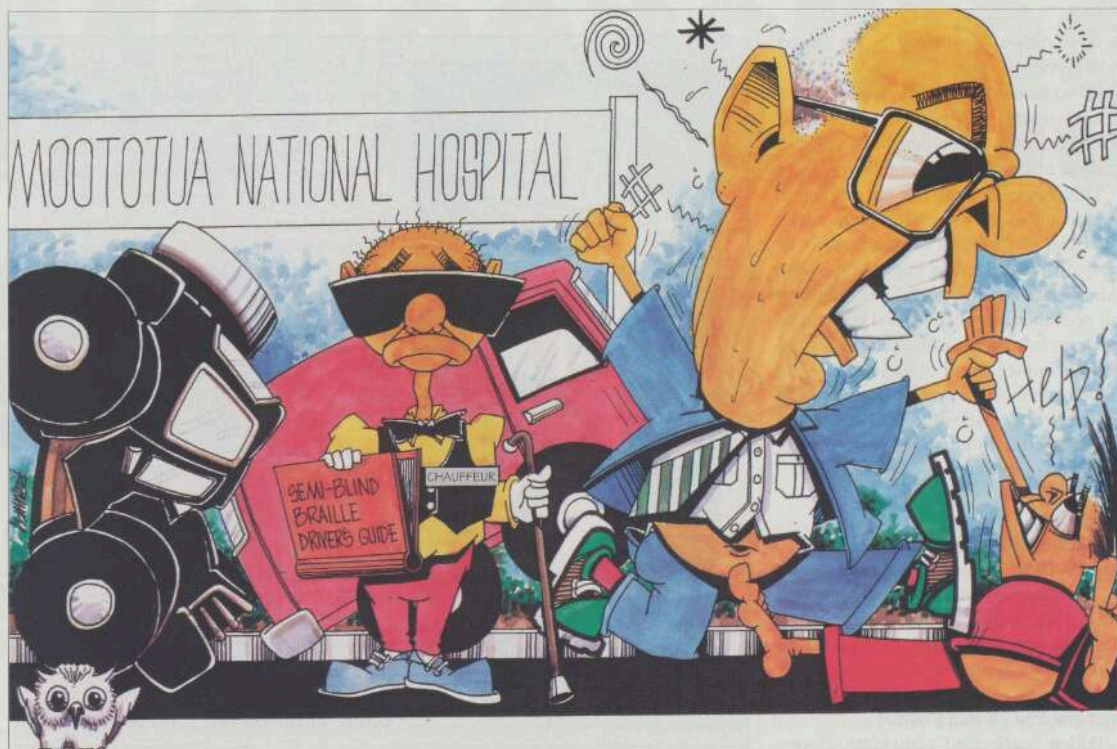
Governments expect people to depend on them, he says, but to decolonise means to rely on local volunteers who take charge of their own lives, rely on their own values and judgment and refuse to allow "recolonisation" by self-satisfied elites whose coconuts are too high.

David Chappell,
Honolulu, Hawaii

Letters to the Editor should be addressed to:

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BRIEFS



PM's chauffeur partially blind

Western Samoan Prime Minister Tofilau Eti Alesana's chauffeur was replaced by a police officer after he admitted to being partially blind.

In April, the 72-year-old PM's distinctive black Nissan Patrol, while on its way to parliament, careered into the back of a pick-up truck.

As the driver of the pick-up, 20-year-old Mafutaga Toitua, went about apologising to Alesana, the man was punched and verbally abused by Samoa's old first citizen.

Toitua later found himself locked up for three days on a charge of attempting to cause bodily harm to the ageing PM.

"My son was shocked at what happened," said Toitua senior.

According to his son, on the third day of imprisonment, he was bailed up before the PM, who then apologised for the accident.

Days later it emerged the chauffeur had admitted to suffering from Parkinson's disease and being partially blind.

Toitua senior intends to press charges of assault, wrongful arrest and dangerous driving.

Work on Bougainville resumes

Australia has resumed restoration activities on Bougainville with the return of aid workers in mid-April.

Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer announced that an Australian-funded general practitioner and a medical technologist had recommenced work at Sohano Hospital and two more medical personnel were due to start within the next two months.

And the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have recommenced their programme on mainland Bougainville.

Downer added that Australia would provide assistance in provincial restoration and in building up the capacity of the Bougainville Transitional Government and the soon-to-be-formed Councils of Elders.

"This kind of support is part of Australia's support for the peace process on Bougainville," he said.

Rabuka calls for cooperation

The 11th summit of the Melanesian Spearhead Group was held in Fiji last

month. The meeting, which was initially to be held at Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka's province in Savusavu, began in the capital, Suva, because of bad weather. It was continued in Savusavu after the weather cleared.

Attending the meeting were Papua New Guinea Acting Prime Minister John Giheno; Solomon Islands PM Solomon Mamaloni; Vanuatu PM Serge Vohor; and FLNKS President Rock Wamytan.

During his opening address, Rabuka stressed the importance of looking ahead and a clear sense of vision. With the Lome Convention expiring in the Year 2000, countries in the region will have to look beyond this to the 21st century and prepare themselves for the realities of the new era, Rabuka said.

He said the interests of these countries and their people were best served when they developed the ability to anticipate and initiate.

He said unity and solidarity were vital to the future of the region and that members should make full use of the MSG to explore all avenues of collective cooperation to further the economic interests of

BRIEFS

these countries – both within the region and beyond.

He added that the region, with its natural and unexplored potential resources, have been and will continue to be of interest to its more advanced neighbours.

This made it vital for the region to develop and explore practical and mutually beneficial cooperation among itself in as many different areas as possible, he said, adding that everyone should work together and pool their commercial and diplomatic resources in order to ensure that we get better deals in the interest of its people.

"We can look for avenues for increased trade between ourselves and at how we can help each other in improving our terms of trade with other countries," he said.

PNG police raids NGO offices

The Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC) has condemned the early-morning police raid of three NGO offices in Port Moresby last month. The offices raided belonged to Individual and Community Rights Advocacy Forum (ICRAF), PNG Trust and PNG Watch Council.

Police confiscated computers, floppy diskettes, files and overseas correspondence.

Jonathan O'ata, executive officer of PNG Watch Council, and two of his colleagues, John Kawowo and John Napo, were arrested. They were charged with organising an illegal assembly but were released on bail of K150 (\$US114).

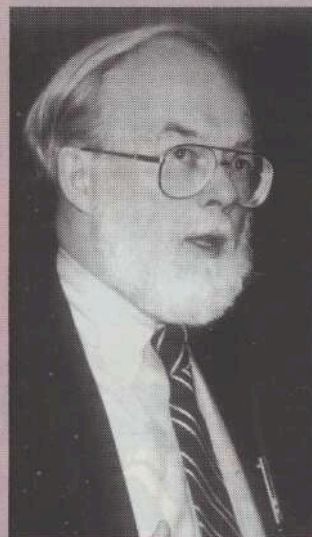
Lopeti Senituli, PCRC director, said the three had been primarily responsible for organising the soldiers and public protest outside the PNG National Assembly which forced Sir Julius Chan to step aside as prime minister.

Senituli said he believed another reason for the arrests was the NGOs' role in raising funds for Jerry Singirok's legal bills to appear before the Commission of Inquiry into the controversial Sandline mercenary deal.

Kiribati's successful passport sale

The Kiribati government's revenue from the sale of passports to foreigners topped the \$A1-million (\$US700,000) mark during the first four months of this year, a Pacnews report stated.

And Kiribati's chief accountant, Teriba



PIM loses North

Pacific Islands Monthly readers will no longer be seeing the byline of David North who has joined the US Department of the Interior's Insular office as press officer. North started writing for the magazine in 1985, when *PIM* was working out of Sydney, Australia.

This is his first job as a civil servant. In his previous work with the US government, North was a political appointee, a consultant or contractor. He was Assistant to the US Secretary of Labour in the Johnson administration, close to 30 years ago.

In recent years, North was an immigration policy consultant and researcher; his work with *PIM* was a part-time venture.

Among the stories and trends he covered, in addition to Washington's relations with the Pacific, were the politics of the American territories and of Capitol Hill, the financial jams frequently encountered by the island governments, the impact on the islands of fluctuating commodity prices and the threat of global warming.

PIM is sorry to see North go, but wishes him all the best in his new career.

Taba, attributed the sales increase to the recognition of such an investment, which is being promoted by agencies internationally.

The Green passports scheme is mainly bought by Chinese from Hong Kong and mainland China.

Revenue from passport sales last year was \$A1.5 million (\$US1.05 million), Radio Kiribati reported.

OBITUARY

Peter Tali Coleman (1919-1997)

Peter Tali Coleman, the 78-year-old former governor of American Samoa, died at his home in Honolulu of liver cancer on April 28.

Coleman was the son of a US Navy-enlisted man and a native Samoan mother. He was the first native Samoan to receive a law degree from a US university and the first person of Samoan ancestry to serve as a public defender and the island's attorney-general. Selected in 1956 by the Eisenhower administration as the federally appointed governor, he was the first and only native-born Samoan to hold that posi-

tion. In that role, he chaired the territorial convention which created Samoa's first constitution in 1960.

During the 1960s and 70s, he was administrator for the Republic of the Marshall Islands and later deputy high commissioner of what was then called the Trust Territory of the Pacific. He was the first US citizen to receive an honorary Marshall Islands citizenship by special act of their parliament.

Returning to American Samoa in 1977, he became the first popularly elected governor of the island, holding that office from 1978 to 1985 and from 1989 to 1993. This made Coleman the first and only individual in American history to serve as a governor in each of five decades.

Lauded as a "giant of the islands" by officials in the US Interior Department where he began his career, Coleman is remembered as someone who "helped bring democracy and self-government to many island jurisdictions, not just American Samoa".

He played a vital role as Washington loosened its ties, and as the islanders took on the burdens and opportunities of participatory democracy".

■ SPECIAL REPORT

Mercenaries and mining

Investigations into PNG's Sandline scandal find link with Fiji's Emperor Mines

By **ALFRED SASAKO**

Until March this year, little was known in the South Pacific about mercenaries – how these soldiers of fortune operate, who is behind them and the dodgy government deals from which they might make their millions. But the aborted attempt by Sir Julius Chan of Papua New Guinea to engage Sandline mercenaries on Bougainville has lifted the lid off their wheelings and dealings.

What has emerged is a tangled web of interconnections involving individuals, politicians, mining companies, soldiers of fortune and get-rich-quick schemes in the world of mining.

An investigation by Australia's Radio National in a programme called *Background Briefing* has uncovered the tangled web of often complex interconnections. And some of these companies have links much closer to home than many have realised.

It is important to note that there is nothing legally wrong with these interconnections or with the fact that people in the mining industry have interests in many ventures, according to *Background Briefing*.

"The danger and the fascination with it all is that the risks – political, military, geological – and the corruption and dodgy deals with dodgy governments are not seen as obstacles to business," it said. In this case, one man's name stands out – with links to mining companies, including Emperor Gold Mines in western Fiji – in a "tangled and complex web of companies and associations".

That man, according to *Background Briefing*, is a Robert Friedland who owns a \$A9-million (\$F6.9-million) home in the Sydney suburb of Point Piper.

But who is he and who are the people around him? Friedland is a Canadian citizen and Australian resident whose corporate empire spans nearly the whole globe with offices in Australia, Canada and Singapore.

In the mining industry, Friedland is nicknamed and known to some people in the industry as "Toxic Bob" because, in 1989, his gold mine in Summitville, in the United States, was found to be "one of the 10 most toxic sites in the USA".

The US taxpayer has so far had to pay well over \$US100 million in the ongoing clean up. The flamboyant mining entrepreneur is yet to make his contribution. And to this day, the US Justice Department is chasing "Toxic Bob" for a reported US\$150 million to help clean up the Summitville site.

Friedland has been active in the mining industry since the 1980s. In 1996, he made \$US600 million when he sold his claim to the world's richest nickel deposit in Voisey Bay in Labrador, Canada.

In recent years, Friedland has recruited the best and the brightest from the world's big mining and investment houses, including those from the Hong Kong office of Jardine Fleming Bank.

Incidentally, Jardine Fleming is the firm Sir Julius approached to manage PNG's proposed buy-out of RTZZ-CRA's stake in the Panguna Copper mine on Bougainville.

One of the top executives Friedland has on his management team at Ivanhoe Capital (Friedland's private company) is an Australian mining engineer by the name of Gordon Toll, a former mining executive with RTZ. Ivanhoe Capital is based in Singapore.

Today, Toll is the executive vice-president of Indochina Goldfields, a company listed on the Sydney Stock Exchange with investments in Burma, Vietnam and Fiji.

Toll is also chairman of another company called Australian Bulk Minerals. All these companies are connected to Friedland, according to *Background Briefing*.

But there's more.

During investigations, *Background Briefing* discovered that Diamondworks, an associate company of Friedland's, bought Branch Energy last year. Branch Energy is the mining company most closely associated with Executive Outcomes, Sandline International and Colonel Tim Spicer – the brain behind PNG's

■ SPECIAL REPORT



Getting to the bottom of PNG's mercenary saga ... just how deep does the mining connection run?

\$US36-million aborted mercenary deal.

In a controversial report prepared for Carson Gold (now Diamondworks), there is an interesting reference to the hotly denied closeness between mining and mercenaries. The report, prepared at the time Spicer and others were discussing the PNG deal, states that "both Sierra Leone and Angola have been under the duress of civil war, but peace has been achieved largely through military assistance provided by Executive Outcomes, Branch Energy's parent company, to the governments of these countries".

It is a controversial statement because it says what has always been denied: that Executive Outcomes, the mercenary company, owns Branch Energy. Hereon, the tangled and complex web of companies and associations deepens. Records at the Vancouver Stock Exchange show that Diamondworks is listed there as a company.

Last October, Tim Spicer of 535 King's Road, London, was granted 10,000 options to buy shares in Diamondworks. Spicer's London address is also the address for Sandline International and Branch Energy. The granting of stock options to Spicer and other mining and mercenary employees was done under a section of the Securities Act of British Columbia, Canada.

It states that "certain persons who although in form are independent contractors, in substance are employees".

"It seems [that] when Branch Energy wanted to raise finance to expand, they headed for Canada, where they made contact with

Robert Friedland," *Background Briefing* stated. What do those behind mining companies closely associated with mercenaries look for as they scout around for opportunities, especially in the Asia-Pacific region? What is their aim and when do they make their swoop?

Edward Flood, a director of Emperor Mines in Fiji and president of Indochina Goldfields, provides some insight for us in a corporate video.

Flood explained: "As a fund manager in San Francisco, we looked at mining opportunities around the world [and] the Emperor Mine is the classic type of opportunity you are looking for.

"You are looking for a mine that is undervalued in terms of its comparable companies, it is undervalued in terms of the resource base that exists at the time, and it is undervalued in terms of what its future production is going to be. And the Emperor Mine fits that bill in all cases. It is a mine that has a growing production, it has projector costs which will be coming down, but it has a tremendous resource base to be able to grow from."

It seems they had these areas were well covered when the Vatukoula mine began operations. And, according to *Background Briefing*, Indochina Goldfields told its shareholders in the Sydney Stock Exchange last December that its aim was to "create a large and growing presence in the Asia-Pacific and to become a major low-cost copper producer." ■

■ SPECIAL REPORT

Mine ready to negotiate

Haiveta reveals government plans for takeover at Sandline inquiry



Foreign media, soldiers and public at Murray barracks during the crisis

By **SAM VULUM**

Bougainville Copper Limited, the developer of the controversial Panguna copper mine in the North Solomons Province has finally indicated that it is prepared to listen to landowners' demands for greater participation in the operations of the world's second-largest open-pit copper mine. This comes nine years after millions of kina's worth of destruction and the loss of hundreds of lives.

"Greater landowners' participation," was briefly discussed at the 24th annual general meeting of BCL in the Papua New Guinea capital, Port Moresby, on April 29. Answering questions by a principal Panguna mine landowner, Sevenrinus Ampoi, at the meeting, BCL chairman David Karpin said the Bougainville mine agreement would be reviewed to include equity for the Panguna landowners. "There will be changes to the Bougainville Agreement. Equity will be a relevant matter to future discussions on the agreement," Karpin said.

Ampoi reminded the BCL chairman and members of the board of directors that the agreement was not equitable to Panguna landowners because it was negotiated and signed by the national government and CRA Ltd. BCL's 1996 annual report shows that the company has set aside K15.9 million (\$US10 million) for compensation payments to landowners for the period 1990 to 1996. According to the report, the amount is being held in an interest-bearing account.

Government plans were revealed during the Commission of Inquiry into the engagement of Sandline mercenaries. Chris Haiveta, former PNG deputy prime minister, told the inquiry the government

had planned "Operation Oyster" to recapture Panguna mine and "Operation Valentine" to acquire CRA's interest in the mine.

He said the involvement of two controversial entities in the Sandline deal – Rupert McCowan and Jardine Fleming Inc – was to advise the government to give Panguna and Bougainville landowners "a better deal".

Haiveta said the government would give at least 20 per cent equity in BCL if it succeeded in acquiring CRA's 53.6 per cent controlling interest. He told the inquiry the government wanted to increase its current stake in BCL by buying out CRA's controlling interest. It would then be in a position to give Bougainvillians "20 or 25 per cent" equity, at no cost, as part of the resolution to the nine-year Bougainville crisis. He said he had hired Jardine Flemming Inc as financial broker for the acquisition. Jardine acted as financial adviser in the successful Orogen Mining Ltd float. "The government has [a] 19.1 per cent [stake] at the moment and we hope that by buying 53.6 per cent we would have a total control of 72.7 per cent," he said. "That would give up, say, 20 to 25 per cent that we would give to the landowners, the North Solomons provincial government and the people of Bougainville."

The revelations, however, fell short of touching on earlier reports that heavy share trading and a sudden increase in prices in Bougainville copper shares occurred before the government's mercenary deal was exposed. The BCL chairman confirmed the trading and indicated that investigations were continuing. The Australian government wrote to the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) in early March seeking information on who bought more than one million shares in BCL just before news broke of the mercenary plan.

It was suggested that the share trading involved members of the PNG government, but no names were mentioned. More than one million shares in BCL were purchased for around 60 cents each on February 14, 18 and 19. The ASX traced the trades to Brisbane-based firm Morgan Stockbroking, a co-manager of the Orogen Minerals float last year.

The Panguna mine was closed on May 15, 1989, by disgruntled landowners over lack of adequate benefits from mining operations. The landowners had demanded from the government and BCL, a hefty K10-billion (\$US6.95-billion) compensation for environmental damage. Militant landowners later took up arms and shut down the mine as well as government services to Bougainville.

Meanwhile, in his supplementary statement to shareholders, Karpin renewed BCL's commitment to resume mining operations, subject to economic viability and when conditions permitted on war-torn Bougainville. Karpin reiterated that BCL had not been able to assess the condition of the mine since 1990.

