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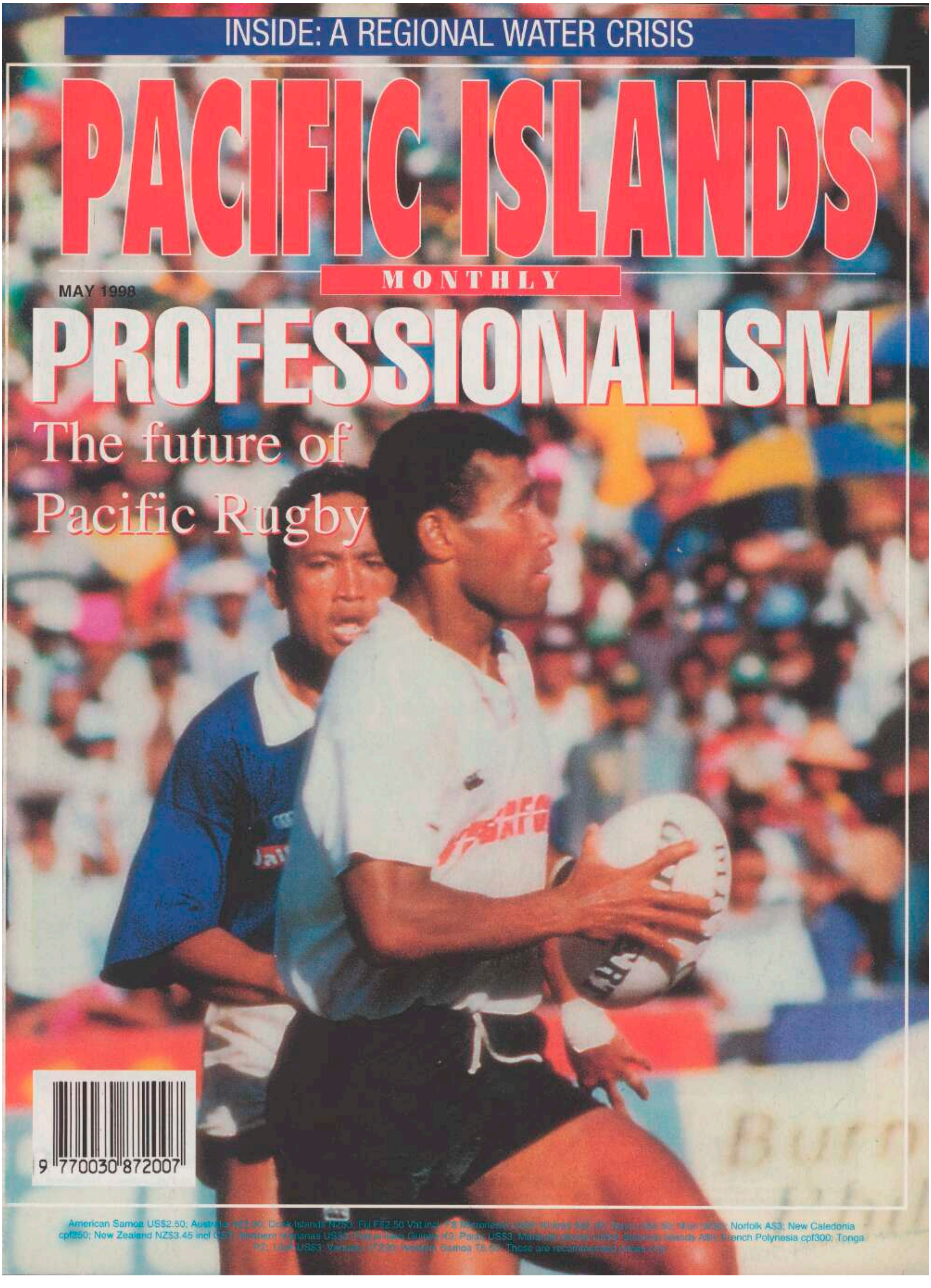
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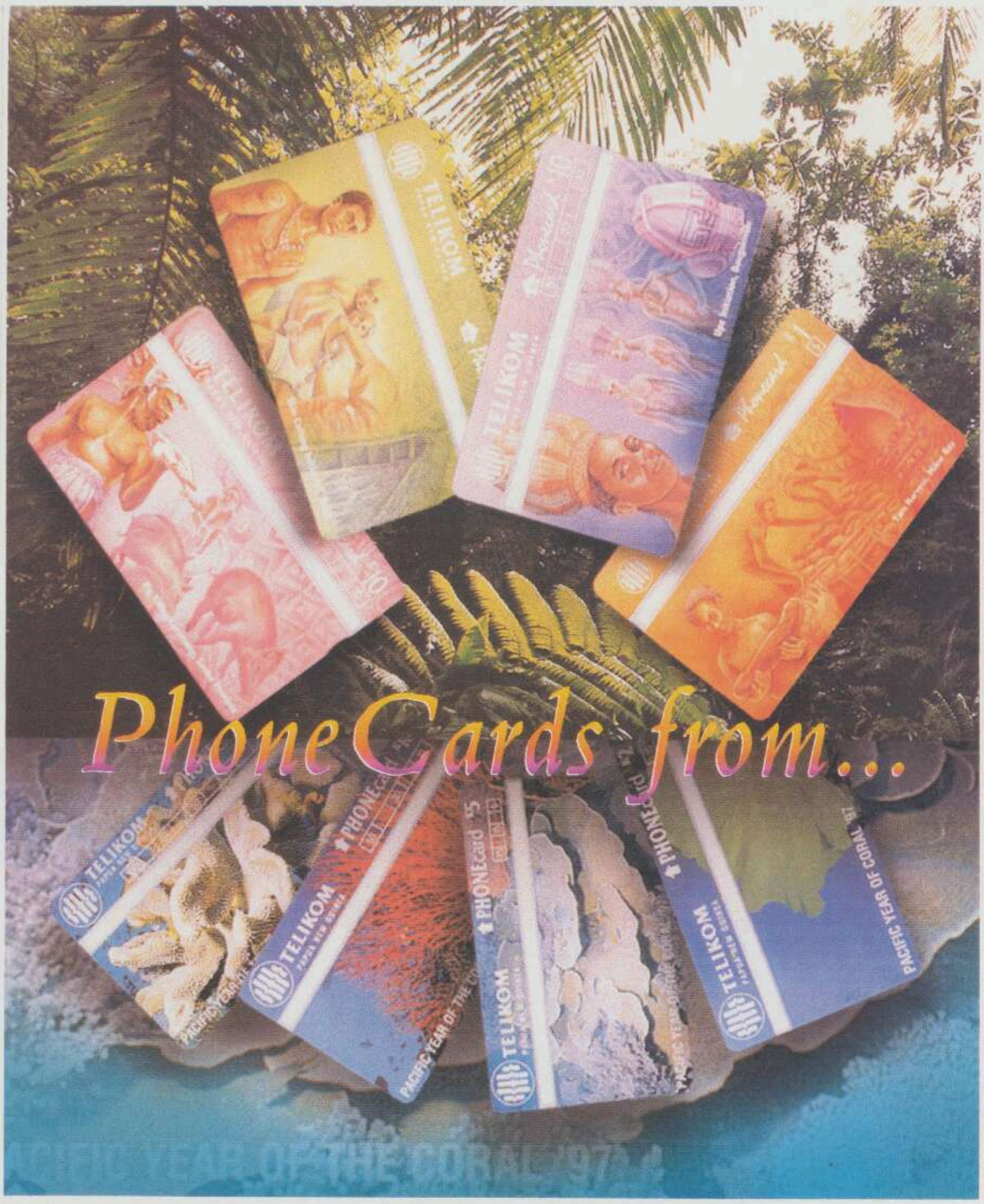
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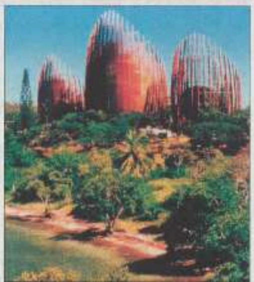

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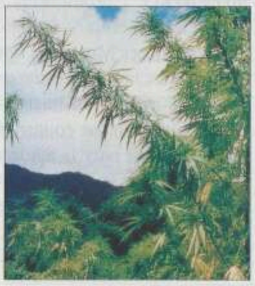


BRIEFS

APIA-

Businesses in Samoa with $52,000 ($US17,726) gross or less in sales each year will not be eligible to pay the Value Added Goods and Services Tax any more.