"It should be noted that economic viability of any future operations will depend on a number of factors which cannot be accurately predicted this time, including the cost of recommissioning, likely future operating cost, government and community requirements, the copper/gold market and the economic outlook at the time," he said.

"It is not possible at present to determine when this might be achieved or determine the degree of damage and deterioration to assets which might have occurred during the period of suspension."

Since its inception in 1972 until cessation of operations in 1989, the mine produced concentrate containing three million tonnes of copper, 306 tonnes of gold and 784 tonnes of silver.

The production had a value of K5.2 billion (\$US3.6 billion) which represented 44 per cent of PNG's exports in that period. Contributions to the national government in the form of taxes, duties



COVER STORIES

EXCLUSIVE

Fiji's prison scandal

Investigations begin into allegations of drug dealing, nepotism and corruption behind Suva's prison walls

By **BERNADETTE HUSSEIN**

Fiji, which is at present trying to deal with allegations of corruption within its Customs Department (See page 18), must also contend with a prison scandal. Investigations by *Pacific Islands Monthly* have uncovered allegations of drug dealing, nepotism, abuse of office and cover-up of information at Suva Prison, in the country's capital.

A letter, dated April 4, 1997, and signed simply "Prison Intelligence Unit", was sent to Fiji's permanent secretary for home affairs, Apisolome Tudreu. The letter made serious allegations against the prison and did not stop short of naming names. It claimed bribery was rife, that there was a lack of discipline among prison officers and that prisoners moved freely around the security bay with no control over their movements to the visiting area.

Tudreu passed the letter on to the commissioner of prisons, Aisea Taoka, who, admitting to the prison's drug problem, told *PIM* that investigations into the allegations had started. The investigating officers are from outside Suva Prison and are expected to interview both officers and prisoners.

The anonymous letter writer said it was of the utmost urgency that Tudreu be informed of the situation at Suva Prison because things were escalating to a very "dangerous level".

"Drug dealing among prisoners is common. Prisoners are in possession of very large sums of money inside the prison to buy drugs and sell to oth-

ers," the letter stated. "Very recently, the Emergency Control Unit had to dig out a supply of drugs buried with a large sum of money from outside the jail."

"Yes, there is a certain amount of drugs being found among prisoners and appropriate disciplinary actions have been taken against them," Taoka confirmed.

But how do the drugs find their way in? Are visitor security checks not thorough enough?

"Oh no, we still have security checks and these are quite thorough," Taoka replied. But, over the years, the visitors have developed a system whereby they are able to smuggle these drugs in.

"It happens. It is the culture of prisons in the country – contraband items get in. We are still trying to find out how, as gifts and other parcels brought in – as well as the visitors – are checked."

According to the letter, drugs were exchanged in the visiting area – where supervision of prisoners' movements was lax. But Taoka is quick to deny this, saying the close proximity of officers to prisoners would not allow this.

On being asked why the problem was allowed to continue, Taoka replied: "I agree that it has to stop – especially in a place of law and order – but then that is the perfect situation we are talking about. These are the places that people least expect these sorts of things to happen but, yes, they are happening."

"A lot of things happen in prisons which we hear of and try to nip in the bud." Taoka would not elaborate on what these "things" were, but added that the problems were many.

"As for prisoners who are caught in possession of

drugs – they are reported to the police who charge them. These sentences often run consecutively with their time in prison – sometimes they are added on."

The letter goes on to claim that a prisoner who presented a superintendent with a *tabua* (whale's tooth – highly valued in indigenous Fijian culture) and a bundle of fish, was soon after released on extramural duties.

The superintendent was also accused of nepotism, which the letter said was a major problem in the department. The letter claimed relatives of the superintendent were considered for promotions over deserving officers. Taoka, who said he was looking into this matter, qualified his statement by adding that nepotism existed "in all organisations".

"There are businesses which employ family members to work for them. That is nepotism to the core. In a country as small as Fiji, most companies are run by families and everyone is related to the next person and, in some cases, it is unavoidable."

He said nepotism occurred in government departments as well as the private sector. When asked if its prevalence was its

justification, Taoka replied: "No, it's not OK. We are related to people in one way or another and everybody needs to work but we should try to get the best people into the system. "People should not come in just because they are related to us.

"[But] first we have to find out if it is happening and, if it is, then we have to solve this problem in a diplomatic way."

The letter alleges that one of the officers (who is a relative of the superintendent in question) "was transferred from

another island to Suva because of house-breaking, criminal trespass and attempted rape".

"He was arrested and charged and he has already appeared in court. Early this year, the same officer was in charge of a cemetery work party when a newly issued lawnmower went missing."

This officer was also reported to have grievously wounded a prisoner with a file in Suva, the letter continues, alleging that the police investigating officer who was

Commissioner



"Yes, there is a certain amount of drugs being found"



"A lot of things happen in prison"

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Prisons Aisea Taoka



"We have to solve this problem [nepotism] in a diplomatic way"



Officers and prisoners "have been getting along quite well"

looking into the case was later seen drinking with this officer at one of the local clubs. The officer was also a close associate of another prison officer who absconded to New Zealand while on trial in Fiji, the letter stated. The two were seen at a local club the night before he left, the letter writer claimed.

There were also allegations of the superintendent being bribed with cartons of beer to help in promotions. The officer is regarded as a security risk and is alleged to have been involved in a grave scam where grave plots were being sold to help repay a personal loan, the letter writer claimed.

"He is telling us, his subordinate officers, things about other officers. Something which he should not do. He is the same person who told people that the relationship between the former commissioner of prisons and the deputy commissioner of prisons was bad," the letter stated.

The writer said the superintendent also told some prisoners and officers during a prison inquiry to highlight the "bad working relationship" between the then commissioner of prisons and his deputy which he (the writer) suspects was done to tarnish the reputation of both the officers. "For an outsider, everything is OK. But for someone like me, who is inside, it is like a lull before the storm."

There are also allegations of another prison officer who while on duty on April 6, went out to a church to preach without making arrangements to be relieved. Taoka said these were serious allegations and, if they were true, the officers named would face serious disciplinary action.

The letter stated that several new officers were being used as carriers of unauthorised goods and information to and from

the prison. It said that these were usually officers who were unable to effectively deal with hardened criminals.

"The new prison officers are just growing into the job, so to speak, and confidence comes with experience. These officers, over time, will have that sort of experience and confidence which will help make them efficient prison officers. "You need to be thick-skinned to do the job effectively."

But Taoka added he was looking very closely into this and said he required proof before any further action could be taken.

"From what I have seen and experienced the two groups [officers and prisoners] have been getting along quite well. Look at the prisoner-to-officer ratio which we have. Sometimes, we have one officer taking a working party of 10 prisoners and, by the end of the day, they all come in." So how does he explain prisoners escaping from working parties?

"Well, those are isolated cases – because we don't have a large number of prisoners escaping from working parties. In fact, the number is very small." Among the problems highlighted by the letter was the general lack of security, and especially that the security bay was becoming a gathering area for prisoners. "Presently, any prisoner may enter the security area at any time without restriction," it said. However, Taoka retorted that this was highly unlikely.

"Prisoners go into the security bay area when there is business to be done in the administration block. I am not denying that prisoners don't have access, yes they do, but it's controlled access. "That area is under lock and key and the officer in charge at the time ensures that the prisoner coming into the security bay area requesting entry has approved business in

the area." According to the letter, the problem at the prison is not merely poor management. The letter writer expresses concern that certain information is not reported to higher authorities. The letter cites the example of a prisoner who escaped through the main gate. He had been readmitted after an earlier escape.

According to the letter, the prisoner was allowed unsupervised within the security area. He saw the gatekeeper open the main gate and he escaped, the letter stated. Neither the Ministry of Home Affairs nor the media were given this information, the letter claimed.

The letter paints a picture where prisoners are gaining the upper hand and ordering officers about. The situation was getting out of hand and, although the management was fully aware of the situation, nothing was being done, the letter writer claimed. The letter likened the situation to that before the prison riots in late 1979 and 1980 when there were prison breakouts around the country.

Referring to the alleged problems, Taoka said he could only speak from when he was given charge of prisons – which was June, last year. "In the past I would imagine there would have been complaints yes. There have been two prison riots, one in 1965 and the other in 1979-1980. The riots were a result of complaints and problems not being addressed."

Taoka said he did not see the need for an inquiry. "There have already been six inquiries and most of the recommendations have been implemented but there are still some left." Taoka himself has not been spared in the letter, which claims the majority of prison officers were "fed up" with his public comments on the things he was going to do to improve the situation.

It said Taoka was trying to please the officers by telling them of his plans, but which had still not been implemented.

"The public comments are related to my efforts in planning the improvement and upgrading of the prison system and its infrastructure," he said. "Obviously, these things will take time to happen as they cannot be done overnight. I have to work with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the political leaders about what is to happen and these things take time.

"If they have a little more patience and wait, they will see it happening."

However, the letter writer feels differently and insists "drastic actions are urgently needed". ■

COVER STORIES

Customs 'corruption'

By **BERNADETTE HUSSEIN**

One department recently brought under the spotlight for corruption is Fiji's Customs Department, which boasts a history of shady deals. In 1995, 10 customs officers were discharged for allegedly helping second-hand car dealers evade customs duty.

Early last year, Fiji's Public Service Commission (PSC) ordered an investigation into an alleged abuse of office by a high-ranking customs officer. The investigation followed a complaint against the officer by the Fiji Public Service Association (FPSA).

The high-ranking officer allegedly helped some second-hand car dealers and failed to lay charges against an airline executive who imported pornographic tapes into Fiji. The airline executive was caught with the pornographic tapes by customs officers at Nadi International Airport.

Earlier this year, a senior customs official claimed that corruption and bribery were rife in the department and were the cause of a multi-million-dollar loss in government revenue. These allegations perhaps caused more impact because the officer admitted to having taken a bribe in December last year. He alleged that in December last year he was offered a \$F5000 (\$US3480) bribe by a businessman in return for not pursuing a case of evasion of duty. He said this was normal practice in the department where the majority of officers were on low salaries. Officers were

earning between \$F5000 and \$F8000 (\$US3480 and \$US5575) per year.

The officer claimed that:

- there were more cases of evasion than those with correct paperwork;
- in most cases of evasion of duty, businessmen offered cash to kill the issue; and
- bribery was common and most cases were not highlighted because the department itself decided on what action to take.

According to the Customs Act, most customs offences cannot be handled by the department.

The officer's allegations saw an inquiry into the department. The then acting finance minister said there was one case of bribery after another, and there was a need to clear the air. The FPSA came forward to say it had been writing to the Finance Ministry and the PSC, urging them to investigate allegations of corruption in the Customs Department.

During this time, the officer who had divulged the information was charged, and the assistant comptroller of customs, Tanasio Naqarase, said this case was not isolated. He said the department received similar complaints every month and each case was investigated. No case was ever ignored, Naqarase said.

However, he claimed that the state of affairs in the department had deteriorated and this was a result of negligence on the government's part. Finance Minister Berenado Vunibobo, who was out of the country at the time the scam was revealed, arrived a few days later and ordered a review of the existing legislation affecting the Customs Department. He appointed the

inquiry committee, made up of a prominent businessman and state solicitors. The inquiry commenced in late April and the committee has been given the task to find out if there are loopholes in the department's legislation and procedures to allow for abuse of office or loss of government revenue. The committee also has the task of determining if there has been any evasion and breach of customs laws. It has also been entrusted to make appropriate recommendations for the efficient and proper administration of the Customs Department following the inquiry. Controversially, it was a closed inquiry, despite the FPSA's calls not to hold it behind closed doors. The permanent secretary for the Ministry of Labour and Industrial Relations, Anare Jale, said the salary structure in the civil service was determined by PSC after necessary consultation with the service trade unions concerned.

"The salary structure currently in place in the civil service, which includes police officers and customs officers, resulted from a job evaluation exercise conducted by professional firms from abroad," Jale said.

"The commission had again recently commissioned another job evaluation exercise and the report of the evaluation is currently a subject of negotiation between PSC and the public sector trade unions.

"However, salary increases have been awarded to civil servants to accommodate cost of living adjustments (COLA)."

He added that it may not be correct to say that police and customs officers were low-paid employees and some earning below poverty line. As for low wages being a reason for bribe Jale said "There maybe other reasons for civil servants to [take] bribes, for example, greediness. I do not think that a serious situation of low wages exist in the civil service."



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■ ECONOMY

Scaring away the investors

Reports by **KALINGA SENEVIRANTE**
Port Vila

For small island economies in the Pacific, the development of off-shore banking centres could become an important foreign exchange earner. In recent years, Vanuatu has shown that it could bring in a substantial income to the national economy. But, last year's "Letters of Guarantee" financial scam involving the Reserve Bank has sent a shiver through the spine of Vanuatu's off-shore banking sector.

Port Vila's "financial centre" – a collection of foreign banks, trust companies, accountancy and law firms – is one of the well established off-shore banking centres in the region, which brings in about \$US4.4 million a year to the economy. In addition, it provides employment to over 300 local people and the 60 or so expatriate staff and families who bring more money into the economy.

The income created by this industry makes up a substantial amount for the country when you consider the fact that the total export income of Vanuatu in 1995 was \$US28.3 million.

The financial scandal last year, which was, however, unconnected to the off-shore banking sector, has made the industry nervous. "It has certainly had a negative impact on people thinking about investing in Vanuatu because there was uncertainty about whether this government understands what they are doing," Thomas Bayer, executive chairman of Pacific International

Trust Company told *Pacific Islands Monthly*.

The scam in question was a bank guarantees scheme. If the \$US100 worth of Letters of Guarantee signed by the Reserve Bank was allowed to mature in April 1998, it would have far exceeded Vanuatu's entire foreign currency reserves and bankrupted the country.

Julian Ala, head of the Vanuatu Financial Services Commission, the government's watchdog over the off-shore banking sector, claims this scam has not impacted on the industry as yet, but concedes it will have an impact on the public relations aspect of the industry. "If you

look in terms of public relations exercise, it does not have an impact in that people think that there's a scam or allegations.

Vanuatu's outspoken ombudswoman, Marie-Noelle Ferrieux-Patterson, who was instrumental in exposing the financial scam here, believes the reputation of the off-shore banking sector can be affected by these scams if people overseas hear that the situation is not stable and politicians don't know what they are doing.

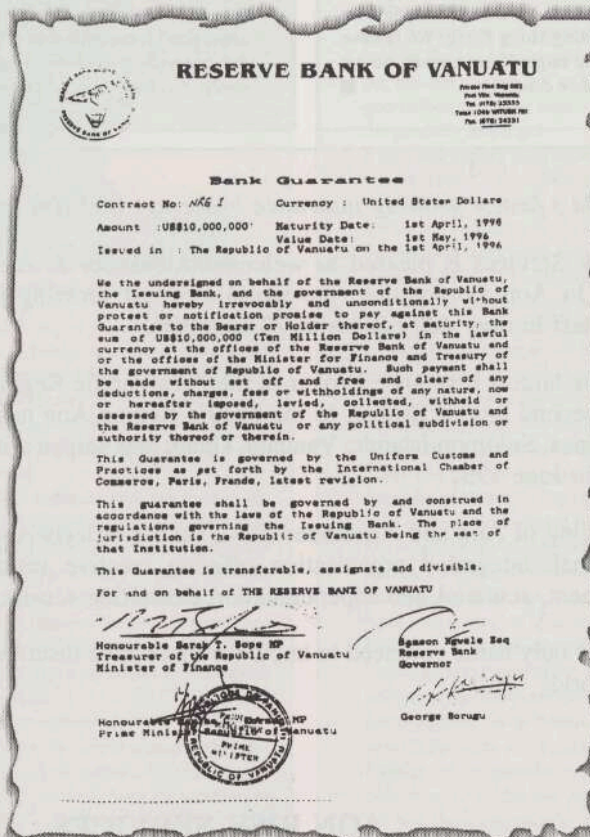
"But, generally, the off-shore community is an almost different entity. You have a lot of professionals involved in it. I don't think politicians are involved in any of the off-shore activities at this stage," she told

PIM.

Vanuatu is attractive as an off-shore banking centre for foreigners because there are no income tax or exchange controls here and no reporting of money transfers. There's also no interest-withholding tax. The sector generates income for the Vanuatu government through company registration and annual operating licence fees collected by Ala's office.

The shipping register maintained by Vanuatu, where ships registering here as "home base" pay a certain percentage of their tonnage to the Vanuatu government, generates an additional \$US0.5 million a year. Ala argues the off-shore banking sector cannot get involved in any of the domestic financial scams because it is not open to the public.

Both Ala and Bayer dismiss any suggestions of off-shore banking sectors acting as money-laundering centres or tax-evasion havens. "They can't solicit funds from the general



One of the Letters of Guarantee

ECONOMY

public – they are limited to dealing with groups of companies or individuals associated with the bank,” Ala points out.

“Money is laundered when it enters the banking system. That’s the point of laundering. It doesn’t get laundered later or before... Virtually no money [in cash] enters the [off-shore] banking system in Vanuatu,” explains Bayer. “It has to come through another bank overseas.

“Drug dealers won’t cart a suitcase of money to Vanuatu because none of the banks in Vanuatu would take notes.” Because notes are not accepted here, overseas companies transferring their profits to Vanuatu banks will have to do so through their banking system.

But any of the interest paid on those funds once they’re here are not taxed in Vanuatu. “Whether you pay tax or not, on your interest received here, is not our problem,” says Bayer. “Whether you declare it or not is a problem in your home country.” Ala says they have never been accused of helping people in neighbouring countries to avoid taxes back home. “We work very closely with law enforcement officials in New Zealand and Australia,” he says.

Vanuatu is facing stiff competition from new off-shore financial centres opened in Malaysia and Guam, as well as from the older ones in Hong Kong and Singapore, says Ala. “Companies from China, Indonesia and Malaysia have been coming here slowly,” he adds. “We are targeting Hong Kong. We believe with the handover to China, there might be an opening to get some of the business which might be coming out.” ■

INTERVIEW

Ferrieux-Patterson discusses Vanuatu’s financial scam and its impact on investment

PIM: The recent financial scams you have exposed, would they have an impact on the off-shore banking sector here?

FP: My report at the time indicated that there were some concerns about the reputation of Vanuatu. I think there’s still the same concern to see political people signing documents involving big amounts of money and not taking the appropriate steps to check and follow their own financial rules that can create a bad image overseas. This also concerns the heavy commitment a government can take in terms of overseas debts. Overseas indebtedness is always a concern. A country could collapse – like what happened in the Cook Islands. They suddenly realised they owed more than they could repay and all systems suffer.

As far as the off-shore financial centres are concerned, I still see that they would be more generally affected by the reputation. If people hear that the situation is not stable, the politicians don’t know what they are doing, it might be a concern. But generally the off-shore community is almost a different entity. You have a lot of professionals involved in it. I don’t

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Barak Sope ... removed from political world

think politicians are involved in any of the off-shore activities at this stage. Accountancy, banks and trust companies already have their own reputations. I think they would maintain themselves with their own clients.