Government is prompting the change because Inland Revenue is collecting too little VAGST from small businesses. In making the announcement in mid-April, government spokesperson, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi said focusing on bigger companies and businesses is better use of Inland Revenue time. He said the law will be changed to bring this into effect when parliament assembles in late May.

HONIARA -

Solomon Islands will no longer have to spend millions of dollars on trade and investment promotions overseas. Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Tourism Moses Mose said this as Solomon Islands launched a Web site on the Internet for the promotion of business opportunities available in the country to the world. Mose says not only is the internet promotion project more cost-effective but it also increases accessibility to the millions of internet viewers world-wide. The several hundred thousand dollars spent by the Solomon Islands government each year on trade promotions is now expected to be reduced drastically with only about $US17,000 expenses for the internet promotion costs.

NUKU'ALOFA -

Tonga's major wholesaler, the Tonga Cooperative Federation (TCF0) is undergoing a major supermarket and general merchandise project in downtown Nuku'alofa, worth more than $1 million pa'anga ($US658,000). The first phase involves a supermarket outlet and rental business offices on the ground and first floor respectively, worth about 250,000 pa'anga ($US165,000), Radio Tonga reported. Another project involving the general merchandise shop, which would cost the Cooperative Federation 700,000 pa'anga ($US461,000), will begin upon completion of the first phase in June.

NUKU'ALOFA -

Two squash pumpkin exporters in Tonga have named a price level for the current season. Squash Export Company Limited and Touliki Trading Enterprises Limited have announced a two-tier price tag while efforts are still being made for a higher price, Radio Tonga reported. This is the first time ever that any exporter has been able to guarantee a price before the planting period begins. Spokesperson for the two companies, Dr Feleti Sevele says 50 per cent of the growers squash will be fixed at 55 seniti (US 36 cents) a kilogram or 550 pa'anga ($US363) a tonne.

The price for the remaining half will range from a guaranteed minimum of 35 seniti (US 23 cents) or 350 pa'anga($US230) a tonne to a maximum of 85 seniti (US 56 cents) or 850 pa'anga ($US559) a tonne. The final price will be dependent on the market conditions at the time of shipment.

PAGO PAGO -

A plane load of millennium celebrators from Austria will witness the first light of day in the Year 2000 in Fiji and then cross the dateline to repeat the experience in Samoa. According to Austria's ambassador to the United States, Dr Helmet Tuark, the Millennium South Pacific tour was being organised by Austrian companies and about 300 tourists have been booked.

Dr Tuark who was in American Samoa in April says the South Pacific is a new choice for Austrian holiday-makers who

Pacific islands monthly : PIM.

EDITORIAL

Water, water everywhere

One might be forgiven for thinking that infrastructural development and technological advancement - when it comes to water supply in the Pacific - is more early 20th century than anything else.

The biggest problem, it seems, is not the El Nino phenomenon, although that has made it a bit difficult, but the lack of planning and foresight on the part of governments throughout the region. Take Fiji, for example, where in the western division there is abundant water in the reservoir, but, because the pipes carrying them to people's homes are small, water supply is unreliable. Even in the capital Suva, the increases in population and the need for better infrastructure have not been planned or budgeted for. In the Marshalls, where a constant water supply is considered a luxury, the lack of water because of the El Nino phenomenon is understandable. One wonders, though, how people have managed to survive in Micronesia all these centuries without the help of President Clinton. Even there, it seems that officials have not allowed for the huge increases in population that have placed severe pressure on water tables, community water tanks and wells.

One of the fears in the Marshalls is that the water shortage may have adversely affected the physiology of the islands and atolls themselves. In Papua New Guinea, the drought seems to be easing but the effect that the lack of water has had on the vegetation and animal patterns is yet to be seen. In most cases, officials have been left scrambling when faced with water shortages, and many Pacific citizens have been left wondering how such occurrences could happen in the age of internet, computer-driven development and increasing prosperity. Even in places such as Samoa and the Solomons, where economies are said to be growing, water supply is unreliable - not in terms of supply, but in terms of health. Tourists are advised not to drink the water in such countries, and the image that this portrays to the outside world is not favourable. The water problems in some Pacific countries have left many lessons for others. Foremost amongst these is the need for planning and foresight when it comes to population growth and pressure on aquifers, maintenance of current equipment, emergencies and disasters such as hurricanes, and budgeting for the future. The quality of life, and indeed the survival, of tomorrow's Pacific island citizens depends on it. ■

Rural woman wins IBM Pentium Notebook

Mrs Zubeda Ali of Rakiraki in Western Viti Levu, Fiji, has won the Pacific Islands Monthly Subscribe to The Source campaign this month. Her name was drawn by the PIM Editor Sophie Foster.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Victory in Europe - and now what?

THE German capitulation of May 7, 1945, bore out two forecasts made often in the 5 and a half years of the European war - namely that Germany would be broken by air-power, and that "the Jerries will collapse quickly as soon as Germany is invaded". The last five years will be described, in centuries to come, as the most dramatic in human history. Mankind came so very close to enslavement; we were saved from another Dark Age - which might have extended over hundreds of years - by a series of what seem like miracles; and then, when the United Nations at last were able to gather their strength, we witnessed a series of military victories and mass surrenders without parallel in the records of war.

Five years ago, all the nations literally cowered before a terrifying triumvirate - Germany, Italy and Japan. The "Axis" was opposed only by an isolated and unprepared Britain and a faltering France. Today, two of those three Powers are utterly destroyed; the third is on the way out; and the world is dominated by the might and genius of Great Britain, United States and Russia.

"Trusteeship" - Australia gets off on the wrong foot at UNCIO

THERE has been much very confusing talk at UNCIO (United Nations Conference on International Organisation) about a "trusteeship" system which may follow the liquidation of the Mandates system (under which certain nations, under League of Nations supervision, administer some ten Territories).

The territories originally were: A Class Mandates - Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria. B Class - Togoland, Cameroons, German East Africa. C Class - New Guinea and Bismarck Archipelago (Australia); Western Samoa (New Zealand); Caroline, Marshall and Mariana Islands (Japan); and Nauru (Britain, Australia and NZ).

Here in the Pacific, we are interested only in the C Class Mandates. There is little doubt that, in the final wash-up, those C Class Territories will remain with their present "protectors," except that the Japanese-held islands will pass into the charge of the United States.

However, Australian delegate Dr Evatt has caused disturbance by demanding a system of trusteeship, not only for territories left unprotected by the post-war re-adjustments, but also for all colonies generally, wherein sovereign nations rule over subject peoples. His argument is that such colonies and territories are being held in trust for their native peoples; and that the nations which hold them should be obliged to report regularly, to some international authority, concerning the discharge of their obligations to the natives. The Australian apparently has been encouraged in this revolutionary plan by Russia; but America is not well disposed towards it and naturally Britain and France, who hold scores of colonies of all kinds, would not agree to any such perfectionist idea. ■

BRIEFS

usually travel to the Caribbean states. American Samoa is not on the itinerary but during Dr Tuark's visit there's been some arm twisting to get the territory on it.

Lieutenant governor Togiola Tulafono is urging that the Austrian tourists make a stopover in Pago Pago after Samoa. Dr Tuark has assured that they will try to convince the tour organisers that a visit to American Samoa will be worth their while.

PORT MORESBY -

The United Nations will despatch a five-member observer mission to Bougainville to monitor, supervise and oversee the current peace process on the island. The observer mission is being sent at the request of the Papua New guinea government, the National reported.

It will become part of the Peace Monitoring Group PMG, but with a different role. The PMG will replace the current Truce Monitoring Group TMG, whose term expired on April 30 after the permanent cease-fire took effect.

PNG Foreign Minister Roy Yaki said the UN general secretary's acceptance of PNG's request to send the observer mission was an endorsement of the Lincoln Agreement.

TARAWA -

An evaluation and problem analysis report on Kiribati's telecommunication upgrading on the outer islands, funded by the European Union from 1980-1996 has been presented to the government. National Authorising Officer Kianteata Teabo says the 15-year project prepared by Tele Denmark, covered the Lome 1 to 3 fundings which amounted to $A15 million ($US9 million), Radio Kiribati reported.

Teabo says the government will scrutinise the report before commenting on it. Meanwhile Kiribati has also prepared another five year national indicative program involving the second financial protocol of Lome 4 fundings that commence from 1996 to 2000.

The programme is again focused on telecommunication. ■

Slow-down hits Pacific economies

UN Resident Coordinator Romulo Garcia and Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji, Sada Reddy, at the ESCAP Report launch in Suva.

By **SOPHIE FOSTER HILDEBRAND**

The short-term growth prospects for the Pacific remained "generally unpromising" according to the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific. However, the ESCAP report, released in mid-April, said that long-term improvements were possible because of structural reforms that many Pacific Island countries had committed themselves to. "Other than Samoa and Solomon Islands, which showed 7 and 4 per cent, these economies generally achieved less than 3 per cent growth in 1996. "Economic growth rates remained low in 1997 also, reflecting in part the softening of the prices of agricultural commodities and primary materials."

The prospect for 1998, the report says, is that the negative impact of the financial crisis in Asia may affect some exports adversely. While Samoa and the Solomon Islands recorded relatively high growth rates, their rates of inflation have also been high over a number of years. The report says the inflation rate of the Solomon Islands has been "traditionally high" ranging from 9 to 15 per cent since 1991. Samoa's inflation rate has ranged from 1 to 18.4 per cent in the 1990s because of its vulnerability to natural disasters and shortage of staple crops.

Papua New Guinea recorded a double-digit inflation rate in 1995-96 because of the devaluation of their dollar. Flotation of the local currency as a result of an economic crisis in late 1994 also affected that country's inflation rate. The report says that Pacific Other Pacific island countries have recorded inflation rates below 6 per cent since 1993. ■

> ***'The prospects for 1998 is that the negative impact of the financial crisis in Asia may affect some exports adversely'***

Paradise in disarray

Inquiry slams Rarotogan Hotel deal

By FLORENCE SYME-BUCHANAN

The Public Expenditure and Review Committee report on the government sale of the Rarotongan Hotel pointed to blatant irregularities saying the deal failed to be of any advantage to the Cook Islands.

The report concluded that Government could not claim that the transaction was carried out in a "fully arms-length, transparent and contestable manner."

It examined how the Hotel sale was handled by government, rather than how the purchaser Tata Crocombe of Rarotongan Resort Hotel Ltd (RRHL) negotiated what appears to be the deal of a lifetime. In 1995, when Government's near bankruptcy became public, Prime Minister Sir Geoffrey Henry announced a Five Point Recovery Plan. The main thrust of the plan was the sale of state owned assets to repay some of the country's $203 million debt.

All government owned hotels, the Rarotongan, Rapae Hotel, Vaimaanga Hotel Project and Aitutaki Resort were put up for sale.

Marketing the sale of the Rarotongan and Aitutaki Resorts alone cost taxpayers $35,000. The Government stated the Rarotongan Hotel's trading losses as being in excess of $500,000 a year - this figure later increased to $750,000. It was also stated that Government had lost in excess of $10 million since the Hotel began operating in 1977.

A New Zealand company, JLW Transact, was contracted by Government to effect the sale of the state owned Hotels. This, the Government Privatisation Committee told JLW Transact, was to be "in accordance with Government's policy of a fully arms-length, transparent and contestable approach."

At the closure of expressions of interest on 23 May, 1996, there were three main bids. Preferred bidder was an Australian company which offered $6 million. Bids received from a Hawaiian company ($8.4 million) and a Seattle entity for $3.5 million were not recommended by JLW Transact.

The report states that support for the Australian company was based on the fact that the offer was 'significantly cleaner' than that offered by the Hawaiian company and at a pricing level that the sales agent considered to be far more realistic for the property.

Despite JLW Transact's advice, Government selected the Hawaiian company as the purchaser and proceeded to draft a sales and purchase agreement. However, the company withdrew from the sale process. PERCA was unable to establish why JLW Transact's preferred buyer - the Australian company - was not pursued further.

PERCA noted in JLW Transact's letter supporting Crocombe and Co's bid, the sales agent stated the Australian company had withdrawn their bid. The Australian company subsequently confirmed to the Committee that they were never informed that their offer was not acceptable or that another offer had been accepted.

The company also states that they had never withdrawn their offer and are still unaware of what actually happened in regard to the sale of the property. Government signed a sales and purchase agreement with Tata Crocombe's Rarotongan Resort Hotel Ltd on 14 November 1996.

But a major obstacle to the transaction was the mortgage held over the property by the Republic of Nauru. Key aspects of the agreement were that a promissory note be signed by Crocombe for the purchase price of $3.5 million. The promissory note stipulated that the purchase price would not accrue interest and would be repayable in full on any resale of the assets.

PERCA has established that although JLW Transact had endorsed the sale of the Hotel to RRHL, the company had never seen Crocombe's offer nor the terms of the Agreement. "The sales agent simply responded and commented to the terms of the proposed sale to the purchaser, as advised to them by the vendor (Government)," reads the PERCA report.

And despite RRHL being identified by Government as preferred buyer and not by the sales agent, JLW Transact was paid a commission of $81,250.

Government justified the Hotel sale to RRHL because Tata Crocombe was the only potential purchaser to put forward a "serious deposit" of $100,000. The PERCA report contested this as the $100,000 was repaid to the purchaser and "was not a deposit per se."

"It was never part of the purchase price, but was a fully refundable sum irrespective of the outcome of the sale process." Neither was it a requirement of the bidding process for a deposit to be made - other than $2000 to enter the bidding process. Potential bidders were only asked to identify the minimum deposit they would make should their bid eventually be successful.

Another factor in Crocombe's favour was the expression to invest further in the property - $3 million on its upgrade and $1 million in equity.

The report states the original bidding process didn't require specific commitments to upgrade the property. It said if Government had placed undue emphasis on the upgrade factor, "then clearly other bidders were disadvantaged in not being required to address this issue." Government press releases and Cabinet Memorandums suggested that the Hotel was being sold for a $6.25 million package. This was misleading in that the sale price of $3.25 million was on paper only in the form of the promissory note.

The remaining $3 million was to upgrade the Hotel and was of no monetary benefit to Government. The entire benefit of the upgrade would be to the purchaser only. The resulting deal, in which Government ended up paying for the renovations rather than RRHL, makes a further mockery of the "$6.25 package".

No "equity payment" has been made to the vendor. The non-payment of equity may have been caused by problems with the Government of Nauru mortgage and title to the Hotel could not be given to

Tourists enjoying the beauty of a Rarotongan beach.