PIM: If these scams have had an impact on the image of Vanuatu, how would you see the government playing a role in clearing up Vanuatu's name?

FP: They did; they proceeded quite effectively. Once they made a mistake, there was a bit of political turmoil following that. The main person involved is not involved in the political world anymore. Barak Sope has been removed. The prime minister at the time started to take steps and initiated court action against the people he saw as responsible for this scam. So, they have taken steps and the fact that an Australian citizen ... was prosecuted I think is a signal to others in the region who think that Vanuatu is gullible.

PIM: In recent years, we have seen conmen trying to con a number of governments in the region in similar scams and politicians getting caught in it, willingly sometimes. From the investigations done by you here, do you think there's a warning or lesson to be learned by other politicians in how not to get caught by these scams?

FP: I think so. Actually, the message went through at that time.

There was a lot of coverage for the bank guarantees in Vanuatu. The message went far. A few days after my report came out, I heard that the Marshall Islands was trying to sort out something similar to that, in bigger amounts... Cook Islands has suffered from it before. We had a similar case before but not of such potential. The publicity which followed has made the point. I met colleagues from Africa at a world conference not long ago and everybody was aware of it, even in those countries. They were interested in the work I have done in that subject matter, because in Africa, too, they are faced with similar cases. Recently, there was a meeting of the reserve banks in the United States and that came out as a subject of discussion between all the governors of banks in the world. So, it is being talked about and that's the best way to ensure it will not happen again - by being talked about.

PIM: When your report first came out, I believe you were attacked by many politicians for saying what you said. But now the politicians have come around to accepting it. Do you think this would have been the case in any other country, where the politics may not have been perhaps as democratic or open as here?

FP: Don't forget, in Vanuatu the post of ombudsman was filled only two-and-a-half years ago. It has been in the constitution since 1980, but nothing was done until 1994. So, my role came as a shock, and it was more a shock because the government added in my responsibility the leadership code. So, they themselves put themselves in a position where I could look at the leadership code as indicated in the constitution. So, the reaction we got in July when the report and the bank guarantees came out was ... that they were very surprised at the publicity that it got.

It was mandatory (in the constitution) that I had to make my reports public. I think that message was passed and they had not realised that it was in the constitution and I couldn't keep it a secret. Furthermore, my experience and the knowledge of the banking world was that there was no way I could keep it secret. Keeping it secret was making it more dangerous. The only way to deflate it and avoid negotiation of these guarantees was for the fact to be known.

PIM: Since you are employed by the government, do you think a local person, if he or she was employed in the same position, would have been able to do the same thing?

FP: I'm not employed by the government. I mean the government is the agent of the people of Vanuatu and this way provides the budget for the office. I'm an employee of the Republic of Vanuatu. My appointment is made by the president and the government is not involved in my appointment. My independence is guaranteed both by the constitution, the act and by the contract. I think it's quite secure about my position. I'm appointed for five years and to change this you have to have a very serious case of misconduct on my part. Certainly, I've got an easier job than most local people, because I'm not part of the wontok system. That's certainly an advantage as far as my job is concerned. I was appointed by the president, so that must be indicative of what their wish was. Their wish was to have someone who would have the freedom of independence in their own system. So that's the only thing I can answer. Are there are people with the ability? Yes, there are people with ability. Many politicians think I'm handling it in a harder way and only time will tell, when the next person comes. ■

■ LEGISLATION

Caught napping

Govt bulldozes through with legislation on chief auditor's term while Opposition researches



Tony Pereira ... "We don't know how our taxes are being used"

By **CHRIS PETERU**

Saying you were in the library while legislation crucial to Western Samoa's financial well being is about to be voted on is a good reason not to take any interest, except if you're the Opposition leader.

It wasn't as if Samoa National Development Party boss Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese hadn't been given enough notice. Debate on the motion to amend Article 97 of the island state's constitution had been

raging for a month or so in parliament, and for several months at every bar and *kava* bowl in the country. The guts of it meant slashing the chief auditor's term from until age 60 into a three-year contract.

In 1995 Controller and Chief Auditor Su'a Rimoni Ah Chong was suspended for tabling a report alleging big-time government corruption. Despite a government appointed Commission of Inquiry negating key aspects of the report, it failed to alleviate public cynicism over the issues raised, more so when none of the inquiry's recommendations to the government to guard

against further abuses were acted on. The proposed amendment marked the first time government had brought constitutional change because of action taken by the audit office.

How the likelihood of something this important could be overtaken by an overdue book fine is hard to understand. As it turned out Tamasese had actually gone in to get some last-minute research on the amendment itself, which wasn't a bad idea, even if his *modus operandi* was.

Anti-amendment supporters and the Samoa Civil Liberties Organisation were more concerned about the chief auditor losing its pivotal role as independent watchdog (the acting chief auditor now is the wife of the deputy speaker) and instead becoming a rubber stamp for the government.

The Human Rights Protection Party (now in a fourth consecutive term of office) faces a chronic debt problem now close on \$400 million dollars and rising. It could easily be a lot more considering that audits of a number of government departments, including Treasury, have not been made public for at least five years. Clear regulations under the Public Monies Act says Treasury is required to table audited financial accounts to the public regularly.

"They are collecting taxes and using taxes without accountability. For the last 15 years, governments have never complied with their constitutional and statutory obligations. As a people we do not know how our taxes are being used," says Tony Pereira, president of Western Samoa's Civil Liberties Organisation. The Western Samoa Chartered Accountants Society has voiced concern over the lack of good accounting ethics. Treasury accounts 1981-88 were lumped together and tabled in 1992. The Accounts for 1989 were not tabled until five years later.

"We have been sworn to secrecy," said a Treasury employee "But I can tell you there are accounts which have been written off completely, just forgotten about, because apart from a very few departments there are no accurate records so it is still easy to do."

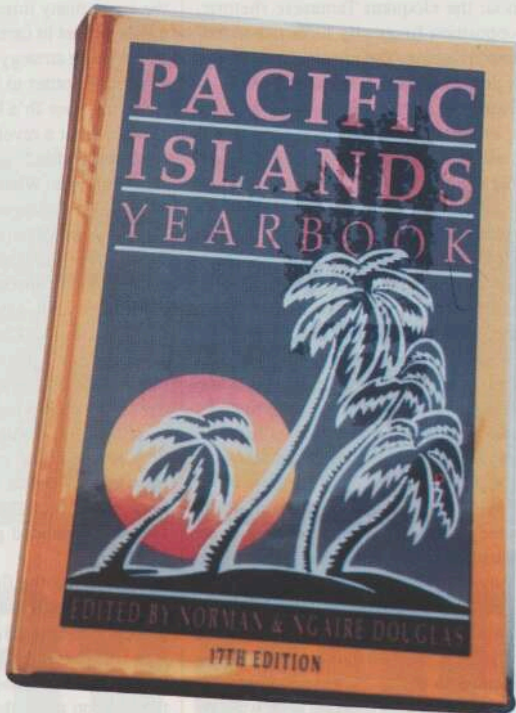
What Finance Minister Tuilaepa Malielegaoi, who holds a masters degree in commerce, and a talent for politics as performance art, did tell two reporters in December 1995 was that Treasury audits were not publicly available because they "are being computerised".

No other announcements have been

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■ LEGISLATION

made since, although late last year the audit office promised to audit and update most government departments by the end of this year.

"Although the minister has in the past referred to himself as an auditor or gives the impression that he is an auditor, and therefore some measure of credibility is attached to his explanations in parliament, he is a non-practising accountant," says the chief auditor.

Malielegaoi was unavailable to comment as he was on government business overseas.

For its part, the Opposition seemed reluctant to highlight aspects of the financial bungling, leaving it open to suggestions it carried out some funky accounting of its own when it last sat on the Treasury benches. A salient reminder during Tamasese's last prime ministership is how from 1979-81 there were massive basic food shortages, forcing Samoans to queue Russian-style for goods in near empty stores.

Twenty-five submissions to a parliamentary bills committee, gave the whole constitution amendment idea the thumbs down. An excerpt from the committee's report said, "It was evident from the views that any proposed amendment to the constitution is inappropriate." Other submissions called for a referendum as a more accurate forum to gauge public feeling. Supreme court proceedings brought by the chief auditor against the prime minister over the report are continuing, although the PM repeatedly denies he has been served notice of any charges being made against him.

Given the backgrounds of the individuals, the two parties, and the political cordite in the air, it was hardly surprising parliamentary broadcasts became more popular on the radio than requests for songs by nerdy Swedish popsters Abba (*Waterloo*, *Dancing Queen*) who have managed to keep Western Samoa in a musical time warp, long after their welcome break-up.

Back in parliament, the government, noting Tamasese's vacant chair, suspended standing orders and charged through the second reading of the amendment bill in just under 15 minutes. Like the opposition, the HRPP MPs had expected a day of frenzied, tough debate. Instead, the remaining opposition members sat silent, like rabbits frozen in the lights of a very big truck bear-

ing down on them at alarming speed. It was the kind of silence that could have reminded listeners around the country of a library, where no doubt some of the opposition wished they were with their missing leader. No one even tried to hold the fort, which was surprising but not unexplainable. Without the eloquent Tamasese rhetoric, the opposition frequently turns out sounding unconvincing. The government, in contrast, just sounds too good to be true.

Even the opposition number two hit man, outspoken independent Le Tagaloa Pita, was invisible. A former cabinet minister, his reputation in the debating chamber can be summed up in one word: Aayyaahhh. But right then, he wasn't there either. Nor was he at the library looking for something to talk about.

Although both men eventually made it for the third reading vote, the government had slammed the door shut. The last session day, parliament had adjourned while debating a Customs Amendment Act. Normally, discussion on the last bill discussed, resumes immediately the next session.

"I assumed as did Tagaloa that the [finance] minister would continue on Wednesday," said Tamasese, pointing to parliamentary convention and Tuesday's agenda paper. Assumptions aside, a politician with four election losses against the same people, should have been able to come up with better strategies on how the HRPP operates, than thinking if he was late to parliament the government was not going to try and stitch the opposition up.

Ageing Prime Minister Alesana, who nowadays invokes God's name with the enthusiasm with which the Mormon church proclaims "the church is true" to anyone within earshot, was in no such doubt about what his mission was that morning. Thanking God for the beautiful day, he launched into a brief history of the constitution. Basically, it amounted to something like, "Out of the way man, there's a constitutional amendment coming through." He then moved the constitutional amendment bill to be put to the vote.

Alesana also reassured the public the amendment was in the best interests of the nation, and that suspended auditor Ah Chong was free to reapply for the chief auditor's office. "Whoever is involved in this job should be free from political interference, he need not be afraid to carry out his duties even if he is appointed for a

three-year term," said Alesana.

Holding the required two-thirds majority in the house, it came down 36-11 in the government's favour. The Opposition later claimed that the vote had been sprung on them. Of course, it had. In fact, they've been sprung, rolled over, and tossed up in the air so many times now, they could ride a bull market in carnival ride futures.

"It was a strategy employed by the government in order to silence debate," opposition member Te'a Peato told local tabloid papers. What a revelation.

"Predictable," was the chief auditor's only response. What is also becoming predictable is a duopoly of power between Alesana, and deputy Malielegaoi, who, as a result of the decision, is free to roam carte blanche through Western Samoa's main bank vault, say critics. Of course, the invitation for Ah Chong to reapply for the chief auditor's job could be damage control by Alesana, given the lousy publicity the report caused locally and abroad.

If the chief auditor is reinstated, it will be surprising if he is allowed to even audit his own pay check, such is the trust level between the HRPP leadership and the longest suspended government employee in history.

This is not the first time the HRPP has fiddled with the constitution since the 1962 independence. Earlier, universal suffrage was introduced, allowing those over 21 to vote for the first time during the 1991 elections. Soon after, the term of government office was extended from three to five years. Civil Liberties president Pereira: "Do we need a minister of finance, one with a Masters degree in Commerce?"

"I suppose I have a fair bit to learn about the nature of politics, I had thought that some members of the HRPP would consider this not as a partisan party matter, but more a conscience matter. But I am surprised"

The punchline to a joke over the chief auditor's term being reduced to three years goes: "So there will be enough time to audit all the accounts for 1993."

What level of professionalism will be applied to the job by the next chief auditor, given the amount of bungy jumping the government did over Ah Chong's report, will be interesting. Ethics and accountability though could still be as hard to find as accurate Treasury accounts for public inspection, and the protection of human rights this Alesana administration built its

■ AVIATION



Air Marshall Islands Saab 2000 ... journeying into the next millennium

Beyond 2000

Can the Saab carry Air Marshalls into the new century?

By **GIFF JOHNSON**

That Air Marshall Islands felt compelled to take out an advertisement in the *Marshall Islands Journal* in mid-April to proclaim that the Saab 2000 had operated for two weeks with a perfect on-time record is an indica-

tion of how much difficulty the \$US16-million plane has had since inception of service in June 1995.

The plane, hailed as the answer to the long, thin air-routes in the Pacific, has not lived up to the claims; repeated breakdowns have cost Air Marshalls dearly in money and passenger confidence by stranding scores of passengers travelling

between Fiji and the Marshalls. The real challenge facing AMI is how to make the high-tech Saab function reliably in a technology-unfriendly environment, and where parts are as far away from the central Pacific as they can be (Europe and Scandinavia).

As AMI labours to resurrect an admirable record established by a slow, noisy and gas-guzzling (relative to the Saab) workshouse British-built HS748 aircraft that serviced the Fiji route prior to the Saab, there is some reason for optimism that improvements may, in fact, be happening.

Two proposals are on the table for launching regional airline operations; moves that would take the pressure off a single airline and base operations in a more central location such as Fiji.

The Asian Development Bank recently completed a study for a central Pacific airline involving the governments of the Marshalls, Kiribati, Tuvalu and other islands.

The ADB study followed up an initiative of the Marshalls that first surfaced in 1995, getting verbal – but not any financial – support from other governments in the sub-region. The study could pave the way

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■ AVIATION

for ADB financing of a sub-regional government airline utilising the Saab.

Saab itself is proposing a commercial airline plan to operate the Saab 2000 from a Fiji base. Saab officials believe that improved maintenance and servicing that could be had from a major airline operation would increase the reliability of the Saab.

There are two other developments that spell improvement for AMI's international operations and should help to restore not only passenger confidence, but that of airlines in the region that AMI would like to be selling air time to for the Saab – Air Vanuatu is the only South Pacific airline that has used the Saab regularly since last year for a weekly Nadi-Port Vila run.

The ADB recently injected \$US2 million of a \$US4 million loan to AMI, which the airline is using for building a hangar suitable for servicing the Saab and other large planes and for engineering training and spare parts.

AMI has never had a facility large enough for the Saab, and AMI mechanics are frequently seen on the tarmac carrying out maintenance under plastic tarps in the pouring rain or the blistering sun with salt spray enveloping them; this is the normal environment in which the Saab 2000, a virtually entirely computer-driven aircraft, must operate.

The other development of significance is that AMI has made the sound decision to retain its HS748, after more than a year of unsuccessfully attempting to sell it.

The plane may be based in Fiji and used on a lease/charter basis by other airlines; but by keeping it, AMI maintains an essential backup for the Saab and the Fiji-Marshalls route.

Since AMI is the only carrier that services these four nations in the central Pacific, the backup is crucial to reliable operations.

But the big question that has to be asked – and is being asked in Majuro – is: can the Saab 2000 work out here?

Saab 2000's Australia-based vice-president for marketing and sales, Peter Greensmith, says, "The aircraft is the right one to meet the needs of the Marshall Islands into the next century but we do need time to prove it."

But time – and patience – is something that AMI is running out of. The Saab 2000 owned by AMI was the 17th to roll off the assembly line at the Saab factory in Sweden and, as the only one in the region,

it's fair to say that AMI has been the guinea pig for Saab's foray into the Pacific market.

And since the beginning of this year – particularly since an ill-timed breakdown in January stranded heads of state and foreign ministers from virtually every Pacific country who were in Majuro for Amata Kabua's funeral – AMI has turned up the volume of its criticism of the Saab.

Saab officials say that improved maintenance, coupled with basing the maintenance operation in Fiji, can cut days off delivery time for parts from Europe, and will improve the operations – one reason that AMI negotiated a deal late last year to have major maintenance done at Air Pacific in Nadi.

But government officials in Majuro say that the expectation that the Saab would get better with improved maintenance is a prediction that has turned out to be "a mirage".

"There have been quite an amazing number of breakdowns in the last year."

And AMI general manager Randy Hanna observed that despite a \$US3-million spare-parts package provided by Saab, just about every time the plane has a problem it turns out to be a part that is not in stock and must be ordered from Europe.

In late February, however, the Saab went through its first C-check, the 3000-hour FAA-required overhaul.

While in the hangar for the C-check, Saab and AMI engineers installed a series of what Hanna described as "non-mandatory improvements that will assist the plane's reliability".

If the improved service in late March into April is any indication, the twin-engine, 50-seater has responded to the servicing it received in Fiji in February.

It appears, too, that some heated criticism of the Saab by AMI and government officials in Majuro has stimulated greater efforts on Saab's part to improve the Saab's service.

The Scandinavian company is attempting to market the Saab 2000 in Australia and other parts of the Asia-Pacific region. So, stabilising AMI's Saab 2000 operation is crucial to its marketing success.

"We are as keen as anyone to fix what is undoubtedly a problem," Saab's Greensmith said. "Our reputation is on the line too and we are not at all happy when people are stranded around the Pacific, or Marshall Islanders' travel plans are disrupted."

He believes that three things must happen to improve the Saab's service:

- improving maintenance skills through better training;
- investing in better facilities, tooling and support equipment, including hangar; and
- getting a second aircraft in operation to provide back-up.

When the Marshalls government initially negotiated the deal with Saab in the early 1990s – while the 2000 was still a drawing-board concept – it signed a deal to buy two Saabs, with an option to purchase two more.

The Marshalls bought the first \$US16-million Saab, but the second one, to have been delivered in mid-96, has been leased to another airline for operations because the Marshalls, facing increasing funding cutbacks, couldn't pay for the second one; after the experience with the first, it's doubtful that the Marshalls government and AMI would want to take the risk of buying a second one – another reason the sub-regional idea makes sense, since so many other countries gain the benefit of the service AMI is currently providing.

Hanna said AMI was working with Saab to develop a long-term plan for Saab 2000 maintenance, and that Saab had been very helpful in this.

But a related issue to whether the Saab is the right plane is simply this: can a small airline in an isolated area successfully operate a single plane that, because it is so high-tech, requires extreme levels of maintenance precision and computer-driven diagnostic capabilities, and quick access to a ready supply of spare parts?

Which leads back to the sub-regional airline idea.

For AMI has proven one thing beyond doubt: there is a steady and increasing volume of passenger and (especially) cargo business to and from Fiji, Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Marshalls.