Crocombe. "A consequence was the purchaser could not raise money on the security of the Hotel which he still did not own, he couldn't refurbish what wasn't his property." The Hotel was the venue for the South Pacific Forum, the opening of which was getting uncomfortably close for Government. In August 1997 Government was able to clear the mortgage with Nauru by paying $3 million obtained from the sale of 20 percent of Telecom CIs shares to Telecom NZ. With the Forum just a month away and Crocombe unable to refurbish the Hotel, Government elected to pay for job itself, spending a total of $2.075 million for the facelift. Of this, $100,000 was paid to landowners to settle rental arrears and reviews.

The money came from a public account at the ANZ Bank which was earmarked for the repayment of an Asian Development Bank loan to Telecom. Of this, $700,000 was unauthorised expenditure.

An 11-page Deed of Variation was approved by Cabinet and subsequently signed on 3 September 1997. Reliable sources say it was highly unlikely that any of the Cabinet Ministers, apart from Sir Geoffrey who strongly favoured selling the Rarotongan Hotel to a Cook Islander, fully understood the terms of the original 27-page Sale and Purchase Agreement. None was apparently given sufficient time to examine the Agreement.

Neither were they given enough time to study the Deed of Variation, itself a complex legal document that took one local lawyer "two hours to go through." The main changes to the original agreement were:

• A cap of ten years placed on repayment of the $3.5 purchase price - there originally was no time limit.

• Government's renovation costs to be repaid after one year at 13.25% interest.

• Deletion of RRHL's required $100,000 share capital.

• Condition of obtaining $2 million bank financing deleted as was the $100,000 refundable 'deposit.' The 'deposit' had already been refunded in April 1997.

• Also deleted was the requirement to enter into a management agreement with Outrigger Resorts and Hotels of Hawaii for the management of the Hotel after completion date.

This was replaced by a clause requiring management by an international operator not later than 12 weeks after completion date of the Agreement. It's understood that this final requirement still has to be fulfilled by Tata Crocombe. Of significance too is that no other potential purchasers knew that the Hotel could be acquired on the basis of a promissory note.

Criticism has also been levelled, at the National Development Council and Chamber of Commerce, that Tata Crocombe, who had headed the Government's assets sales programme, had an unfair advantage in negotiating the purchase of the Hotel. But the most glaring irony is that Government failed to make any money from the sale that was supposed to help reduce national debt; instead the deal has left the country millions of dollars poorer. ■

SPECIAL REPORT

PERCA conclusions on the Rarotongan hotel sale

That the Hotel was put up for sale without sufficient attention being given to the Republic of Nauru mortgage.

• That the Hotel should not have been advertised with the prospect of a 60 year lease without that having been negotiated with the landowners.

• That the impending South Pacific Forum meeting and the inability to quickly dispose of the Nauru security both had a detrimental effect on the sale process.

• That because of the long delay in settling the terms of the mortgage and the interest shown by the Asian businessman, consideration could have been given to re-advertising the Hotel for sale with partial or complete upgrade in place. The financial circumstances of original bidders and potential bidders may well have altered more than some 16 months after original expressions of interest were called.

• That any re-advertising should have included reference to internationally recognised management requirements if this was regarded as an important criterion.

• That terms of the sale to RRHL were such that the possibility arises there may have been other applicants or consortiums interested in a purchase option, the final contractual arrangements of which were far removed from the original advertised marketing.

'Economic recovery objectives set out in the Five-Point Plan have not been met'

• That economic recovery objectives set out in the 'Five Point Plan' have not been met. Instead Government has incurred considerable expense, and waived potential revenue in agreeing to the sale in the form it did. No money was received at the time the Hotel was sold.

• That securities in place in relation to the sale give small comfort to taxpayers of the country, particularly over the period of financing - 10 years.

• That adequate accounting advice was not sought particularly in regard to the 'net distributable reserves' question.

• That unlawful expenditure of public money has been incurred to the extent that the limit of one and half percent of the total appropriation for the year ended 30 June 1997, and the current year, has been exceeded.

• That the details of the sale were well advanced before endorsements of the sales agent was received.

• That a better financial return from the sale of the Hotel could have been achieved.

• The Committee concludes that Government cannot claim that the transaction was carried out in a 'fully at arms length, transparent and contestable manner' in accordance with its stated objectives. ■

Crocombe's response to PERCA report

The new owner of the Rarotongan Hotel has rebutted the Public Expenditure Review Committee report on the sale of the property, accusing key committee members of "extensive conflicts of interest." In a press statement Crocombe said he's not surprised at PERCA's criticism of the deal he was given by the Government.

He points to PERCA Chairman Mike Mitchell having represented the Hotel's landowners, "a competing purchaser and others with an interest in the transaction."

"It just goes to prove that in a small community it is unrealistic to expect any sort of objectivity in reviewing an emotionally charged issue which threatens entrenched interest groups," said Crocombe.

He described the PERCA report as "a "clumsy manipulation of the facts to fit a clear agenda."

But in an explanatory letter to the Speaker of Parliament, the Committee itself admits that in a "small community such as ours, it is inevitable that conflicts of interest will arise particularly where progessionals are involved in the sale of state assets." One member of the Committee, Tina Browne who is a partner in the law firm which represented Tata Crocombe disqualified herself from the inquiry.

Chairman Mike Mitchell took no part in inquiries relating to land leases. His representation of a "competing purchaser" dated back to 1993 when he had an "unrelated business connection" with the Australian bidder referred to in the report.

The sale of the Hotel was discussed on the telephone on two occasions. Mitchell stated in the letter that he was "never briefed to represent that Bidder in his negotiations, had no knowledge of the nature of his bid, his funding arrangements or how his bid was received."

"A third member of the Committee was a Director and shareholder of the company that was contracted to carry out the upgrade of the hotel. The contract was terminated before the Hotel's upgrade was completed. The terms of that contract and the reason for its termination were not issues that concerned the Committee."

"The Committee is satisfied that none of the foregoing matters influenced the preparation of the report or the conclusions reached," wrote Mitchell.

Meanwhile, speculation that the Rarotongan Beach Resort was sold to overseas concerns early last month has been discounted.

Contrary to popular belief, a spokesperson from the Rarotongan Beach Resort said the Hotel isn't for sale.

The spokesperson said owner Tata Crocombe's "dearest wish is to see this resort, which has lost millions and millions of the taxpayers money over the years, be turned around so that it becomes a strong part of the new Cook Islands economy, providing stable jobs and bringing in foreign exchange earnings." ■

A cattle thief for a PM?

By **CHRIS PETERU**

Samoa's government building

Forgetting today what you said yesterday has always been important for surviving in politics.

But finding out that Samoa's Prime Minister Tofilau Eti Alesana was convicted of cattle theft following months of government denials is alarmingly unforgettable.

Nine months ago MPs from the islands 49 seat parliament were reaching for the tissues as angry words were hurled between the ruling Human Rights Protection Party and the Samoa National Development Party.

The reason was SNDP leader Tupua Tamasese had tabled a police file stating that in 1966 a 41-year-old high chief, Vaaelua Eti a.k.a. Alesana was convicted of cattle theft.

"Samoa, I have never stolen anything in my life, because I am the son of a church minister," he responded to the allegation.

The government claimed that the opposition was trying to destabilise the country by making outrageous statements that could not be justified.

Speaker of the House Toleafoa Faafisi refused to accept the police file saying it was not authentic.

Taking the floor Deputy PM Tuilaepa Malielegaoi added, "this cannot be an official police card, the government coat of arms is missing... and there is no signature from any police officer."

As government diatribe turned misty-eyed condemning Tamasese, Tuilaepa moved for him to be suspended from the House for the rest of the parliamentary term. The mood turned soggier still as MP Fuimaono Mimio begged for Tamasese to be forgiven.

An emotional Prime Minister accepted the apology. However, Tamasese refused to withdraw his statement.

To clear the good name of the Prime Minister, Police Commissioner Asi Blakelock and Justice Secretary Pierre Meredith were requested by the government to confirm whether Alesana had a criminal record. "I wish to inform you that there are no documents or other records to show that the leader of government was ever charged with theft," wrote Meredith to parliament days later.

"I refer to your request and indicate that I have no knowledge of the existence of any records," said the police commissioner.

Just lately the picture changed dramatically, when a subdued Malielegaoi announced during a weekly press conference that police had found Alesana's file confirming the theft convictions. For his part, he was fined along with 27 other men from Lalomalava village over the slaughter of several cattle.

"The Prime Minister has agreed to these charges, but remember these things he was accused of made it appear that the PM himself went and stole something. No, now it is very clear, it was a decision done by the village."

He said there was a big difference between what the PM was accused of and what was now known. If the file had not been found, he said, the PM too would not have understood because the decision was so old. The PM, Malielegaoi said, just forgot.

Even if his memory lapsed, what government found out wasn't exactly a revelation. They were probably the last people in the world to suspect their leader may have, indeed, misunderstood something.

In a small community of 167,400 people, in the end there are no secrets. And now everyone knows that the PM has a colourful past.

Opposition leader Tamasese believes the discovery of the file was connected to a defamatory libel court case between Alesana and the national Samoa Observer newspaper.

"One assumes that the police would not have discovered the Prime Minister's criminal file if it wasn't for the fact that the file was cited and produced in the Observers defence statement in the pending court case," he claimed.

For its part, the Observer said in an editorial that the whole affair "smelt of a cover-up".

Under the constitution, any member of parliament with a criminal record has to give up his seat and a by-election held. A Supreme Court challenge by the Opposition against Tofilau could now be on the cards and would have huge ramifications if upheld. ■

■ FISHERIES

Fine–tuning Samoa's fishing industry

Traders make light work of the tuna supplied to the fish market in Apia.

By **CHRIS PETERU**

IN Samoa commercial tuna fishing is now the country's number one export earner.

From three years ago, the industry has gone from supplying one small fish market on the foreshore of the capital Apia, into a multi-million dollar operation.

Following a lull at the start of the year, in part due to El Nino that sparked an early spawning season, fishing crews are gearing up for the biggest season on record when their boats are finally hauled ashore again in November. Earnings for 1997 topped $US7.5 million, over half of the island state's entire export revenues. In 1995 the Central Bank figure for fish sales abroad was zero.

Small wonder then why Samoans with no previous interest in the fishing industry are falling over each other to hook some of the action out on the waves.

Boat builders have struggled to keep up with demand. From just a handful of boats plying the shallow harbour reef 18 months ago, the Fisheries Department has issued licences to 135 boats moored two abreast along a now jammed Apia jetty. The huge increase testified to the score of people who splashed out about $US13,000 each for a ten meter aluminium fishing boat broadly based on a traditional outrigger design.

Potentially the financial rewards are as big as the 95,800 square kilometres of blue water that marks out the boundaries around the islands. Compared to other Pacific islands, that amount of ocean is quite small but still remains a huge virtually untapped resource.

"This is the business to get into," says boat owner Steve Niumata. "Even if there are plenty of boats out there we are still in the biggest ocean in the world."

Crucial to the success of the reborn industry are the export companies who set up their own facilities then went looking for overseas markets. they found them close by. "We were always fairly confident that it could be done," says John Luff, who started one of the first export companies.

Ninety per cent of the tuna catches are albacore (thunnus alalunga). Exporters pay around $US1.30 per kilogram before shipping the stock to either of the two huge canneries on neighbouring American Samoa. The remainder are sent to emerging markets in Australia and Hawaii.

Harder to find yellow fin (thunnus albacares) caught in big numbers near Florida and Rhode Island on the US mainland fetch about $US2.00 a kilogram locally.

"If you bring in say ten Albacore a night basically you break even for that week. That means everything including wages," says Niumata. "A good boat will average between twenty to thirty. When that happens you are on top."

Anything left over is snapped up by restaurants , bars and cheap al fresco eateries ensuring close to one hundred per cent volume sales. All manner of fish dishes now adorn menus where not so long ago, the fish - in fish and chips, was tinned tuna from Thailand drowned in batter.

"It's been great for business because customers enjoy it, and we are quaranteed a good supply of fish whenever we need it," says a waterfront bar owner.

Out on the water the large numbers of boats long-line fishing is causing a few snags. Powered by small 45 horsepower motors, their range is limited to about 30 nautical miles before heading back in. This means the nine mile long lines laid down can easily become entangled or cut by a competing boat using the same stretch of water. At $US3000 each, a lost line is an expensive mistake. Working on small vessels at sea is not for the faint-hearted.

After laying the lines, the three or four man crews regularly endure the furnace-like conditions for the day huddled under a low-slung plywood shelter the size of your average garage door. The small deck space means few boats have ice on board to protect the catches from spoiling or to chill the drinks. Having such light displacement means even moderate size swells can cause the vessel to pitch and roll alarmingly. If battling the elements isn't hard enough on land, an even headier recipe for danger is surfacing.

Fishermen often complain about greedy owners and poor wages. But with no union or industrial mediators, they have increasingly let their feet do the talking, leaving "sick" boats looking for new and often inexperienced crew almost every week. Following the death of 25 fishermen in the last 15 months, and calls for more responsibility, owners unwilling to spend on basic gear have angered police.

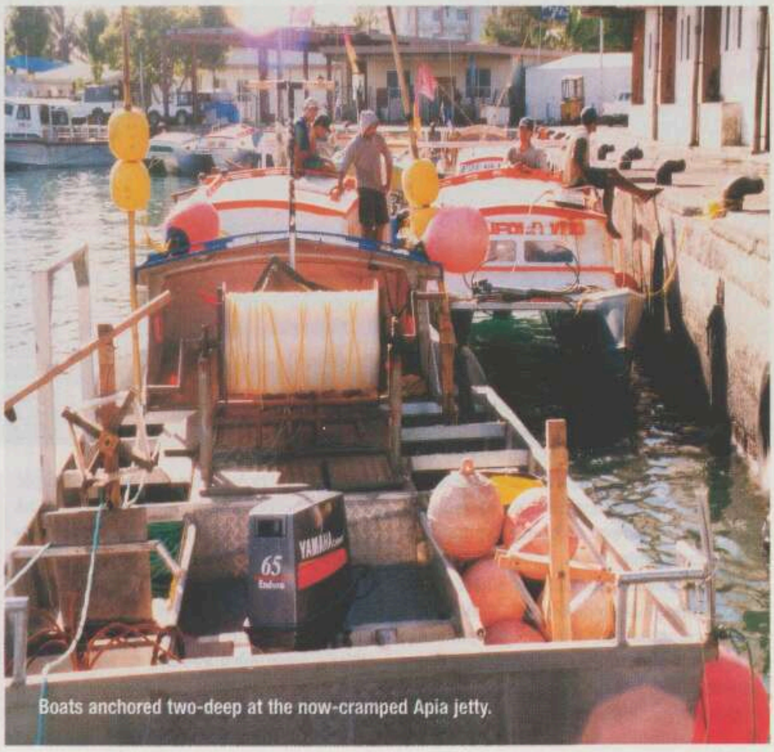
"It appears there are a number of owners who don't care despite the warnings about safety," says Deputy Police Commissioner Tapau Kirisome after four more fishermen recently became the first casualties of the year. The owner of the boat only knew the surname of one crew member, a relative.