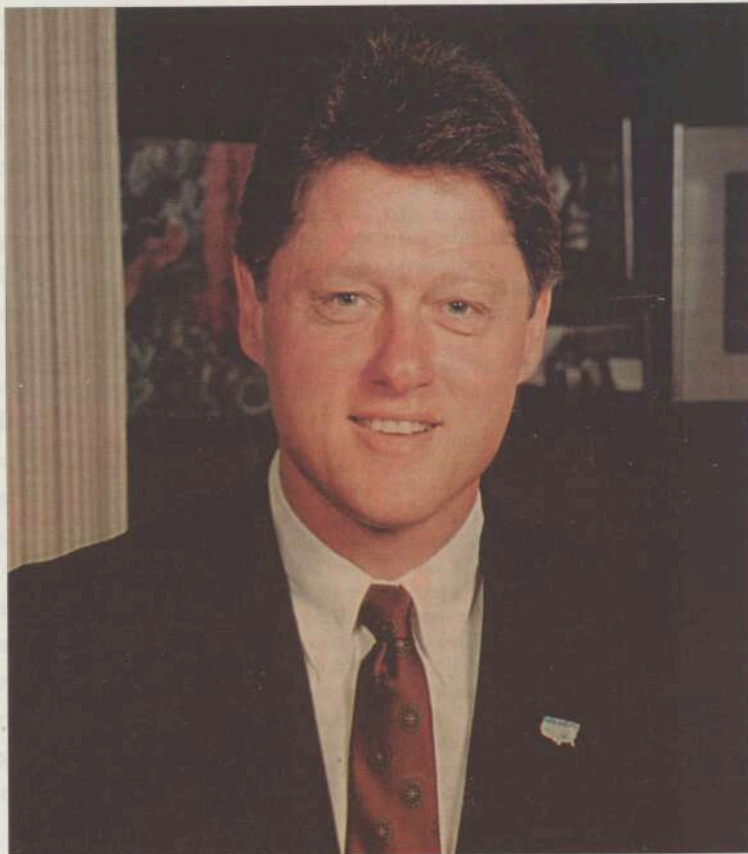
Air service that can be stabilised has a ready market in this sub-region.

The question – given that many countries have their own ideas about air service, and are somewhat less than enthusiastic about airline cooperation when it comes time to anti-up with some money – is who will finance air cooperation in the central Pacific area?

With both the ADB and Saab getting into the picture, that question may soon be answered. ■

■ POLITICS

Campaign cash for more independence



Gutierrez sent more than \$640,000 towards the Clinton (pictured)-Gore campaign

By DAVID NORTH

Did the presiding officer of Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs back in 1969-1970 send major cash contributions to Britain's then ruling Labour Party to speed independence?

I doubt it, but that is exactly the technique used by Guam's Governor, Carl Gutierrez, as he seeks to secure more (but not total) independence from Washington.

According to the mainland press, Gutierrez put on a campaign fund-raiser when First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton stopped in Guam (in 1995) on her way to the United Nations' Women's Conference in Beijing. Subsequently Gutierrez and his allies sent more than \$640,000 to various

parts of the Clinton-Gore campaign.

The governor's objective: to use the money to attract the attention of the White House regarding Guam's long-delayed bid for more independence. Guam wants to control its own labour and immigration policies, and wants to use much of the land now occupied by the US military.

Gutierrez, a traditional Democratic politico now in his first term as governor, must have figured that he knew how mainland polls operate; if you give really significant amounts of campaign money, the White House grants "access" and, maybe (this is where it gets both clouded and controversial) the gifts result in the adjustment of federal policies to meet the donors' needs. At least that is what Gutierrez must have hoped.

The Guam gifts, while remarkable in several ways, were small change compared to the hundreds of millions poured into various Democratic coffers by well-heeled interest groups, such as bankers, lawyers and bankruptcy specialists. (The Republicans actually raised much more money than the Democrats did, often in similar ways, but their behaviour has secured much less media attention).

The mainland press had been full of stories about big donors being invited to spend the night in the Lincoln Bedroom of the White House, and of various Asians making apparently illegal contributions to the campaign.

Non-US citizens cannot give money to US political parties, and enough foreign money was channelled through various fronts so that the Democratic National Committee, under heavy pressure, has given back millions of dollars.

A particularly unattractive case involved the presence of a representative of the mainland Chinese Government, a gunrunner, at a White House function.

While it is not clear that the Guam contributions were illegal - residents of the islands are US citizens, and if they move to Hawaii or the mainland, they can vote - all this money from this unusual source did raise some eyebrows.

For example, it is clear that the amount of money raised per adult resident in Guam (about \$10 a head) was much higher than in any other territory, and perhaps more (per capita) than in any of the states.

Further, according to the *Washington Post* "Guam Government employees also gave more to President Clinton's campaign than public servants in any other state or territory." Perhaps this, too, was figured on a per capita basis.

But did the governor get what he wanted from the president? Well, no, or at least not yet; but before we get to that, a little background.

For years Guam has been seeking a Commonwealth status, which would free the island from many federal laws; many of its leaders want a deal like that given to the nearby Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, which sets its own labour, gambling and immigration laws. (Taxation is not an issue; the federal income tax does

■ POLITICS

not apply to any of the US flag territories; there are local income taxes, but the money stays on island).

There is nothing in the US constitution, or even tradition, providing a mutually agreeable way for a territory to evolve into something other than a state (as both Alaska and Hawaii opted to do).

So each time a territory wants more freedom, a new mechanism must be established. (The Brits on the other hand, in the decades after World War II, worked out an almost mass-production system for spinning colonies into independent nations.)

Guam set up a Commonwealth Commission, and conducted some quite specific referenda on specific provisions. Later the Territorial Legislature passed the draft agreement, and the governor signed it, taking the whole process very seriously. Successive mainland governments have been less interested in the process, and wary of some of the provisions.

Were Guam to seek independence, rather than continued existence in association with the US, these provisions would be less troublesome to Washington.

But three elements have given both the Bush and the Clinton Administrations problems:

1. The Commonwealth Act established a special political status for Chamorros, allowing only such persons to vote on any eventual decision to seek independence. Washington, with its own black-white controversies, does not want to give any class of people more rights than others on the basis of race.

While Guam has cleverly blurred the issue ... saying, in effect, that Chamorros are people who lived on the island in 1950 and their descendants (thus defining away thousands of mainlanders and post-1950 immigrants) – Washington does not like this notion.

2. Immigration regulation. The US (like Australia and New Zealand) has a welcoming immigration policy and a relatively easy naturalisation process; on the whole these three nations' policies are based on an egalitarian tradition.

The Chamorros of CNMI, however, have opted for a two-caste society; native-born Chamorros on top, and tens of thousands of guest workers (who can not become CNMI citizens) on the bottom. Many US policymakers worry that Guam, given its druthers, would adopt a CNMI-like immigration system.

3. Labour regulation. Guam is covered by the US minimum wage and by mainland labour laws; CNMI has its own minimum wage, a fraction of the \$5.15 an hour going into effect on Guam and the mainland on October 1. Again, some US officials worry that Guam would adopt a CNMI-type set of labour standards, in which Asian temporary workers would work for below-poverty wages.

These are major, gut-level policy issues, and it is no wonder that Washington has been leery of Guam's proposals. Rather than seeking to modify Guam's position on these three matters, the Governor decided he would go the political route – flood the Democratic National Committee with unexpected money from his island, and hope that Clinton would order his underlings to give Guam's leaders what they want.

Meanwhile Gutierrez's underlings were enlisted in the cause, and the *Pacific Daily News*, working within the US tradition of reporting campaign contributions, ran a partial list of the Guam donors, most of whom were identified by title and most of whom gave an even \$1000. One ex-Guam journalist, looking over the list, wondered how so many \$30,000-to-\$50,000-a-year officials had scared up the \$1000.

"Did some of them only give their names, and not their money?" He said to me. He was alluding to the practice among some of the Asian donors to the campaign, of funnelling overseas money through American names when reporting contributions.

While there is no firm answer to that question, yet, there is an interim answer to the earlier question – did the President give the governor what he wanted on the issue of Commonwealth Status?

Maybe such a move was in the works, but when the story on major campaign contributions from Guam hit the front pages it was only a day or two before the White House announced that it was still studying the Guam issue, and it had not changed its policies.

Earlier there had been stories that the administration posture had changed. The *Washington Post* quoted a couple of nameless officials who said that their agencies' posture on Guam had shifted, at the direction of the "political people" after the campaign money arrived. Another story was that the latest working paper circulated by Washington's Guam Commonwealth

Negotiator, John Garamendi, was said to contain some elements favourable to Guam.

"Maybe Garamendi is saying something a little different, but that's not Department of Interior policy yet, much less that of the White House, or of the Congress," I was told by a reliable source.

Garamendi, an active Democrat, perhaps was, in fact, making a difference on this matter. He is the latest of half a dozen senior officials to hold the thankless, part-time post of Commonwealth Negotiator, nominally a presidential appointment, but usually the choice of the Interior Secretary.

Garamendi, as Deputy Secretary of Interior, is the highest ranking of the string of negotiators, and brings to the post a self-confidence based on, among other things, his record of having won a competitive state-wide election in California, America's most populous state. (After service in the state senate, he became California's first elected insurance commissioner, a post he gave up in a losing race for the governorship.) He may well be willing to go further than his frustrated predecessors as negotiator, in the hopes of breaking the deadlock between the islands and the mainland.

But at the moment, the governor's efforts to buy "access" may have backfired on him and on his island.

Meanwhile, two other US flag territories in the Pacific, both with complex relations with Washington, are taking quite different approaches. There is the CNMI posture, and then there is that of American Samoa.

CNMI's embattled governor, a nominal Democrat, is Froilan Tenorio; while no champion of Saipan's notorious sweatshops in the garment industry, he is adamant that CNMI must maintain its control of labour and immigration matters. Various Congressmen, on the right and left, have threatened to place CNMI back under Washington's control on these matters, and Tenorio, up for re-election this November, wants to defeat these efforts.

His strategy: invite conservative members of the Congress of the US, their staff members, and other opinion-makers to visit Saipan, at CNMI expense, to play golf and swim (during the Washington winter) and to take a very carefully-controlled look at the conditions of the temporary workers on the islands. (There are more temporary workers than permanent residents of the islands – a situation which exists nowhere

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■ POLITICS

else under the American flag, and is probably something for the Guinness Book of Records). If CNMI were a hotel - or a garment factory, for that matter - it would be illegal to pay the (considerable) expenses involved in flying Congressmen and staff to the islands, but under the ethics rules of the US Congress, CNMI is treated like a state or local government, so there is no legal problem, although some segments of the media have expressed outrage. (CNMI is said to have spent more than \$1 million on these trips and other PR measures).

One of the visitors, Doug Badow of the far-right, Washington-based Cato Institute, called CNMI a "remarkable laboratory of liberty," according to the *Post*.

A Department of Interior official replied to the paper: "there are still widespread abuses of overseas contract workers in the CNMI." This was a reference to the garment factories that continue to produce goods marked "made in the US" which are then shipped to the mainland without paying customs fees or being counted against quotas. The raw materials, the workers, and many of the factory owners all come from outside the US, but the garments are assembled on Saipan.

Most of the tours of the island include visits to clothing factories owned by Willie Tan, who was fined \$9 million by US authorities for widespread violation of the local minimum wage law. Tan is a major figure in CNMI politics. Recently 20 of his workers, saying that they had not been paid even the minimal CNMI minimum wage, reported that Tan's foremen had threatened them with deportation if they reported their wage problems to the government.

While the governor of Guam tries to secure more independence for his island (with cash) and while the Governor of CNMI tries (with junkets) to preserve Saipan's freedom of action, there is no such effort underway in American Samoa, where all concerned appear content with Washington's light supervision and heavy subsidies.

One institution which benefits from both is the territorial senate, a governmental body which is, in effect, American Samoa's Great Council of Chiefs. Only chiefs (*matai*) can serve, and only *matai* vote in the elections. And, to the best of my knowledge, the chiefs do not raise money for any off-island elections, neither in the US nor in the UK. ■

■ AGRICULTURE

Creepies and crawlies

The problem of the Giant African Snail

By CHRIS PETERU

Anybody who has seen the Giant African Snail (*Achantina Fulica*) sliding around a plantation or garden may sense this member of the gastropod (literally meaning Belly booted animal) family is a serious contender for most unwanted mollusc on the planet. As Western Samoans are discovering, this pest is big, ugly and looking to relocate permanently.

If ever there was a bunch of people wondering if the aliens in the movie, *Independence Day*, were based broadly on what they've been battling since 1993, it's the agricultural department staff. The military equivalent is called a full scale invasion. So how did things get to the situation where parts of the country now look like a Giant African Snail convention centre?

The arrival of the snail could not have come at a worse time for the struggling agricultural sector. Produce prices, due in part to the introduction of a 10 per cent goods and services tax, were doing cartwheels locally. Cyclones had torn the heart out of the taro industry that brought in more than \$US4 million in overseas earnings and, to top it off, a taro blight eventually destroyed any taro not being exported, which was most of it. Fruit fly had been around for a long time already.

Farmers were a despondent lot, one sign being the scores of rural villagers playing cricket on weekdays, instead of tending plantations as their farming instincts had told them to for generations. Looking to reverse the trend, the

agriculture department initiated a cash bonus scheme to rev up productivity and morale. However, that eventually came under a cloud, and was eventually shelved when scams began to emerge involving farmers being paid for non-existent plantations by agriculture officers, and other pyramid-game-type rip-offs. The agriculture minister, Misa Telefoni Retzlaff, a lawyer, farmer, and millionaire publicly stated that we wouldn't see the results of all the productivity from the bonus scheme for five years. He can bet on it.

By then, the initial wave of snails had spread, after arriving from Apia wharf via container, allegedly from neighbouring American Samoa, which had also been fingered by customs officials here for causing the taro blight.

With the failure of quarantine officers to do their job, agriculture minister Retzlaff tried an intensive spray programme to napalm them. It was only partially successful as some families, for reasons possibly explained later on, refused to have their plantations sprayed. Urgency was needed but despite the tremendous efforts of some villages and officials it didn't really happen.

Because nine times out of 10, a state of urgency for state officials is often responded to down the power line as a call for no urgency. And getting state employees to operate with urgency is like asking the finance minister how much money Polynesian Airlines has cost the taxpayer in the last four years. Neither question is likely to draw a response in the near future. So, the years rolled by with plenty of publicity, but never enough cash to buy the chemicals to see the snails off, says government.

■ ECONOMY

Not that the African Snail was in danger of being wiped out in a hurry. It is hermaphroditic, (self breeding) and can lay hundreds of eggs in a sitting. Nocturnal by nature, hardy and able to grow up to eight inches (20 centimetres) long, it is custom made for the humid Pacific Island climate. And if it rains, hey, it just makes it easier to slide around. The diet is a hundred per cent organic, including all kinds of crops, and plant materials.

Then a single 40-watt light bulb went on in the Brains Trust of the agriculture department: pay people a set amount per kilo to collect snails. If it had been a rap song they would have called it *Bonus Scheme*; it's the Bomb and gone triple platinum. Farmers and citizens alike were to go on a national track down the snail campaign, to knock one over for their country and their bank accounts.

The message went out and the hunt began with the enthusiasm Samoans usually reserve for collecting telegraphic transfers at the Bank of Western Samoa. Buckets of snails began turning up at the Ag department. Followed by tens of thousands more. It was amazing.

Television and newspapers ran stories of Buffalo Bill proportions as snail bounty hunters talked about the merits of sea water over boiling water to finish the pest off.

For a time it looked like the island had licked the problem the island way, that the



Sofara ... "We tried our best"

2842 sq kilometres of land, housing 57 people per square kilometre, would be saved. All this could have had a happy ending until reports of snail breeding with at least the same skill level as the snail genocide programme started to emerge.

The only thing that made triple platinum sales then were snail numbers and public hysteria levels. The payment scheme had clearly blown up in the hands of its creators, who may have realised at that point that money can buy a lot of

things but it can't guarantee good honest service.

Department director Tuisugaletau Aveau Sofara, however, believes stories of snail breeding were unfounded, and called the payment scheme a success. "Well, there was a lot of comments about [snail] breeding, but I don't believe it, I've yet to see any real evidence of it. There was a lot of talk. There was just a lot of snails around.

"It does eat crops but if there are better choices around it does not eat crops but will go for better choices around. If there is none and there is taro there then they will eat that."

He downplayed the potential of the pest to create havoc on local agriculture. "It's very early to gauge its effect on exports and subsistence farm crops. It doesn't appear to be a real threat to exports and produce.

"African snails are a pest, a serious pest, and whatever limited resources we were given to work with, we tried our best." But it was unlikely another pay-for-snails programme would be initiated. Towards the end of year, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, who have a sub-regional office here, sent in their expert. "He did surveys, wrote a report but most of the things he recommended we were already doing."

The report is due to be released shortly, says FAO director Dr Vili Fuavao. Reliable



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AGRICULTURE



Giant African Snails ... ruining plantations and crops

sources say its overall conclusion may be at variance with the agriculture department position.

In spite of ever-increasing numbers, the problem has been confined to the main island of Upolu, in particular the capital, Apia, and nearby suburbs.

Recent sightings in the southern side of Upolu have been brought to the department's attention. About seven per cent of the total land mass has so far been infested. Even with stringent inspections it will only be a matter of time though before it will be found on neighbouring Savaii, a 90-minute boat ride away, says Sofara.

"Every day we have at least two inspectors on the wharves of both islands and at the airport running checks. This has been going on since '93. The only thing is for people to collect them and kill them. The alternative is to use bait. Sprays are very effective against snails, but the problem is we haven't got the money to buy the chemicals. You gotta spray the area to kill the foliage, then you bait."

That may soon change, if grant assistance from Japan through the Second Kennedy round agreement comes through. Western Samoa is asking for between 300 to 500 tonnes of pesticide and herbicide to launch a blanket spraying offensive.

"I am pleased with the results of the quarantine programme but it is only a matter of time. But you need to get together to cooperate. One family will do it and another won't."

There are a lot of ways to inadvertently introduce these things. As well, people are careless, some do it to try and be funny, while others do it to be spiteful," says Mr Sofara. Agriculture Minister Molio'o Teo Filo says of the urban areas around Apia which have continuously been the worst hit: "I think people are doing it deliberately. There have been reports from Fagalii [a town suburb] that people have dropped sacks of snails in the street."

Shortly after his cabinet posting, Filo said he felt the payment scheme had not been very effective and that he did not see much chance of full eradication in the near future. A former businessman, he told the local media that people were the main reason for snail numbers increasing.

Says Filo: "The problem is that people are moving them from one place to another. If they don't shift them around, they are only a small creature and can't move that fast." Encouraging Samoans to harvest anything that can't be sold or eaten is proving a tough assignment despite village awareness programmes using the seven department officials assigned to contain the pest. Agriculture board member John Schwalger reckons everyone should look under their cars before leaving home. His theory goes that the snails cling to the chassis of the vehicles, fall off and start breeding again.

Fat chance. There must be plenty of Samoans who can't even look under the front seat, without stomachs two and three

colliding then rebounding and whacking them in the face. Unlike the escargots (*Helix*) variety, the French enjoy with a Bordeaux red, Western Samoa, along with several other island nations, have received a type that is gastronomically and (unless there is an agriculture department payment scheme operating) commercially useless.

Samoans love their food almost as much as they love going to church and gambling. But it wasn't until the snails turned up that there has been any other serious threat to the annual figures for consumption of subsistence crops. Cyclones, taro blights and price fluctuations aside, there is still plenty to eat. But at the agriculture department research station, Nu'u, near the capital, the department's once pristine crops are systematically being munched to death.

Neighbouring suburbs like Alafua where the University of the South Pacific has its agricultural campus, and Vaitele, home of the country's main brewery and cigarette factory, have also been hit. "I don't care what the government thinks, the snails are ruining my plantation and crops," says Vaitele resident Peter Tolo.

He says he has been forced to let five acres of land lie idle because of the snails eating his yams, tomatoes, and cabbages. "We have to accept the pest as part of the environment we have," says director Sofara. Oddly, that's the same approach some of the characters on *Independence Day* were trying to encourage others to do as well. ■

■ POLITICS

NZ's Island MPs' early impacts

By **ATAMA RAGANIVATU**



Tukuoroirangi Morgan



Taito Phillip Field



Mark Gosche



Arthur Anae

As New Zealand's parliament progressed beyond the halfway mark in the first year of a three-year term, its new Pacific Island representatives could look at their accomplishments to date with varying degrees of satisfaction.

Of the trio, Tukuoroirangi Morgan has certainly 'achieved' the highest profile. His role in the Aotearoa TV shambles (*PIM* April) ensured he became the subject of malice and ridicule throughout the nation, although the only "crimes" he can legitimately be accused of at the current time are naivete, insensitivity and opportunism.

In parliament, Morgan represents Te Tai Hauauru, one of five seats designated for the Maori roll. He first came into public prominence as a Maori affairs correspondent on television. Very few New Zealanders are aware of Morgan's Pacific Island connection, which was gained through his *Mangaia* (Cook Islands)-born father.

However, the 39-year-old Morgan was raised by his maternal grandparents on a *marae* (small traditional Maori dwelling area) and Tainui tribal influences have been paramount in his life.

Despite this and aware that the concerns of Pacific Island people are, very often, also the concerns of Maori, Morgan does not shy away from the responsibilities of being the first part-Cook Islander MP. He states: "I am confident that this government will come up with a programme for the Pacific Island community's economic and social recovery. If we don't address their problems, it will be at our peril."

The community's economic and social recovery is also very much on the mind of the coalition government's other Pacific Island parliamentarian, Arthur Anae. During a well constructed maiden speech, Anae summarised the history of Pacific Island people in NZ and presented his vision of their economic future.

"Our forebearers were always self-sufficient at home," he proclaimed. "But, after traditional [manufacturing and labouring] jobs began drying up in New Zealand during the 1980s, we have become more and

more dependent upon the state [for welfare] here. In the modern economy, different skills are required from the manual skills which were previously sufficient for us. We have suffered because of our lack of language, numerical and social abilities and, without retraining, we have lapsed into beneficiaries.

"We were not beggars at home and I want to see welfare dependency buried forever as far as the Pacific Island community is concerned. Through greater educational opportunities and increased employment, we can get our people back to work."

Born on Christmas Eve, 1945, Anae left Auckland Technical Institute 25 years later, having gained a Diploma in Business Administration.

His business interests now include a travel agency, a taxi company, residential and commercial property and a sheep and cattle station. He can also claim four years as the commercial manager of Polynesian Airlines and two years' employment with the United Nations at Rarotonga in the capacity of Air Transport Consultant.

Anae has served, in various functions, no fewer than 16 community organisations. Eleven of these cater predominantly for the Pacific Island community.

If Anae's maiden speech and earlier utterances are any indication, he regards the fulfilment of full employment amongst New Zealand's Pacific Islanders as a personal crusade.

Mark Gosche shares the same goal. However, the means by which he proposes to bring it about are very different from Anae's.

The Employment Contracts Act, introduced by the previous National government, remains a cornerstone of the current National-New Zealand First coalition's employment-creation policy. Anae will point out that the ECA has delivered many new jobs over the past six years through deregulating the labour market, but its detractors claim (with considerable evidence to back them) the act has adversely affected the wages and conditions of workers, particularly in the sectors of employment in which Pacific Island people are engaged in large numbers.

Gosche spent much of his maiden speech attacking the controversial legisla-

■ POLITICS

tion, stating: "Working people have produced much of this country's wealth. Yet, this fact has been ignored by our leaders who treat workers as just another commodity in the market place or, even worse, as an enemy to be vanquished. During my term in parliament, I intend to campaign to get rid of the Employment Contracts Act."

Exactly how Gosche's Labour Party can maintain job growth, having disposed of the ECA, it must be said, remains a matter for conjecture.

Just as Anae is very much a product of the free market and commerce, Gosche boasts a conventional socialist pedigree. For most of his 41 years, he has been actively involved in the trade union movement and served as a full-time official with the Service Workers' Union since 1981 before entering parliament. His earliest jobs include journalist, freezing worker, student teacher, hotel worker and groundsman.

The differences in backgrounds and philosophies between Anae and Gosche do not augur well for the hope, commonly expressed immediately after they were elected, that the four Pacific Island MPs would form a lobby group and work together for the welfare of their community.

Taito Phillip Field, who must now be regarded as the "elder statesman" of the New Zealand Pacific Islands political scene despite being a comparatively youthful 44 and with only one full term in parliament under his belt, confirmed: "I have seen little evidence of any great will for us to work together so far."

"Having four members in the house is very significant but we must use it for effective representation and delivery to meet the needs of our community. I am still hopeful we can co-operate together."

Education is one obvious area of common ground for the quartet. All agree it is an essential ingredient in the betterment of Pacific Islanders.

But, here again, there may be conflict between Gosche's desire to establish Samoan-language nests for preschoolers (amongst his greatest regrets, he says, is being unable to speak the language of his father) and the importance Anae places upon assimilation. Even if the four do man-

age to form an informal grouping, there is not a great deal these still inexperienced backbenchers can attain at the current time. But each has acquired a place on one or more of the all-important select committees and that is a sign they will be considered for more influential positions in the future.

Anae has been appointed to the Maori Affairs, Social Services and Regulations Review committees; Morgan also features on the Maori Affairs Committee, as well as the

Health Committee; Field gained a seat on the Social Services Committee too, and Gosche will doubtless make his presence felt on the Government Administration Committee.

New Zealand's Pacific Islanders would be unrealistic to believe that the presence of Morgan, Gosche, Field and Anae in parliament will immediately enhance their lives.

However, having four voices in the corridors of power must be regarded as a very positive development. ■



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■ MEDIA

Pressing for freedom

FSM's free speech vs cultural sensitivity debate

By **SUSAN PROKOP**

The voice on the answering machine greets callers: "Hi. This is Sherry O'Sullivan. I have decided to fight this evil conspiracy into the dirt. So - my appliances are not for sale!" Thus, the embattled former editor of the *FSM* (Federated States of Micronesia) *News* has thrown down the gauntlet to her detractors who recently sought her deportation and brought legal proceedings against her.

A journalist and writer for over 25 years, O'Sullivan had been editor of the *FSM News*, the country's only independent newspaper, for the past three years. In March, the FSM Congress adopted Resolution 9-106 calling for O'Sullivan's deportation on the grounds that the newspaper was "not in the best interests of the government" and describing her as an "undesirable alien". Speaker of the Congress Jack Fritz told the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) that the resolution was not meant to attack a free press but that O'Sullivan had disregarded "local customs, traditions and culture".

Soon after the FSM Congressional resolution passed, her two business partners, who constituted two-thirds of the newspaper's board of directors (she was the third), voted to remove O'Sullivan from the board and as editor. This was followed by broadcasts on the government-owned radio station repeating charges by her former business associates of various deeds of misconduct. One programme, O'Sullivan contends, seemed to imply a connection between the FSM News board of directors' dispute and Resolution 9-106 "as well as implicit support from the president's office to have me run out of town".

O'Sullivan, 53, readily acknowledges that "this may seem like I must have done something completely egregious to incur such a war-on-two-fronts response". However, she insists that her efforts to bring some accountability to public officials and to "shine a bright light" on election improprieties are the reasons behind



O'Sullivan ... fighting "this evil conspiracy"

the actions of the FSM Congress. For example, during her tenure, *FSM News* investigated matters, such as critical government audit reports, which had not been examined in the past. Her paper also featured stories about "widespread bribery at election time" and balloting practices such as "group voting" which violated voters' ability to cast their votes in private.

As for the actions of her former business partners, she notes that their confrontation with her was preceded by her attempt to publish an article about the first criminal tax-evasion case ever brought by the FSM government against an FSM citizen. It just so happened that the defendants in that case were the father and sister of one of her fellow board members, she said. When the story ran in the newspaper, the other two board members blacked out the names of the accused. O'Sullivan charged them with censorship asked for their resignations from the board. She admits, "That pissed them off."

As this magazine goes to press, she describes her status as "nebulous". The Congressional resolution has no force of law, according to government officials. The president can order an alien deported if he finds that the individual's presence in the country is contrary to the national interest. However, such a finding must be preceded by a thorough investigation of the charges and development of evidence and must follow certain established procedures. The External Affairs Department, FSM's equiv-

alent to the US State Department, has recommended that Nena not act on Resolution 9-106. Calling the paper "kind of a tabloid", one government source said that O'Sullivan's editorial viewpoint may have at times been too prominent. But he did not indicate this constituted grounds for the government to take adverse action against her. O'Sullivan's larger problem may stem from the fact that she is no longer employed. In late April, she received a notice from the FSM Immigration Service asking her to leave the country apparently because she now falls into the category of "Visitor", which entitles her to stay in the country up to 30 days, unless she gets a job.

O'Sullivan has retained legal counsel to challenge the radio broadcasts of her partners' charges. In a letter to Nena, her attorney warns that the connection by a government-owned radio news programme of these "libellous" charges with the Congressional resolution could be perceived by the public as an endorsement of "the suppression of a free press in Micronesia". O'Sullivan calls it "ironic" that the FSM received positive ratings for "free expression" in a recent US Human Rights Report.

She reports an outpouring of support from the FSM public. Recently, she announced her intention to stay, "start over again, begin a new newspaper, and fight the idiots and their respective resolutions". At her own expense, she published a small newspaper and circulated free copies around FSM and the region. That edition "contains amazingly angry letters from FSMers here and abroad; they are angry at their congressmen and recognise the principles at stake".

This feisty expatriate Canadian came to Micronesia in 1992 to write a book and "fell in love with the place". Asked what she will do if, despite all her efforts, she is forced to leave, O'Sullivan says: "I don't know. If the resolution is really adopted by Nena after all this international feedback, I think I'll have a small intellectual heart attack and go back to the US [where she has permanent resident status]. That isn't a happy decision because I don't like the lifestyle I'll have to adopt - as well as the dress codes - if I am to survive there. If I can overcome the current onslaught here, I certainly will stay and start another newspaper. I love it out here in the Pacific, wars and all."

■ ADVERTISING FEATURE

■ WESTERN SAMOA INDEPENDENCE

Economically speaking ...

Prospects have seldom been better



Coconut oil ... main revenue earner - Picture from the Talamua Magazine

Reports by **CHRIS PETERU**

With 35 years as an independent nation up on the clock this month, Western Samoa will be pulling out the party hats for what is expected to be the biggest celebration the country has held in years.

This comes after independence birthdays, once the main event on the social calendar, went from the sublime to the submerged over the past few years. Since 1993, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi began placing more emphasis on an annual

tourism festival which has brought an indifferent response from Samoans and tourists alike.

The decision to beef up the festivities was talked over since last year, and could indicate that marking independence in the style of old may have edged ahead of moves to go all out for the tourist dollar. Economically, though, prospects have seldom been better.

Following little growth in the 80s, then a series of cyclones in 1990/91 which caused an estimated \$600 million of destruction, the turnaround has been remarkably swift.

The International Monetary Fund reports Western Samoa as being the only

Pacific Island nation to have recorded any real growth (six per cent) in gross domestic product for the 1995-96 financial year, the second year running. Treasury is projecting a further growth for the current financial period.

A 10 per cent goods and services tax introduced in 1994 has added millions of extra tala into government coffers. The 35 years of independence arrives at a time when confidence in the economy is fueled by a new sense of entrepreneurship and business optimism. Inflation is currently at 7.6 per cent.

President of the Manufacturers Association Eddie Wilson, whose chocolate and coconut-processing company, Wilix, was nominated 1996 Exporter of the Year, says all the signs for success are coming together.

"Things are great. You will find there is an unbelievable atmosphere of enthusiasm, of confidence. Gone are the days when you had a few people running businesses. You look around now - nearly every Samoan is running a business; it's a vibrant atmosphere.

"What we are adopting now is an attitude of more adoptive, more integrated, more cooperative atmosphere. Before, the mentality was, 'Its only me and I', but now it's opened up."

One illustration is the revival of coconut oil and cocoa as export commodities in the 90s.

This has led to Samoa establishing the biggest processing plants for raw materials in the Pacific, and looking to source from more material around the region to maintain productivity volumes. Coconut oil now leads the way as the main overseas revenue earner.

Finance minister Malielegaoi is confident that the buoyant economic mood will prevail with manufacturing and tourism leading the way.

The major foreign investment in manufacturing thus far has been from Yazaki International, a Japanese wire-harnessing plant that has become the biggest private-sector employer since it began operations six years ago.

"Yazaki employs almost 3000 people. The value-added equivalent provided by just that one point is roughly equal to our total agricultural exports for last year. So, the importance of the manufacturing industry is easy to understand," explains Malielegaoi. Moves to expand the manu-

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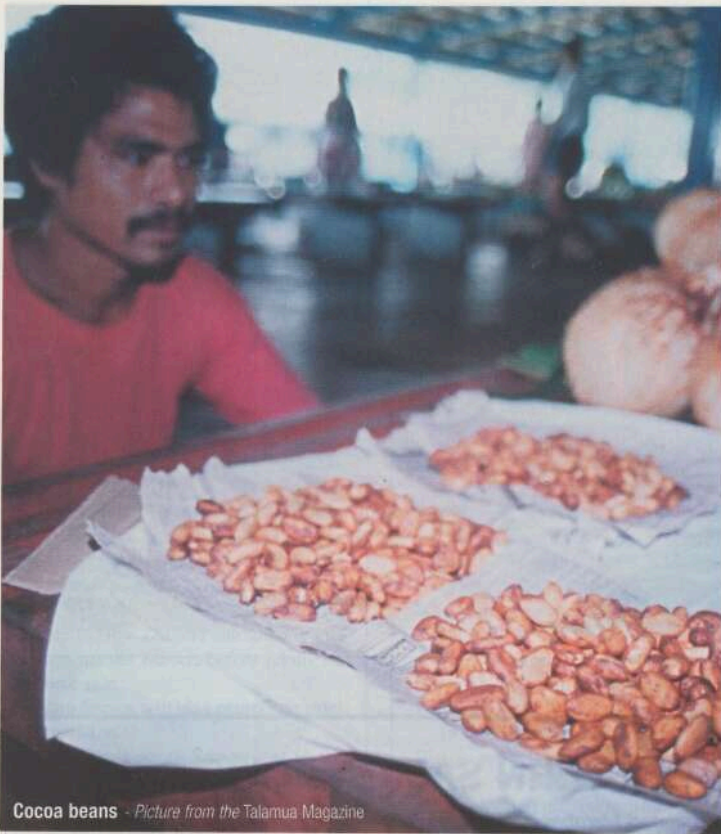
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Cocoa beans - Picture from the Talamua Magazine

facturing base are slowly picking up, with the Chinese government planning to launch five new companies here to complement the needs of local manufacturers, said Wilson.

Malielegaoi noted that tourism now earns the country four times more in foreign exchange earnings, although agriculture is supposed to be the mainstay of the economy. Agriculture was still a priority, though, with a burgeoning beef industry, while the country's first fish-processing plant (privately owned) recently came on line to service markets in Pago Pago and the United States.

Adds Wilson: "I see Samoa as the Japanese of the international market. OK, Fiji is ahead in terms of population size and development, but we are not far behind. We've got an efficient manufacturing base in terms of competitive costs, in terms of quality, and we don't have any problems - political, racial or whatever.

The way I want to see it is that 10 years down the road, we will be at the forefront of manufacturing in the Pacific. I don't think that is unattainable."

But, while all the economic indicators paint a picture of progress and impending prosperity, what continues to taint the Human Rights Protection Party government credibility record is the treasury's lack of financial accountability.

For over seven years, most of which

As Western Samoa launches into another 35 years, the sedate pace of life is slowly being overtaken by the advance of information technology.

Neighbouring American Samoa network

Nua Nua television and a consortium of investors plan to have cable television coming through Samoan households in time for this month's independence celebrations.

Ten channels will be available, including the CNN news network, sport, documentary and movie channels. At \$75 dollars a month, the new deal looks set to attract plenty of viewers.

With a motto announcing "Samoa is founded on God", it was hardly surprising when, last month, televangelism also became available care of a satellite link with the Trinity

On the fast track of information

Broadcasting Network in the United States.

Station manager Ricky Meredith, who runs Go For Christ Ministries is hoping Television Graceland will be allowed to broadcast for up to 12 hours a day.

The arrival of enough television to create a new 'couch banana' subculture means Samoans will have more programme options than any other viewing audience in the region.

Anyone wanting to complain about the avalanche of programme options now only has to pick up a cellular phone - that just went on sale for the first time recently. The Western Samoa government has a part shareholding with a New Zealand-based company in the venture, which involves a one-off connection fee. Local calls will cost about 30 cents. ■

■ ADVERTISING FEATURE

have had Malielegaoi at the helm, the treasury has not been audited, leaving the Human Rights Protection Party government open to suggestions of widespread skulduggery.

Ramming supplementary budgets through the house that exceed the designated one per cent discretion allowed by law is just one example of how the HRPP has chosen to ride roughshod over proper accountability and respect for the public interest.

With the controller and chief auditor suspended since 1995, and changes to the constitution that reduce the powers of the chief auditor's office to that of a toothless tiger, it raises questions as to the ethics of the present administration.

Corruption is nothing new in Samoan politics, but the fallout from this ongoing debacle will no doubt return to haunt the country in the future.

Ironically, the deafening silence as to why the checks have not been carried out has done little to affect the popularity of the government. ■



Man at work - Picture from the Talamua Magazine



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■ W-SAMOA INDEPENDENCE

A feast of rugby

Independence celebrations have created a windfall for rugby-crazy Samoans, with four internationals being played this month at Apia Park, the home of the national team. On Saturday, the national side clashes with Ireland before facing the New Zealand Maoris, Tonga, and finally Fiji in the first week of July.