Spare engines, and on board radios (featuring two totally incompatible frequencies, one run by the fisheries division, the other by a taxi stand several miles inland) are part of new licensing regulations that understaffed fisheries officers are struggling to enforce.

Encouraging boats to go further is one reason behind a government announcement offering tax incentives to locals to import larger 15 meter plus boats to work beyond the 50 mile zone. Several of the trawler-type craft are already being built in New Zealand at a cost of $US85,000 each. The first is due to arrive in July. With refrigeration units already installed and the ability to stay out for weeks, the prospect of full nets seems likely.

"What has happened is that fishing emerged as an economic player almost by chance, because the Samoan Government initiatives are in tourism - which is struggling, manufacturing and beef," says Pacific economist Stanson Browyn.

"The best is still to come and it is going to make people money if done properly". Unlike so many half-cocked ideas to boost the country's economy, this time there might even be a happy ending, with Samoans humming the tune "Gone fishing" all the way to the bank manager. ■



Boats anchored two-deep at the now-cramped Apia jetty.

Relief efforts continue in PNG

By **SAM VULUM**

Old Puso forced herself out of bed to make sure the local nurse returned from town with bags of rice from her daughter.

This would support the family while waiting for the gardens to produce again following the recent devastation of the El Nino drought.

The nurse, from the village aid post, had to set out early on foot from the mountain village to be in time to catch a coastal ship several kilometres down the coast.

The nurse was visiting town for medical supplies to cater for the increasing number of people suffering from diseases in the aftermath of the drought. In normal circumstances she would collect the supplies from the district health centre. However that, too, ran out of stock.

Puso received her supply but there are thousands of others in her area and in other parts of the country who are not so fortunate. Some are still living off wild foods while others are heavily dependent on relief supplies.

The Australian aid agency AusAID which is leading the relief efforts, placed the figure at about 54,000 down from 60,000 at the height of the crisis.

Although gardens have started producing since the first rain in December last year, it will be May before they can start living off them. AusAID head in PNG Annmaree O'Keeffe said the concern now was to supply food aid until the gardens were sustainable.

But Kiriwina drought committee chairman Anthony Douwa, from the Milne Bay province, reported affected people were not receiving supplies. He called on the provincial authorities and disaster committees to physically assess the drought situation in the province.

Douwa said the situation in the districts was worsening yet the teams had not been visiting them. In the Kaiapit district in the Morobe Province, 10 villages had not received any relief supplies since relief operations began last year.

The Churches of Christ disaster relief coordinator Dr Tobey Huff said people there did not receive any supplies because most of it had been used by villages in the valley.

When approached by village elders, authorities said there was a lack of funds, Dr Huff said. He then contacted the national disaster office which put him to the provincial disaster office, which promised to supply food. But, in the end, nothing happened.

"They assured me the supplies were going out that week to the whole area... They lied," he said. Dr Huff said while the church had organised to fly in tonnes of rice to the area, their work was hindered after the only airstrip in the area was closed due to heavy rainfall.

In another worrying report from the Western Highlands province, the increased fertility of the soil and the heavy rains in recent months, affected the formation of kaukau tubers.

Australian airforce pilots in Moresby prepare to airlift emergency relief supplies to drought-stricken areas of the country.

Kaukau, or sweet potato, is the staple diet of the people in the Highlands. The vines, shoots and leaves of kaukau plants in new gardens were growing very fast and that this was retarding the development of tubers.

Provincial authorities fear the drought relief operations may have to be extended in the region because of this development. Reports from Southern Highlands, Chimbu and Enga also indicated that kaukau gardens, made soon after the drought and frost, yielded none or underdeveloped tubers. This means the food shortage is going to continue.

In the Oro province, caterpillars have been destroying the gardens in the worst affected areas of Tufi, Safia, Asimba and Kira. Oro's executive officer to the administrator Titus Hatagen said some of these

areas had not improved as expected and it will take longer for the situation to return to normal. Meanwhile 45 of the 400 tonnes of seeds in AusAID's $1.2 million "rehabilitation" phase arrived in PNG and have being distributed.

Forty-two tonnes of potato seedlings arrived in Port Moresby and 3.5 tonnes in Lae and 14 tonnes to areas in central province. The next phase of AusAID's relief efforts is to help crop production. With the Department of Agriculture and Livestock, it has distributed seeds of quick-growing crops throughout the country.

This is for diet supplements until main crops such as sweet potatoes can yield. Since October last year, the Australian government has committed some $30 million to the drought relief effort.

These funds are in addition to the $300 million which Australia contributed this financial year under the PNG-Australia Development Co-operation Treaty. The $30 million has gone towards purchasing food in PNG, the Australian Defence Force air operation, technical assistance and support of other relief activities by Australian non-government aid organisations.

With the on-going delivery of vegetable seeds and quick growing crops to revitalise gardens quickly, an end may yet be in sight to the aftermath of drought in PNG. ■

Disaster relief promises improvemen

Majuro's weather station reports that the capital city received slightly over two inches of rain from January to March, or just eight percent of the norm.

But, as lines at three Japanese-donated water-making units grow and people wait half a day or more just to get five gallons of fresh water, even these rain figures seem exaggerated.

More than four months into the El Nino-caused drought, Marshall Islanders will tell you that when weather officials said this would be the worst El Nino drought ever, they weren't kidding.

In early March, the Marshall Islands government declared the country a disaster area, appealing to the United States for emergency aid. President Clinton responded quickly with a disaster declaration, paving the way for Federal Emergency Management Agency aid.

Huge water makers arrived in April for Majuro and Ebeye, the two main urban centres, and smaller ones that can be carried on ships to provide fresh water to the outer islands most desperate for water. While the emergency U.S. water aid will relieve some of the drought problem, by any account it has been a rough four months for many islanders.

It isn't expected to improve significantly until June and beyond, when the rains are predicted to return to about 70 percent of normal. As residents focus on the immediate need to find a few gallons of water every day, no-one is talking about the long-term consequences to crops and lens wells from the drought.

On April 3 in Majuro, it rained for several minutes at a time throughout the afternoon. Though this wasn't what one would in normal times call a 'real rain', it prompted one local resident to exclaim exuberantly: "It's a miracle." That's how it felt, and that's how long it'd been.

"We haven't caught any rain since December 17," said Majuro Water and Sewer Company general manager Bill Roberts. The water cuts which used to last for hours are now almost two weeks long because there is no water in the government reservoir. Majuro depends on rain for 90 percent of its fresh water, though a fresh lens on the atoll provides close to a million gallons of water each week.

With about 30,000 people living in the capital, and without rain to fill residents' home catchments, residents consume at least two million gallons in one day. In early March, the Japanese government provided three small 2,000 gallon per day reverse-osmosis water-making machines for Majuro that convert ground water into drinkable water. They have provided many residents on Majuro with their only source of fresh water and people wait for hours to get their supply.

"We took our bottles down at 4 a.m. and we didn't get them filled up until 2 in the afternoon," said Tarkine Lavin. He got about 10 gallons for that 10 hour wait. The arrival at the end of March of a 16,000-gallon-a-day water-maker from Japan speeded up water availability.

The drought has made island residents extremely resourceful when it comes to

De-salination units are helping turn sea-water into drinking water in the Marshalls.

s to Marshalls' drought of the century

finding water. Air conditioners produce several gallons of clean run-off water a day. "It's good for washing dishes or taking a bath," said local resident Jeffrey Wase, adding that his family carefully collects every drop from their household air conditioner.

A lot of people have dug their own ground wells, bucketing water by hand to get water for bathing and cooking. For the most part, though, everyone takes fewer showers.