The Irish, who suffered a 41-25 loss to the Samoans when the teams met at Landsdowne Road in November, play six matches in New Zealand culminating in a Test against the Maoris before taking on the home side.

Manu Samoa will play composite sides in preparation.

Although Western Samoa lost to the New Zealand Maoris on their 1995 tour to New Zealand, it was the 60-0 lockout that Fiji handed out during last year's tri-series that most supporters will be keen to see avenged.

"The Fijians were just too good on the day - we were in the game but they were just on a roll.

"I think with a good build-up through the other Tests, we should be able to give them a better game this time round," says Samoan fullback Veli Patu.

The Fijians could still spoil the party, though, with a squad that is full of talent.

Although the Manu Samoa have a home town advantage, they will have to be on the ball to maintain their no-loss record at Apia Park that now stretches back to 1992.

The availability of champion winger Va'aiga Tuigamala, who is reported to be enthusiastic about playing the Test season, has yet to be confirmed. His presence could be a deciding factor with his game-breaking ability.

Independence Test Fixtures: versus Ireland June 7; v New Zealand Maoris June 14; v Tonga June 28; v Fiji July 5. ■

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■ WESTERN SAMOA INDEPENDENCE

A touch of history

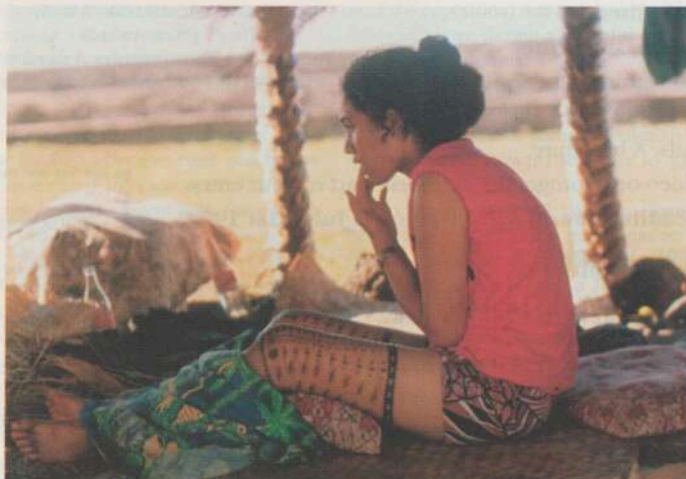
According to archaeologists, Samoa was first settled nearly 3000 years ago, after a gradual migration from South-East Asia. As Samoan legend holds, the islands became the cradle of Polynesia or Hawaiki, from which settlers voyaged and settled on other Polynesian islands throughout the Pacific.

In 1722, the explorer Jacob Roggeveen became the first European to come into contact with Samoa, which eventually led to intermittent contact between European sailing ships and locals. More permanent relations between European and Samoans came into being with the arrival of the London Missionary Society during the 1830s,

which led to the islanders' rapid conversion to Christianity.

Traders looking for copra, sandalwood and other products were also established and began to flourish along with trading firms, notably German, which initiated large-scale production of copra and rubber. The Germans' success led to an increase in interest from other powers with colonial designs.

By the late 1800s, Samoa had become the focal point of colonial rivalry between Germany, Great Britain, and the United States. By 1900, this had led to the islands being divided up between Germany and the United States. The eastern part of the group of what is now American Samoa came under US control and has remained so to the present day. Germany was given the western



The tradition goes on ... a Samoan girl just tattooed - Picture from the Talamua Magazine

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PROFILE

Area: 2394 sq km.
Population: 165,000.
Population density: 57 per sq km.
Language: Samoan/English.
Life expectancy at birth: 67.8 years.
Adult literacy: 98 per cent
 (a UNESCO report in 1994 suggested that real literacy levels were significantly below those indicated in official figures).
Human development Index rating:
 0.700 (88th out of 174).

POLITICS

System of government: a unicameral constitutional democracy, with strong traditional elements.
 The current Head of State is one of four paramount chiefs, and holds the office for life. Thereafter, the Legislative Assembly will elect the Head of State for five-year terms.
 There are 49 seats in the House.
 Government holds 36.
 Universal franchise was introduced in 1991. In order to be a parliamentary candidate, one has to hold a *matai* (chief) title.
 The minimum voting age is 21.
Head of State: Malietoa Tanumafili II. Prime Minister: Tofilau Eti Alesana.
Main political parties: Human Rights Political Party (HRPP), Samoa National Development Party (SNDP).

ECONOMY

Annual GDP per capita:
 approx \$WS2000.
Growth Rate: 6 per cent, the target for 1996-97 is 7 per cent.
Inflation rate (end 1996):
 7.6 per cent and fluctuating.
Government budget (projected for 1996-97):
 Revenue \$WS288.4 million;
 Expenditure \$WS312.7 million.
 Deficit \$WS24.3 million.
 Accumulated Government debt
 \$WS389 million.



The tradition goes on ... a kava-drinking ceremony - Picture from the Talamua Magazine



Traditional Samoan house - Picture from the Talamua Magazine

islands, while Britain was given territorial concessions elsewhere in the Pacific.

Although somewhat austere in their governing of the western islands, under the Germans, huge tracts of lands were converted into commercial enterprises. The country's first effective road and bridge system was put in place and an efficient communications system with the outside world was established.

At the outbreak of World War One in 1914, a New Zealand force of 1400 soldiers landed to claim what was then German Samoa, the first country to be won over by the allied forces. But, as with the Germans, Samoans found the New Zealand administrators difficult to live with.

This led to the formation of the Mau, a national movement that became instrumental in bringing about Samoan self-rule. In 1929, the Mau leader Tupua Tamasese (whose nephew and namesake is now lead-

er of the opposition) was murdered by New Zealand troops during a peaceful demonstration through Apia.

Tamasese's death and the election of a more enlightened Labour government towards the issue of Samoan nationalism allowed moves toward self-rule to gain momentum.

On January 1, 1962, Western Samoa became the first Pacific Island nation to become an independent state. Celebrations have for years been held in June because the weather is meant to be better.

Since then, a combination of Westminster-style government fused with some traditional elements has set the stage for 13 successive governments and four prime ministers.

Prime Minister Tofilau Eti Alesana, who was first elected to parliament in 1959, becomes the longest-serving PM and member of parliament in history. ■

■ SPORTS

Beatrice to break another barrier?

By **ATAMA RAGANIVATU**

These are indeed heady days for Pacific Island sports. Last year, Paea Wolfgramm became the region's first Olympic medallist and, in March, the Fiji sevens rugby side made further history when winning a world team title. In addition, our sportsmen and sportswomen are making significant waves throughout the globe in sporting fields as diverse as golf and sumo wrestling, rugby league and volleyball.

The next major milestone in what must surely be remembered in years to come as South Pacific sport's era of emergence could occur at August's World Athletics Championship in Athens, for Western Samoan Beatrice Faumuina, currently the world's third-ranked women's discus thrower, is highly fancied to claim a medal.

If she does succeed, it will be a momentous achievement as no Pacific Island track and field athlete has previously come even remotely near winning a medal at either the Olympics or World Championships.

Faumuina, though, is used to the role of pioneer. In 1993, when 18, she became the first Polynesian to win an AGC Young Achievers Award. The awards are vied for annually by the creme de la creme of exceptionally talented young people. The only qualification is that candidates must be resident in New Zealand. The majority of recipients come from academia, the arts and the sciences, but the personable young Samoan athlete was amongst the most popular to be

honoured. In 1991, she was named Auckland Young Sportsman of the Year. That prize was gained through her prowess in netball and softball, as well as athletics. In the former, she had captained the Queen City selection which finished second at the New Zealand Under-18 championships.

Despite Faumuina's considerable ability in netball and the fact her role model was the great Samoan netballer-cum-softballer Rita Fatiafalo, athletics became her major sporting passion during the 1990 Auckland Commonwealth Games.

Faumuina's role in the greatest sporting extravaganza ever staged in New Zealand could hardly have been more minor – during the opening ceremony she, along with several hundred other local schoolchildren, waved blue sheets of plastic which were intended to give the impression of the rolling Pacific Ocean voyaged over by Polynesians for numerous centuries.

"Of course, I realise most people watching would not regard it as a big deal," she said recently. "But, for me back then, it was a fantastic experience. I got a great buzz from being out there in the middle of the stadium."

The subsequent Games events, particularly in the athletics arena, were also to play a part in mapping her future. She recalls: "Watching all those international-class competitions at close quarters made me realise what was required to succeed at the highest level. You have to be extremely dedicated and single-minded to make it and the challenge appealed to me. From then, it was only a matter of time before I would give up other sports to concentrate on athletics."



Faumuina's first taste of an important international meeting as a competitor came in 1992 when she flew to Seoul, South Korea, and finished fifth in the discus at the World Junior Athletics Championships, even though nearly all her rivals were almost two years older.

She threw 52.20 metres in Seoul and, since then, her progress has been constant. A year later, Faumuina gained the New Zealand record with 55.20 metres and attracted the attentions of several American universities offering athletics scholarships.

Faumuina, however, preferred to stay at home and study for a business degree at the Auckland Institute of Technology. A grant, gained as part of the Young Achievers award, enabled her to prepare for the 1994 Commonwealth Games without any financial concerns.



Beatrice Faumuina (right) with Western Samoan Olympic javelin thrower Iloai Suanui

She travelled to Victoria ranked number four in the Commonwealth and, therefore, expected to be out of the medal count. But in her final fling, she managed 57.12 metres to snatch the silver medal. Although Faumuina increased her New Zealand record to 60.28 metres in 1995, she remembers the year with sadness. In February, her coach, Miriam Stanley, died suddenly after a heart attack and, competing in the World Championships for the first time, she finished a disappointing 28th out of 33 competitors.

Consolation came in her acquiring a distinguished successor for the much-missed Stanley. Les Mills, the mayor of Auckland and, accordingly, it can be argued, the second most powerful political figure in New Zealand, stepped into the void. The 1996 Commonwealth Games men's discus gold

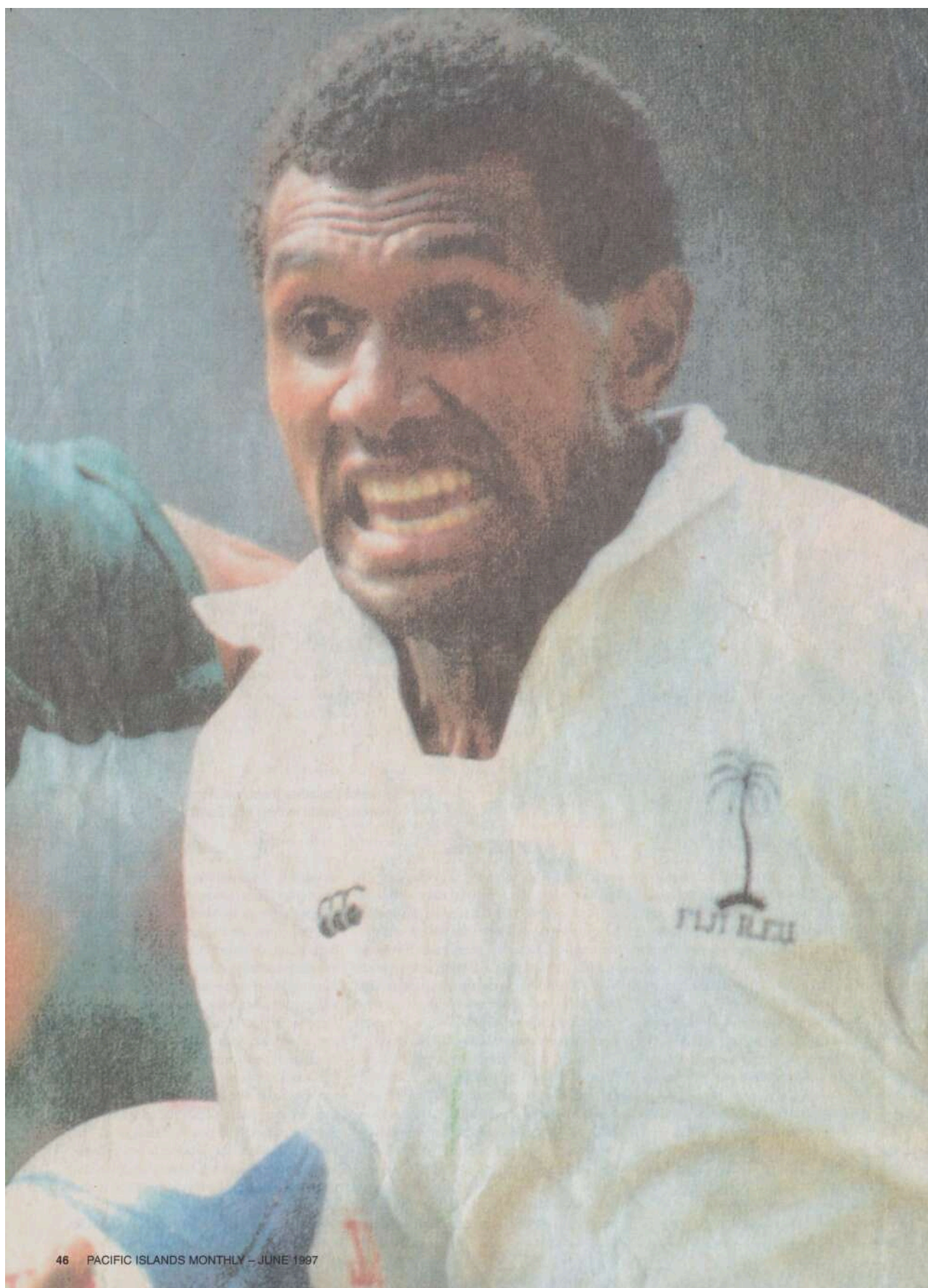
medallist, Mills attends an average of 20 functions a week in his capacity as mayor and, consequently, is not able to devote the time either he or Faumuina might wish to her training. But, this is no great handicap as Mills has an able assistant in five-time New Zealand hammer-throwing champion Max Carr and, whenever either Carr or Faumuina require advice, Mills is never more than a mobile phone call away.

The Mills regime has resulted in Faumuina doubling the time she spends in training, changing her throwing technique, concentrating more on lifting weights than in the past and devoting all her energies to the discus (she had previously also competed in the shot put).

Ranked 35th in the world at the end of 1995, Faumuina had jumped into 10th place after her first full year under Mills' wing

despite a disappointing showing at the Olympics. Then, at the Australian National Championships in Melbourne this March, she projected her discus 68.28 metres and herself into the world's top three. The most exciting statistics about Faumuina, though, does not concern the lengths she has thrown a projectile but that her date of birth is October 23, 1974. She is just 22 years of age and discus throwers do not generally reach their peaks until over 30.

Even if Faumuina returns empty handed from Athens, she will still have plenty of time to gain further sporting glory for the South Pacific. The possible lack of a "big event temperament" – which her experiences in Sweden and Atlanta suggest she might perhaps be bedevilled with – is the one major hurdle between her and a date with history. ■



■ SPORTS

Vidiri waits

By **ATAMA RAGANIVATU**

Jonah Lomu's chronic kidney condition, which threatens to curtail the career of the world's most famous rugby player, may well prompt an appeal to the International Rugby Board for a reduction in the three-year stand down period from international rugby imposed upon Joeli Vidiri in 1995 when he turned his back on Fiji in the hope of greater glory with New Zealand.

Minus Lomu, the All Blacks find themselves short in world-class wingers and Vidiri's recruitment would prevent any possibility of this becoming an Achilles heel. The New Zealand Rugby Football Union are believed to be reluctant to directly mount a formal appeal with the

IRB. However, media reports suggest them to be in favour of him challenging the ruling as a private individual.

When Vidiri's manager, Rod Ketels, was approached for comment on the matter, he stated: "Nothing has been ruled out and I'll be sitting down with Joeli and seeking his thoughts. Obviously, he wants to play for the All Blacks at the earliest feasible opportunity."

As soon as Vidiri does play for the All Blacks and establishes himself on the international scene – and, such is his talent, most knowledgeable observers now believe this to be little more than a formality – it will complete a true rags-to-riches story. The son of a taro farmer, Vidiri was born in the Nausori Highlands and, like many other males from that area, spent much of his youth at the Mosi Rugby Union Club, when not attending

The waiting game ... but at 23, Vidiri has time on his side

■ SPORTS

Queen Victoria High School. But he only gained notice on the national scene after moving to Nadi and securing a place in its senior representative selection.

Vidiri made his international debut at the 1994 Hong Kong Sevens, immediately before touring Japan and New Zealand with the Fiji senior XV. He played enigmatically during the latter expedition, but a superb try in the 'test' against New Zealand Maori gave an indication of the Fijian flyer's true ability.

1994 also saw Vidiri's "big break". In June, compatriot Luke Erenavula reluctantly decided to depart from New Zealand rugby union and embark upon a career in Australian rugby league. To compensate his Kiwi club, he promised to recruit a player who would be capable of adequately replacing him. That player was Joeli Vidiri.

Within a few months, Vidiri had not only confirmed himself as an able substitute with the Pukekohe club, he also inherited Erenavula's places in the Counties provincial team and New Zealand's side at the Hong Kong Sevens.

Vidiri played in four of New Zealand's five games in the Crown Colony including, ironically, the final victory over Fiji. Shortly afterwards, he reverted back to his native country and appeared in a test against Canada. That, though, proved to be his last outing in the white jersey.

Upon returning to Pukekohe, Vidiri declared himself unavailable for further duty with Fiji and stated his intention to represent New Zealand, as they offered greater opportunities for worldwide eminence and financial reward. The decision was a decidedly risky one.

Eligibility rules decreed that he would be on the international sidelines until 1998 – and there was absolutely no guarantee of the All Black selectors showing interest in him then. Vidiri's numerous critics of the time hastily dismissed his All Black chances. The Fijian's handling and tackling, they claimed, were far too suspect. It took just over a year, during which time his skills were being constantly honed, for all the sceptics to be silenced.

Throughout the 1995 New Zealand domestic season, Vidiri and his fellow winger, Lomu, created havoc together as Counties reached their first-ever National Provincial Championship semi-final. Following this, the All Black selectors named him amongst their reserves for the



Jonah Lomu ... resting from kidney injury

tour to Italy and France, before being reminded of the IRB's eligibility rules.

The 1996 campaign opened with another successful sojourn to Hong Kong and then Vidiri proved conclusively that he is a player of true world class with a series of scintillating performances in the Super 12. He scored 10 tries in seven games (only South African James Small grabbed more) and created numerous others whilst tormenting some of the Southern Hemisphere's premier teams. His role in helping Auckland Blues take the inaugural title was acknowledged with the Ford Rugby Super 12 Player of the Year accolade.

Suddenly, Vidiri was the flavour of the month and amongst his many newly won admirers were officials from the Canberra Raiders and Sydney Bulldogs rugby league clubs. They offered him contracts each believed to be worth \$US106,000 a year.

However, Vidiri turned these down and reiterated his determination to become an All Black.

He had overshadowed the mighty Lomu during the Super 12 and continued to eclipse him as their Counties side qualified for a first-ever NPC final. Selection for the New Zealand Barbarians side, which defeated the full England national combination last November, confirmed Vidiri's status within Kiwi rugby union.

At Twickenham he looked every inch a true international star. Vidiri will be only 23 on May 2 this year and, even if he has to wait until 1998 to don the All Blacks jersey, time is now certainly on his side.

After their exploits in 1996, New Zealand are the early favourites for the next World Cup to be staged in Wales two years from now. The odds against a Fijian being involved in the trophy-winning side then are short. ■

■ CULTURE

The meeting point

An impressive documentation of European and island encounters



BY LIZ THOMPSON

Tucked away in the heart of Sydney University sits the Macleay Museum. Climbing two flights of stairs, you reach the small, dark museum stuffed full of animals and artefacts and, at its centre, the Island Encounters exhibition.

The collection draws on a diverse collection of Pacific artefacts – gathered in the Torres Strait Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Caroline Islands and Kiribati – during the second half of the 19th century.

As you enter the display, one of the first things you see is a superb *tapa* dress from Samoa hanging on a wall. The dress is made of bark cloth and plant dyes with hibiscus plaiting on the sleeves and pandanus strips on the neckline and hem. Blue and yellow dyes are used in the pandanus decoration and red on the rest of the dress; the motifs are applied by hand or stencil. The dress was found inside a rolled-up shaggy mat in the museum in the early 1980s.

An inscription written on the mat reads, "From Mataafa to d'Alpuget".

Mataafa was a Samoan chief and Jean Albert Gustave d'Alpuget was a commercial customs agent operating throughout the Pacific region from the 1880s. The mat is said to be of a type associated with the *taupo* or high-born village virgin and was used to prove the virginity of the *taupo* when she was married. It is not known whether there is a connection between the dress and the mat in which it was wrapped.

The style of the dress itself, with large

puffed sleeves and ruffles, suggests outside influences. Information in the exhibition speculates that probably missionaries led to the changes in the style of clothing worn by Samoan women.

The dress was given by Blanche d'Alpuget, who donated her father's collection of Pacific Island artefacts to the University of Sydney's Anthropology department in 1936. However, most of the exhibition is made up of pieces from the William John Macleay collection. Macleay amassed more than 2000 indigenous artefacts from Australia and the Pacific between 1874 and 1891.

The exhibition is comprehensive. One of the rarest pieces is an incredible turtle shell mask, the face of which is built onto the rounded shell of a turtle and decorated with pearl shell eyes with a beeswax cen-

tion to New Guinea (via Torres Strait) in 1875 and collected either by Macleay or his cousin, Captain Arthur Onslow, a retired naval officer and politician.

The Chevert expedition was the first Australian scientific mission to a foreign country and aimed to collect and document the natural environment of PNG. For five months, collecting parties from the Chevert made trips ashore at stopping places along the east coast of Australia, Torres Strait Islands and New Guinea, amassing, according to Macleay, a "vast and valuable collection" of animal and plant life. While they did this, they traded tobacco, biscuits, beads and tools with indigenous people for ornaments, masks, bowls and weapons.

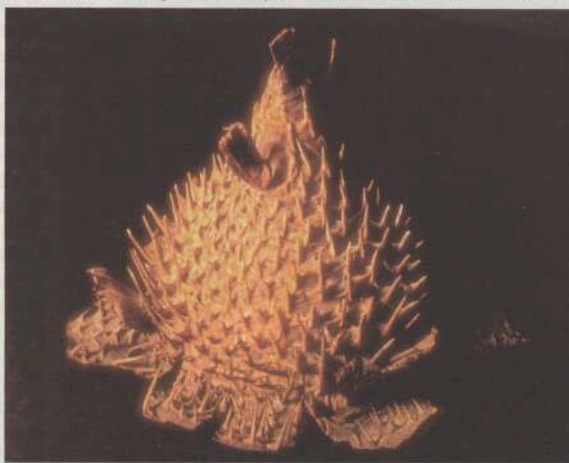
Apparently, this exchange was not really in the interest of collecting, but was seen as a way of developing relationships with the communities visited. It is hard to believe, looking at the quality of the collection, that at some point Macleay did not become interested in the objects for their own sake. In fact, he obtained artefacts from other naturalists, explorers, naval officers, ships' captains, missionaries and planters.

Some of the artefacts from the New Ireland and New Britain in PNG were probably obtained from natural history collector James Cockerell.

The exhibition includes some wonderful and rarely seen chalk figures. Just less than a foot high, these figures are said to represent deceased ancestors. In a 19th-century reference, the Reverend George Browne tells that the larger chalk figures were kept in sacred enclosures and the smaller ones in people's houses. Also from PNG, are traditional Malagan figures from

New Ireland and an extraordinary Papuan Hornbill from the Papuan Gulf, the head of which is on a short stick decorated with feathers.

This stick was found inside a conical-shaped mask made of bark cloth and plant fibre dyed with natural pigments. Davies speculates that the stick was probably used in connection with the mask in the Harno ceremony, during which a new door was constructed for the *evaro*, or men's house. Also from PNG are a couple of 'man catchers' hanging from the wall, wooden



Fish Skin Helmet collected by Brazier - Photograph courtesy of Macleay Museum

tre. Pieces of turtle shell used as decoration are tied on with plant fibre and red ochre is smeared over the whole mask. Some of the rare material, particularly the mourning skirts from the Torres Straits, may, speculates Susie Davies, the exhibition co-ordinator, have been more readily available as a result of missionary pressure to do away with certain traditional customs.

The mask is part of the museum's Torres Strait collection, which is the oldest held by any museum in Australia. Most of it was acquired during Macleay's Chevert expedi-

■ CULTURE



Turtle shell mask from PNG - Photograph courtesy of Macleay Museum

hoops and long poles with a vicious-looking spike. Artefacts from PNG in Macleay's collection are directly associated with European scientific investigations and exploration of the south-eastern part of the island in the 1870s and 1880s.

Several fighting clubs and weapons are on display, one of the most interesting a ceremonial club or baton, *wari hau*, from South Malaita in the Solomon Islands. Made of wood with a stone head and inlaid with pearl shell, the club was made on the island of Malaita by the Areare people. They proved to be of great interest to members of the Mendana Expedition led by Alvaro de Mendana in 1568.

According to records, this expedition was the first European contact made with Solomon Islands, and Mendana, the

Spanish navigator and explorer, believed the stone part of the clubs contained gold. It was on the Mendana expedition that the clubs were first sighted by Europeans but the one in the exhibition was not collected until the late 19th century.

Traditionally, these clubs were carried on a string around the neck and suspended down the back. They were worn by only men and their purpose was purely ceremonial. These artefacts from the Solomons, says Davies, reflect European, British and colonial interests in the islands during the second half of the 19th century.

John Brazier, one of Macleay's collectors who also worked at the Australian Museum for a while, went on independent voyages around the Pacific in 1865 and 1872. He collected artefacts from the

Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati) and the Caroline Islands during the voyage of the *Blanche*, some of which are on display in the exhibition. One of the most extraordinary is probably the Fish Skin Helmet. Made of porcupine fish and plant fibre, the helmet is typical of those worn with suits of armour from the Gilbert Islands.

The fish, dried and split open, rests on the head with its spike sticking up in the air. The armour on display with the helmet is made of woven coconut fibre and was worn during fighting. In 1872, Brazier purchased a suit of body armour and a helmet from a chief on Tarawa Island and the museum speculates that this is the suit on display. Brazier noted in his journals that body armour was being sold to European visitors to the islands and no longer being used for practical purposes.

Island Encounters, says Davies, represents "interaction". Macleay always emphasised in his diaries and in the press that the treasure he sought on the Chevert expedition was a natural history collection but there is little doubt that he established a valuable artefact collection in the process.

Without a doubt, from a contemporary perspective, the artefacts hold far greater appeal than the small mirrors and glass beads for which they were exchanged; a point which leaves you wondering at the equity of the "interaction".

The information leading up to the staging of the exhibition claims it will "try to present the indigenous perspective on the exchange of artefacts" where this is possible. Unfortunately, this is noticeably absent, though Davies suggests that "although the indigenous perspective in such encounters between Europeans and islanders is largely absent, some clues are revealed through the accounts of the collectors".

The indigenous perspective, had it had been forthcoming, would have provided a richer texture in viewing the overall context and meaning of the exhibition.

This aside, *Island Encounters* is an impressive and well documented exhibition.

A number of boards provide information about the circumstances under which the pieces were collected, quotes from newspapers of the time, extracts from collectors' journals, historical photographs and details about individual pieces.

It will remain on display at the Macleay Museum for a year. ■

■ MUSIC

The magic of Telek

"It has been said that when Telek was a child he was given a special *buai* [betel nut] to eat which has enabled him to receive village-based stories in his dreams that provide the inspiration for his songs..."



Story and
photography by
LIZ THOMPSON

George Telek is a quietly spoken and gentle man from a village near Rabaul in New Britain, Papua New Guinea. Most people know of his home as the place that was flattened by a volcano but, fortunately, his own village survived the devastating effects of the eruption.

In PNG, Telek has been a well recognised musician for 15 years, a local rock star. He was recently quoted in *The Australian* lamenting the fact that he was no longer able to walk about freely on the

road: "People say, 'It's George Telek' and everybody looks at you and you can't do anything because you are so popular. I like it for selling cassettes but to walk around it's a bit much."

But now his fame is spreading to foreign shores. Ever since his first highly successful collaboration with Australian band Not Drowning Waving, out of which grew the highly acclaimed album *Tabaran*, Telek has become an international name. He followed his collaboration on *Tabaran* with appearances at The Big Day Out with Not Drowning Waving in Sydney; Womadelaide '92 and '97 in Adelaide; and Sing Sing, a cross-cultural music collaboration which took place between Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islanders, Papua New Guineans and members of Not Drowning Waving.

Now Telek has become the first Papua New Guinean to release a solo CD – which has received rave reviews. Telek's musical

career began when he became a singer in a local village group in Rabaul, The Moab Stringband. He later formed the Jolly Rogers Stringband, named after a popular tavern in Rabaul, and, according to his press release, it was around this time that he became interested in electric bands.

In his village he collected empty tin cans, lined them up and began to teach himself percussion. Telek went on to form the Kagan Devils, named after a Japanese company that not only employed him, but also bought him a drum kit.

He later joined another popular Papua New Guinean band The Unbelievers Revival. It was during this time that he wrote and recorded his first song called *Talaigu*, which, became extremely popular in Papua New Guinea and which features on the Telek album.

Telek is probably best known for his band Painim Wok (a pidgin term which means literally "to find work"). Painim Wok was recorded by Greg Seeto of Pacific Gold Studios who also recorded the *Tabaran* album. The recording sold out as Painim Wok became hugely popular.

By this time Telek was writing an enormous amount of material and went on to produce five solo albums quickly becoming one of the most well known musicians in the country.

The self-titled *Telek* album recently



Telek in headdress

■ MUSIC



Telek and Bridie

released by Origin is a project instigated by former Not Drowning Waving member David Bridie who produced the album with John Phillips.

Bridie and Telek have collaborated on an impressive range of projects over the last 10 years and their mutual respect for one another as friends and musicians is obvious. Bridie has visited Papua New Guinea several times. When he travels to Rabaul he stays with Telek and his family. He recounts that sketches or demos for the material now appearing on the album took shape when he recorded Telek singing into a DAT machine whilst sitting on a plantation near Kokopo and on the beach at Bainings in East New Britain.

The elements of these early sketches remained the core to many of the songs now appearing on the album. He also recorded various sounds of the region and its insect life and some of these have made their way on to the album which has a very real sense of the PNG village and bush environment.

This sense of atmosphere is often enhanced by the use of traditional percussive instruments from PNG and by the didgeridoo played by Kev Carmody, one of

Australia's best known Aboriginal singer/songwriters. He plays the didgeridoo on the song *Anoro*, adding to the track's rich texture with evocative sounds that inspire a sense of the movement and calls of animals.

Kev was quoted in a *Rolling Stone* article commenting on Papua New Guinean wooden percussion instruments, "It's a blown instrument and the beautiful sound that comes out of it is like a day beginning, the birds making noises, the hunter goes out. We do the same thing on the didj. We put the calls of the birds out, we know our environment".

Production of the *Telek* album began last year when Bridie and Telek were invited to appear at the 1996 Bellingen Arts Festival and used the opportunity, while Telek was in the country, to commence recording at Tim Finn's Periscope Studio in Melbourne.

A broad range of impressive musicians gathered for the event: Ben Hakilits from Buka Island, who currently plays with Yothu Yindi, was on drums; Rusiat Wakit on acoustic guitar and backing vocals; Kev Carmody on didgeridoo; Archie Roach on vocals; as well as a number of Australian

musicians including Greg Pattern, Rob Crow, Joe Creighton, Angus, Bridie and Phillips.

The songs, mostly written by Telek, are performed in Tok Pisin, the national language of PNG, or Kuanuan. Despite the fact that the lyrics are sung in a language few people will understand, the power and emotion in Telek's voice and the rich layering of musical influences mean that language does not become a barrier in appreciating the album.

Telek merges traditional *tolai* songs, melodies and stories with contemporary rock, groove and the folky/gospel-tinged stringband sound. In previous cassette recordings made in PNG a lot of Telek's work has been quite simple – beautiful, often haunting melodies with musical accompaniment rarely heavily textured.

On the album, this simplicity is woven with the richly textured studio sounds produced by Bridie and Philips and layered with the influences of various other Australian and Aboriginal musicians.

Like all the projects on which Bridie and Telek have worked together it is a superb product of cultural and musical collaboration. ■

■ LITERATURE

Misfits, magic and mementoes

Sinners and Sandalwood is a tribute to the strange terrain of inter-racial understanding



By **NICOLAS ROTHWELL**

Last testimony from a vanished, near-forgotten world; obscure masterpiece by an unknown author; sentimental memoir, recapturing in age the bloom of youthful romance; tribute to the strange terrain of inter-racial understanding – *Sinners and Sandalwood*, a slim volume just published in Australia, is all of these things, and more, in 100 concise pages.

Subtitled "Tales of the Old Pacific", and bearing the unmistakable influence of those master tale-tellers of the ocean – Robert Louis Stevenson and Joseph Conrad – this is the lightly fictionalised record of a young sandalwood trader's impressions of the New Hebrides archipelago – today's Vanuatu – in the far-off condominium years of the late 20s.

The author, Frederick George Short, born in Britain in 1910, raised in India and New Zealand, "rebelled against the staid colonial society of the time, and at 17, he took ship for the tropical paradise of his adolescent dreams" – armed with little more than a volume of Shakespeare. *Sinners and Sandalwood* consists of six loosely linked short stories, enclosed by a pair of lilting poems. The first, "Coral Colours", has this lovely line which could stand as epigraph to the whole work: "Read while you may, for even now it vanishes away, that moment bright, and in the end all coral colours turn to white."

Loss, the anticipation of death, sombre fate, the recollection of a disappearing age – these are the themes of this record, both amateurish and profound, both subtle and colonial in tone. There are passages of short story writing and construction here

that rival the masters of the form; there are moments of profound emotional response to the spell of the Pacific. Sometimes, the old planter's brand of humour comes to the fore: "One of the delightful things about island people is their endless capacity of negotiation," declares the narrator of one of these stories.

But what gives *Sinners and Sandalwood* its peculiar force is the author's tilt on life – unusual, perhaps, among White men in the New Hebrides, but not as unusual as we may tend retrospectively to imagine. This is a book about the clash of two cultures and value systems, and their mutual fascination. Short's central characters are distinctly prone to falling in love with native women. They are prone, also, to adventures in the New Hebridian supernatural – sorcerers and bird-women and witches stalk these pages, and the magic works. This is the realm of the blue horizon, the Burns Philp steamer and the catalogue from Sydney, where centre-stage is held by larger-than-life characters, such as the libertine planter Jimmy Ruby, soft-hearted and philosophically curious, or the lovelorn English remittance man, Lethbridge. "The island provided a last refuge for many a queer fellow on whom a more sophisticated society would have frowned," says the teller of one especially apocalyptic story, "The Dugong's Skull", which explores the intriguing question of the dugong's emotional conduct, as well as laying out the cerebral Lethbridge's surprisingly modern theory of reality as composed of vibrations.

Throughout these pages, an open, keen response to native culture is on display, coupled with a consuming love for the nature of the islands: "Oh blessed isles, Oh blessed Melanesia, black, beautiful dreamer, living the last umbilical dream," exclaims one character in the midst of a celebratory feast – hardly a deep comment but, again, not quite what one might expect to find in a record of this particular time.

Here, too, can be found all the ennui and dislocation of plantation life: "When we were drunk enough to think soberly,"

says one offhand narrator. A bluff planter (who appears in several guises through these stories) is moved to offer, in one of the tales, this comment that encapsulates a way of life, "When you've lived here as long as I have, you'll accept the facts and forget about explanations."

The last of the pieces is "The Beachcomber's Story", a highly Conradian tale, which suggests both a prior reading of *Heart of Darkness* and extensive contact with the idealistic, intellectual anthropologists who began visiting the New Hebrides at the start of this century.

The Beachcomber, young Stephen Aisles, disembarks at Vila Harbour and heads for a remote plantation posting as company overseer. Intuitive, sensitive, he responds to the world around him by plunging too deeply into it, goes 'native', vanishes for an age, and experiences an inevitable psychological crack-up. Living with his adoptive tribe, he witnesses a cannibal feast, is half unhinged and heads back to Vila. There, outcast, shunned by White men, he drifts into mental chaos and succumbs to the siren call of union with the sea, the moon, the sky – he drowns himself in the calm, enticing waters of the harbour. This story is, in some sense, a self-portrait; the author's memorial to an aspect of his own character, remembered down the decades – a life set in a new perspective in the echoing arcade of time.

Short, after a strikingly adventure-filled career, and several reinventions of himself, lives today on Australia's Gold Coast, where for some years his main preoccupation has been nurturing many hundreds of native trees to create a haven for birds. In the wake of his New Hebridean days as plant manager and sandalwood trader on Santo, there have been episodes of New Zealand farmwork and university, World War II service in Greece and Egypt, tramping and camping across Australia, Himalayan treks and tiger-sightings; even a return to Santo and meetings there with old Melanesian friends – but those are other fascinating stories, and ones we can only hope this late-discovered raconteur will, in the fullness of time, tell us. ■

• Published 1997 by Jomaru Press, North Leura 2780, NSW, Australia. \$A24.95



**SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM SECRETARIAT
SUVA, FIJI.**

VACANCY

The Forum Secretariat was established in 1972 by the South Pacific Forum to encourage economic and political co-operation between its member countries*, and between those states and the more industrialised countries. To help fulfil the aims of the Forum Secretariat the following position needs to be filled:

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The Secretariat is seeking a suitably qualified and experienced person as Political Issues Adviser in its Political and International Affairs Division. The Political Issues Adviser will work closely with the Director of the Division in handling a range of Forum political issues including security, political development and governance.