As problematic as finding water is in Majuro, home to half the country's 60,000 people, it's nothing like Ebeye, the urban centre next to the U.S. Army's Kwajalein missile testing range. At least Majuro has a massive underground lens that provides water, even though the amount is small. Ebeye, on the other hand, has no fresh water resources.


Ebeye is more akin to a strip of desert than a tropical island.

More akin to a strip of desert than a tropical island, Ebeye has a desalination plant that broke down several years ago and hasn't been fixed. So the island's 12,000 people are entirely dependent on water barged several times a week by the Army from Kwajalein Island, three miles away.

From before sun-up until late at night, little kids line the Ebeye dock to fill up one gallon containers and carry them home. When Kwajalein Senator Ataji Balos told the Nitijela in March that Ebeye was facing a water crisis of major proportions, he was not engaging in hyperbole. Nowhere is that point more clear than when Ebeye residents try to bring water back from the Army base. Each morning, as the thousand or so Marshallese workers board boats to commute to their jobs at the Kwajalein base, it's a free-for-all at the dock as dozens of non-workers carrying five and ten gallon water containers vie for the few extra seats on the ferry ride so they can fill their containers with water at Kwajalein.

Ebeye elementary school principal James Duffy described being caught in the crush to get on an Army ferry as something akin to rush hour in a New York subway station. Despite all this, not all is negative about the current El Nino. The drought has provided a convenient and largely believable excuse for being late for work, or not showing up at all (as in "he had to fix his water pump" or "he's transporting his water to the house"), and for otherwise aberrant behaviour that is the product of a stressful drought.

With U.S. drought aid in April, and rains expected by June, Marshall Islanders have reason to believe they've made it through the worst El Nino of the century. The question that remains is how the islands themselves fared, and how long it will take for subsistence crops to regenerate. ■

Double whammy for outer atoll

By GIFF JOHNSON

Typhoon Paka couldn't have hit Ailinglaplap Atoll in the Marshall Islands at a worse time. Heavy damage in early December from the typhoon strength winds caused serious damage to crops on the atoll just as the El Nino-caused drought began parching the islands. Although damage levels weren't bad enough to merit U.S. emergency assistance, a report was prepared for the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency predicted that a combination of damage from Typhoon Paka and the severe drought could compel a majority of Ailinglaplap Islanders to leave their atoll "for the duration of the crisis unless assistance is promptly rendered."

"The conjunction of Typhoon Paka with the current El Nino drought poses a threat of the most serious magnitude for the people of Ailinglaplap," according to a report by Kevin Hart.

Called "The Effects of Typhoon Paka and the ENSO Drought on Agriculture Productivity at Ailinglaplap Atoll", it was prepared for the U.S. Embassy and provided to FEMA officials earlier this year. Hart is a former Peace Corps Volunteer in the Marshalls in the late 1960s, and has resided in the islands since. He believes conditions on the atoll, in the wake of a nearly 50 percent drop in copra prices, were already stressed.

"The capacity of the subsistence economy to feed the atoll's population was tested during 1997 when copra prices fell from 16 to nine cents per pound," he said. "Conditions of severe hardship were beginning to manifest at Ailinglaplap even

before Paka or the drought." Paka destroyed or damaged large portions of the banana and breadfruit trees.

In addition two thirds of the pandanus, papaya, lime and other vitamin-rich fruits were damaged. Although these only make up about eight percent of the diet, they are essential to maintaining health of the population.

Hart says full regeneration of the atoll's agriculture could take more than 10 years, provided there was extensive replanting immediately after the typhoon - which there wasn't.

The health of every tree and plant on Ailinglaplap was damaged to some extent by Paka, the report said. "If normal conditions were to prevail, half of agriculture losses for 1998 from Paka would naturally regenerate within three years, he said. "The drought, however, will deeply undermine potential for recovery."

Hart's fears have been confirmed by officials at Tobolar Copra Processing Authority who fear that this severe drought will affect the copra crop for several years.

The report predicts agricultural productivity at Ailinglaplap could drop to 20 percent of the normal capacity during 1998 because of the combination of the drought and Paka. Over the next decade, as the atoll attempts to recover, the economic loss to agricultural productivity may exceed $2.5 million, it said.

The report urged aid from the U.S. in the form of emergency food supplies and agricultural assistance to launch replanting efforts on the atoll.

But while the U.S, in late March, started providing the Marshalls with emergency assistance, that aid is focusing heavily on the provision of water-making units and water related equipment for the major centres.

The Marshalls itself is cash-strapped and has not directed special funds or technical assistance to Ailinglaplap or other outer atolls affected by the drought.

Ailinglaplap islanders, it appears, will for the most part be left to devise their own remedies to the double punch of the typhoon and drought - which, if history is a guide and the Hart's report on the mark, will result in droves of islanders moving into the two urban centres. ■

Rumours of Yazaki pull-out has Samoan government worried

By **CHRIS PETERU**

THE sign on the sides of the yellow and pink buses, contracted to carry hundreds of Samoan factory workers daily, is pointed: "Serve your Yazaki Samoa".

Hailed by government as the country's economic saviour and biggest private sector employer, Yazaki may now be looking to take its automotive wire harnessing operation elsewhere.

This follows problems at its Vitele factory, minutes from the capital Apia, and the Asian currency crisis. News the Japanese-based multi-national, which landed in Samoa six years ago, was having second thoughts, took the public by surprise when Trade secretary Chan Tung made the announcement.

"It is much cheaper to produce wire harnesses in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand compared to having the harnesses (made) in Samoa. That is a concern," Chan Tung said. "So there is still a possibility Yazaki might decide to scale down its operations or shut down altogether in Samoa and that is a threat to us."

Recently appointed chief executive Mr Yasuo Oishi declined to comment, but the company, which has dozens of factories scattered around the planet, moved to allay fears - at least for the time being.

"It's difficult with the downturn in Asia. We don't know what will happen in future, but as far as we know, we are going to be here for quite some time," says senior administration officer Muligatele Kelemete. "So while it's important for us to look after this company, at the same time we've got to look at other factors, like the economic downturn in Asia," he said. "This company is Japanese owned."

For a government which spent millions of taxpayer dollars to entice Yazaki to locate here, the possibility of a withdrawal is scary. Such has been the success of the company in boosting Samoa's economic fortunes that it is commonly accepted that several more companies the size of Yazaki could flatten the estimated $US140 million foreign debt in no time. Attracted by low labour costs, non-unionised labour and political stability, the light manufacturer was also given a 30-acre block of land, a factory, and later an extension built by government. Along with the usual tax breaks, they were allowed to occupy the premises rent-free. The estimated cost for those incentives is about $US8 million - but government has been reluctant to divulge accurate figures.

Despite criticism of the expense to the taxpayer, authorities still believe it is a good deal. They point to the creation of 1500 jobs (mainly for women) plus 300 more in administration. Every month $US190,000 is paid out for salaries and local credit. Over the years Yazaki has earned more than all of Samoa's other exports.

But unlike other societies, where the mention of redundancies is enough to send people into depression, the feeling on the factory floor is largely of indifference. The workforce has had a poor relationship with management from the beginning. Within months of starting up, a strike involving hundreds took place. Although it was resolved with a minimum amount of disruption, the rumblings over conditions have continued to reverberate.

"No-one really cares about this company. Management treat us like slaves, so they can go to those countries in Asia and make them slaves. This is not a happy place to work," says Silia, a line worker. Employees stay on their feet, crimping and cutting wire during two eight-hour shifts. Breaks are minimal, and a numbing three-hour slog at day's-end has increased complaints.

Those with thoughts of climbing the career ladder saw their hopes plummet when most of the 100 section leaders, the first rung on the management ladder, were suddenly demoted to the line with pay-cuts. Earlier plans to shut down the New Zealand plant and hire hundreds more Samoan workers have since been replaced by a sinking lid type employment policy.