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An Information Package on the position is available from the Secretariat and applicants are urged to obtain one. Inquiries should be addressed to Mr Aklesh Nand on telephone (679) 312-600 Extn 207 or fax (679) 305-573. Applications close on 16 June 1997 and should contain full information on education and career background, names, addresses and telephone numbers of at least three referees with whom the applicant has been associated professionally.

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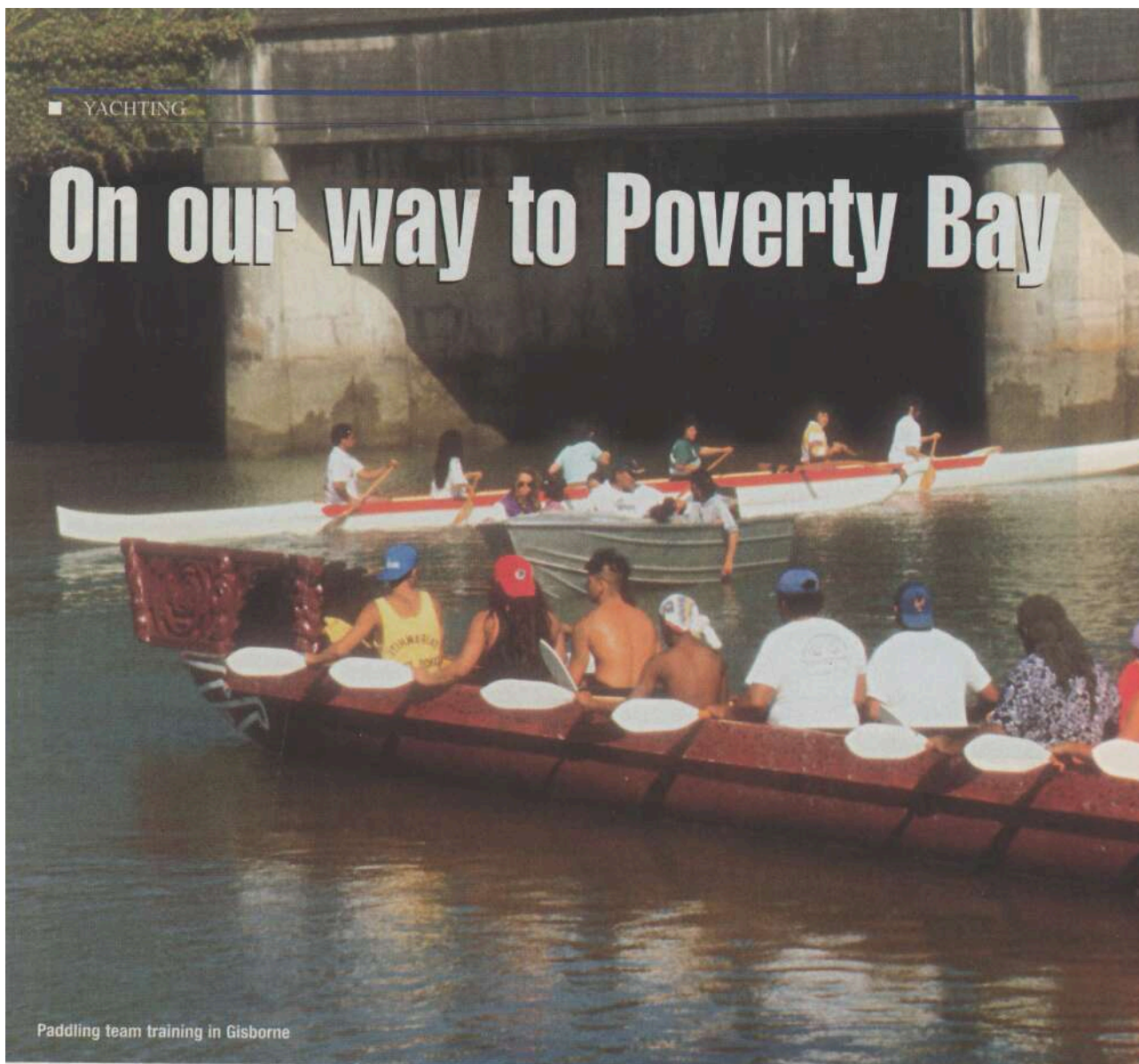
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■ YACHTING

On our way to Poverty Bay



Paddling team training in Gisborne

Story and photography by **SALLY ANDREW**

In Lyttleton, we bade farewell to Cruising Club manager Frank Wooley and his dog, Sailor (the canine commodore), then listened to another disappointing weather report.

For three weeks the wind had been blowing from the north. We retired to bed disgusted, and set the alarm for 3am. When we awoke, the wind seemed lighter. Our elation was short-lived. The forecast predicted northerlies of 20 knots up and down the east coast. We went back to sleep.

Two days later, we were at sea, motoring through a windless black night. Suddenly, bull kelp wrapped itself around our feather-

ing propellor and we came to a thumping halt. *FellowShip* was dead in the water, without wind to sail and no auxiliary propulsion. Fortunately, the Kaikoura Peninsula was miles away, so we drifted during the long hours of darkness. At sunrise, we managed to cut the kelp and free the prop, and continued our northbound trek to Poverty Bay. Mid-morning, we witnessed an eclipse of the sun.

The shipping lanes off New Zealand's east coast are busy and, at night, dangerous. Near Cape Campbell, the lights of a southbound ship passed much too close before disappearing quickly over the horizon. Then, a large ship, headed towards Cook Strait, crossed our bow. A good lookout is mandatory. Off the notoriously windy Wairarapa

coast, our sails hung limp – not a zephyr of a breeze stirred the water. We motored slowly northwards. Moments before sunset, we moored *FellowShip* to the seawall at Napier Boating Club.

I had just started breakfast when *FellowShip* lurched over and crashed sideways into the dock. I leapt on deck and found that Napier Harbour was experiencing a tidal seiche – a mini-tidal wave. The tide had dropped a foot in mere minutes. It wouldn't have been a problem except that it was low tide and *FellowShip* was already sitting in the mud. Over we went, leaning into the seawall at a precarious 25-degree heel, our tonnage resting on a lifeline stanchion.

Mayhem below decks. Everything that I'd carefully laid out on the galley counter-

■ YACHTING



New Zealand's Kaikoura coast

top – eggs, toast, pots, plates – slid with a crash. Foster tried pushing *FellowShip* away from the wall. Standing on the high side was equally useless. Only when the water suddenly rushed back in, almost as fast as it had left, did *FellowShip* right herself. Ten minutes later, it dropped and rose a second time. Quick repositioning of jerry jugs meant we fell over in the opposite direction, away from the seawall, with a bang and a boom, again, below decks. Day sailors, who were coming in the harbour at the same time, said they had experienced some weird and wicked currents in the entrance. I bet they did.

Local rain and flooding had set logs and clumps of trees adrift in Hawkes Bay. Luckily, Taupo Maritime Radio reported the position of these hazards to navigation and we gave them a wide berth. Nonetheless, in the dead of night, as we rounded Mahia Peninsula, we side-swiped a log which hit us three times as we charged through a black, moonless night under greatly reduced sail. It was impossible to slow down in 30 knots of southwesterlies.

After 17 hours of scary sailing, we entered Gisborne harbour. An old friend, Father Phil Keane, came to greet us, arms filled with stacks of personal mail, boxes of cookies, bars of chocolate. It felt like Christmas. By contrast, Captain Cook was unable to obtain even bare necessities like

fresh water and wood to replenish his ship, *Endeavour*. Consequently, he saddled the area with the name Poverty Bay – a sore point to this day with many of the *tangata whenua* (local people).

Forty-five-knot winds and thunderstorms were forecast so we stayed in port. Two northbound Kiwi boats, *Strider* and *Sequel*, took shelter too. They tied up alongside the dredge *Pukunui*. Ham radio operator Grey Crone and his old dog (also named Pukunui) invited us for a home-cooked lunch.

Facilities for visiting yachtsmen are poor, but the local welcoming committee, John McFarlane on *Janine*, endeavours to make a stay pleasant. His one-page guide to Gisborne's facilities includes the location of water, telephones, chandlers, repair facilities, supermarkets, and fuel. On the wharf, the Gisborne-Tatapouri Sports Fishing Club was organising a fishing tournament. Club member Doug Kerr drove us to Tatapouri's bay-side clubhouse where huge stuffed gamefish – a striped marlin, a yellow-fin tuna and an 800-pound black marlin – dressed the walls.

Many of Gisborne's predominantly Maori population are dedicated outrigger canoe paddlers. Teams train daily on the Turanganui River. Local carver and canoe builder Matahi Greg Brightwell, founding president of the Maori/Polynesian Outrigger Paddling Federation, has proselytised the fit-

ness benefits and cultural relevance of paddling for over 10 years.

Brightwell has powerful *mana* and is a strong, if controversial, character. He was the first Maori in modern times to build a voyaging canoe and sail it across the Pacific.

"A dream commanded me: 'Build a sacred canoe, sail the olden route, repair the spirit road broken for seven generations...'"

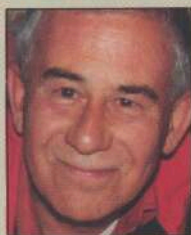
In 1985, Brightwell sailed *Hawaiki-Nui* from Tahiti to New Zealand unescorted. With him was his father-in-law, Francis Pura Tuarongo Cowan, who, decades before, had accompanied Eric de Bissshop on his infamous voyage by raft from Tahiti to South America. Greg invited us home for a dinner of chicken, *puha*, *kumara* and roasted potatoes and *rewena*. *Puha* is a delicious wild herb used in Aotearoa to flavour foods. We watched a video documenting his building of a magnificent 145' *waka taua* which, because of political reasons, lies unfinished at Whangara. On the floor, one of his sons (who already speaks English, French, Tahitian and Maori) studied Japanese.

The following day at dawn, we sailed out of the harbour, bound for the Bay of Plenty. As we departed, I couldn't help but wonder if our last impression of Poverty Bay had been Captain Cook's first: the light of the rising sun dancing on the white cliffs of Young Nick's Head. ■

■ OPINION

Simmering relations

Will higher Maori representation in parliament bridge the racial divide?



David Barber

WELLINGTON

It is inevitable that relations between New Zealand's indigenous Maori race and the Pakeha population are a dominant continuing theme in this country and I make no apology for returning to the subject. It is, after all, an issue impossible to ignore when you reflect on the following recent news events:

- a judge rules that Maori do not need the licence to fish for trout in the nation's rivers that everybody else must buy or face prosecution;
- a Maori sub-tribe refuses to pay a council's fees for dog licences because it says dogs are a *taonga*, or treasure;
- the Ministry of Maori Development says disparities between the standards of living of Maori and Pakeha threaten social order in the nation's cities;
- a Maori member of parliament says the Treaty of Waitangi is more important than the Ten Commandments;
- a Pakeha launches a petition for a referendum on replacing the treaty with a constitution guaranteeing equal rights for all New Zealanders; and
- a Maori takes a sledge hammer to the America's Cup yachting trophy, accusing the government of "illegal occupation of our country".

That little medley was guaranteed to get the race relations pot simmering and it surely did. As former Labour Prime Minister Mike Moore said: "New Zealand is tinder dry at the moment. One bright spark in the wrong place could ignite passions and unleash anger that has been suppressed for generations. For the first time in my life, I fear for the future of our country."

Now, Moore is a passionate man, with a passionate love of New Zealand and has been known to go over the top when talking about his country. But any thinking person must agree with his statement that race relations and Treaty of Waitangi matters are the "defining issue" of our age. "We could get everything right in economic terms, but if we fail here we fail everywhere," he says. Many people thought the scene was set for a rapid

improvement in the situation when 15 Maori MPs were elected to the new parliament last year, giving them representation roughly proportionate to their share of the population for the first time. With an appropriate voice on the nation's leading *marae*, Winston Peters' emergence as the deputy prime minister and a powerful say in government through coalition partner New Zealand First's clean sweep of the Maori seats, things were looking up.

With Maori at last given their rightful place in governing the nation, there was scope for the true partnership both sides yearned for in the interests of mutual development and racial harmony. All it needed was goodwill and common sense from both parties. Sadly, this has not proved forthcoming. Some Maori MPs have not helped their cause. Tukuoroirangi Morgan's \$90 boxer shorts purchase (*PIM*, April 1997) only compounded red-neck Pakeha suspicions that Maori leaders loved to ride on a taxpayer-funded gravy train and helped kill a Maori-language TV channel. Labour MP Tariana Turia's maiden speech depiction of non-Maori New Zealanders as *tauiwi* – or foreigners – and subsequent statement that the Treaty of Waitangi was more important than the Ten Commandments, the Magna Carta and the United Nations charter only alienated even those Pakeha sympathetic to Maori rights. The judge who interpreted the treaty to rule that, in some circumstances, Maori did not need a licence to fish for trout didn't help matters. His ruling was very qualified, limiting the right to fish without a licence to a small number of Maori from a particular *hapu* or *iwi*, which has traditional authority over a river fishery, providing conservation issues are taken into account.

The main purpose must be to provide for the fisher's own family or *marae*. Nevertheless, Moore said, the ruling was "just plain wrong, stupid, dangerous and inflammatory", asking how it could be policed. Little wonder then that the Pakeha man's suggestion of a referendum on replacing the Treaty of Waitangi with a constitution for all New Zealanders attracted widespread support. Denying his proposal was anti-Maori, Mark Whyte said: "There is a lot of racial divisiveness in our country and the root cause of a lot of it lies in the treaty. We're a long way on from 1840 and I think we need a different set of rules to live under so that all decent people who want to make New Zealand their home can do so without favour or discrimination." Under the law, he has 12 months to collect the signatures of 10 per cent of enrolled voters who can demand a national referendum. Its outcome would not be binding on parliament but would assuredly spark a very bitter and divisive campaign – the very thing the country does not need.

As Moore says, a referendum would be passed because there are more non-Maori voters than Maori – but it wouldn't solve anything. "It will simply feed the radicals who can then claim with justification that the legitimate needs of Maori are being dismissed." The government is planning to provide funds in this month's Budget for four new Maori commissions on health, education, employment and economic development to remove disparities such as Maori people being almost three times as likely as non-Maori to be unemployed. Maori are looking to their New Zealand First MPs and ministers to live up to their promises. Veteran Maori Council chairman Sir Graham Latimer has already warned that if they do not perform, a new Maori political party should be set up to challenge them. ■

■ OPINION

Aussie foreign secretary visits the SPC



Debbie Singh

SPC, NOUMEA

Australian Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade Philip Flood paid a four-day visit to Noumea in April to meet with French and New Caledonian representatives and discuss, amongst other things, Australia's involvement in the Pacific Islands region.

The visit, Flood's first to New Caledonia, also saw him spending a day at the South Pacific Commission to visit programmes and discuss Australia's involvement with the organisation. The secretary, who was accompanied by his wife, allocated part of the afternoon to address SPC staff, discuss the purpose of his visit and answer questions on Australia's link with the organisation, funding and Australian involvement in issues of media interest.

Flood said Australia had what he called "an abiding interest" in promoting regional economic stability and growth. Australia's aid to the South Pacific from 1996 to 1997 was over \$500 million (including its \$50 million in defence co-operation to Papua New Guinea). Flood said this allocation held steady despite stringent budgetary pressures.

Australia currently contributes over 35 per cent to the SPC core budget. But whether or not this percentage will decrease following the organisation's annual conference in Canberra in October this year remains to be seen.

Flood would not comment on the topic, saying it was a matter to be decided in Canberra. However, he indicated that the question of whether it was "healthy" for his country to contribute such a large percentage would definitely arise at the Canberra talks.

Flood maintained his country's commitment to the SPC and confirmed that Australia expected to provide over \$7 million to the organisation in 1996-1997, substantially complemented by extra-budgetary funding.

He said, in providing assistance to the Pacific, the SPC offered several advantages for Australia, particularly because its membership includes the full run of Pacific Island countries and territories and because of its ability to meet the specific needs of the region. "The SPC is establishing itself as a model for others

to follow through a process of reform and sharper concentration of effort," he said. "We take our membership and support for these organisations very seriously and, consequently, we have worked hard to ensure they are cost effective and contribute effectively to the regional process of economic reform and development. "An important principle is that a dollar not well spent in one area is lost to other priority programmes. Organisations cannot be all things to all people and choices have to be made about prioritisation."

Flood said the SPC's fisheries programme topped the list of Australia's funding priority areas to the organisation, stating: "The effective and sustainable management of fisheries resources is of central concern to the long-term wellbeing of many island countries. "Given that many Pacific Island countries are relatively resource poor, Australia considers that sustainable management of the fisheries resource is a vital means of achieving sustainable economic development in the region."

Flood also named the SPC health sector as a priority area in Australia's aid programme to the region and said Australian assistance had a strong focus on primary and preventive care and building local capacities.

He said his government was keen to see the revised AusAID/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-funded Pacific Islands Forest and Trees Support Programme deliver real outcomes in terms of improved commercial logging practices and better overall forest management.

He also highlighted the importance of the SPC's socio-economic programme which constitutes statistics, demography, culture, women and youth. In addition, the organisation's Community Education Training Centre (CETC) in Suva has also received extra-budgetary Australian funding.

Following his address, Flood answered questions from SPC staff on topics which included the "closure" of some of the services of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), the Bougainville crisis in terms of Australia's "special relationship" with Papua New Guinea, Australia's trade with the islands in terms of the replacement of the SPARTECA agreement and the influence of money power by large donors.

On the subject of Radio Australia and the decision not to shut down the service after weeks of speculation and uncertainty, the secretary said Radio Australia was run as an independent entity by the ABC and its future funding levels would be announced during the May budget.

Flood did not comment on SPARTECA, saying the agreement was being studied in Canberra.

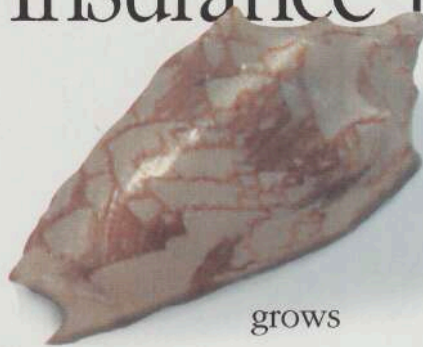
On the possibility of the United Kingdom returning as an SPC member, Flood said he could not comment because it was a matter for the UK to determine.

However, SPC Director-General Bob Dun says the return of the UK to the SPC would be a great vote of confidence in the Pacific in light of its historical ties to Britain.

"Membership of the SPC is a very cost-effective way of contributing to development in the Pacific Islands," he said.

Australia's consul-general in New Caledonia, Graeme Wilson, said his country was prepared to take a "fairly positive" view of new membership provided it was "cost effective". "For instance, Chile has, in the past, expressed an interest in joining the organisation and, no doubt, this interest will continue given Chile's commitment to the Pacific region," he said. ■

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