Cuts on overtime mean most workers earn $US22 for a 40-hour week, just above the minimum wage but not enough to keep up with inflation. "This is a multi-million dollar company, surely they can afford to do a little better than that," says Su'a Sio, secretary of the National Union of Workers.

"Morale is low," a supervisor at the firm said, "it's affected the quality of the product." The government has sided with management to the point where Prime Minister Tofilau Eti Alesana and his cabinet have descended on the premises to encourage staff to work more industriously. Indeed, the Prime Minister has asserted there is no poverty in Samoa because of the jobs provided by the corporation.

There are vested interests in the form of lucrative contracts held by some government MPs including labour minister Polataivao Schmidt, who has the only on-site catering facility, and House speaker Toleafoa Faafisi who runs a fleet of buses transporting workers to the plant.

The company supplies harnesses for three major car makers: Toyota, Mitsubishi and General Motors. Between 30 to 40 containers are transported by sea every month. At one time or another, all three manufacturers have returned shipments of harnesses from the Australian assembly lines complaining they were sub-standard.

Kelemete says there were problems training villagers to adapt to an industrial culture. "In the beginning it was difficult, but now most of the supervisors know what the requirements are. Working with locals who have never worked in their lives made it difficult."

Despite hiccups, production standards have improved. In November, the business picked up the internationally recognised QS9000 certification designed by US auto giants GM, Ford and Chrysler. The approval seal meant the manufacturer was turning out a world class product, the only branch in Oceania to have the classification.

Kelemete says, "Other big companies overseas are probably looking at how we would fare. If Yazaki is successful here, they can see potential, but if it goes down then I guess it gives a message to other companies as well".

The real picture is that Samoa's hard-earned economic gains will quickly sour if the Japanese decide they have had enough.

If that happens, a financial disaster awaits. ■

Millennium's first child a Pacific island celebrity?

The odds that the first child born in the new millenium will be a Pacific Islander are high.

By **MICHAEL FIELD**

While everybody argues about where the Millennium's first rays will strike, the really intriguing question is: Who will be the first citizen of the new age? And will she be a Pacific Islander? Or maybe he, although the odds slightly favour a girl, born into the world soon after midnight on First of January, 2000.

Conceived in the autumn and born into the height of the summer, a life-time of celebrity awaits the child - provided the birth has not been too contrived. Maybe she will arrive at Nuku'alofa's Vaiola Hospital, or Suva's Colonial War Memorial Hospital, although the smart money will be Auckland's National Women's Hospital, New Zealand's busiest birthing centre. Or perhaps, poetically, in a bure on Taveuni, in Fiji where the 180 degree line runs across dry land.

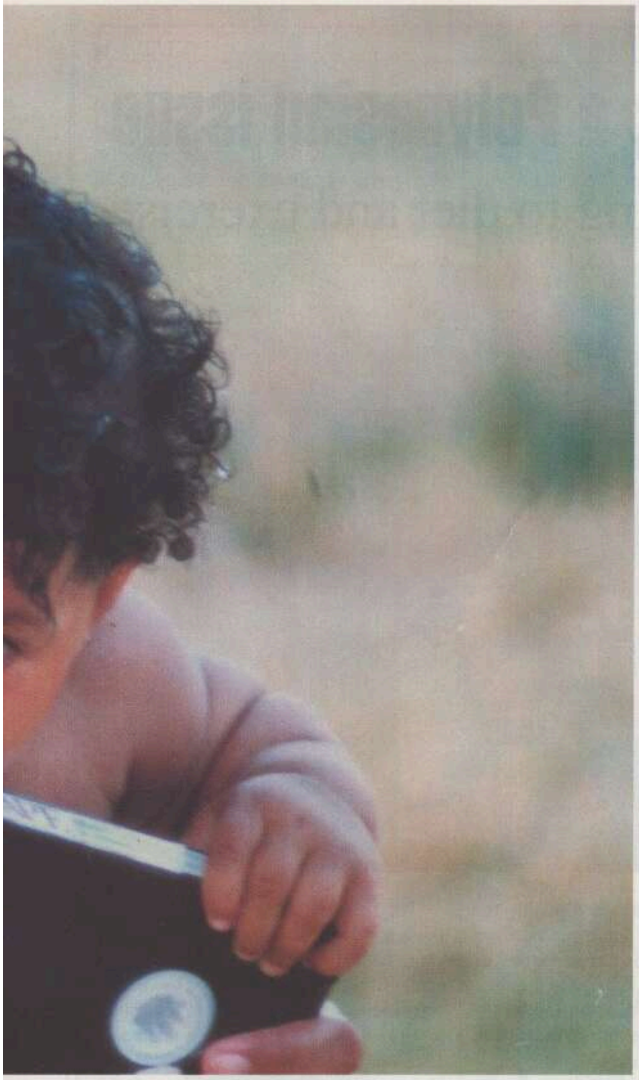
It is a fair chance that, for the Pacific millennium, the child will be a Pacific Islander. The day's first light always falls first across Fiji (with its hour of daylight savings added), Tonga and New Zealand two to three hours before Australia even departs the old century.

On average New Zealand produces six infants an hour, Fiji two and Tonga one child every three hours.

Of New Zealand's newborns, one every hour is indigenous Maori while a new Pacific Island New Zealander arrives every two hours. The lonely Chatham Islands, 860 kilometres east of New Zealand will first greet the Millennium, which is 45 minutes ahead of Fiji with daylight savings and one hour 45 minutes ahead of Tonga.

The Chatham's hospital handles four births a year. None of them are first borns and any threat of complications sees the pregnant mother put on a plane for New Zealand. Not so in Taveuni where they have around 30 births a month and could easily produce the first child.

Although a French television network was recently in Taveuni, the problem for the first child there is that it is likely to be an obscure event, uncovered by the world's media.



Not so in Suva and perhaps Nuku'alofa and certainly at National Women's the big players, including CNN, are likely to awaiting the news.

"You've really got us thinking about all this now," National Women's spokeswoman Veronika Mazur says, "and we would really like to have the first baby." They handle 25 newborns a day, most of them between 6am and 11am, although Mazur said babies around midnight do happen. The key will be the actual time the birth is noted on the birth certificate.

"Basically the baby is considered to have been born when it is fully exposed, once you can see the feet," she said. It will be the call of the midwife or doctor.

While a full-term baby, to be born on New Year's Day, requires conception in late March, National Women's has successfully handled babies up to 25 weeks premature - suggesting an early September conception for millennium's child is a risky possibility.

Mazur said National Women's occasionally gets requests for babies to be induced by a particular day. The requests usually come from Asians looking for auspicious days. Mazur said the hospital would not usually accept such requests, nor resort to caesarean deliveries for outside reasons.

"We always look out for the baby's best interests," she said. Former rugby All Black Andy Haden who now manages high profile sports people agrees it will be a global event, provided fate is left to handle the timing. "If it is contrived it will miss the mark," he says. "The more contrived and the more planned the less likely it will receive the profile." He said he would tell the parents not to underestimate the international market interest in the first child and the new family "may benefit handsomely" by letting management agents handle the media interest. "Celebrity will be thrust upon the child."

'The first child and the new family "may benefit handsomely" by letting management agents handle the media interest'

All thanks to the International Dateline which in 1884 in Washington was decisively drawn right down the Pacific - although its location had more to do with where Paris and London were. The British and the French argued about where the Prime Meridian should be - and London won. From a Pacific perspective it barely mattered. If Paris had won perhaps Samoa today would have been in the western hemisphere instead of always being trapped in yesterday.

Samoans perhaps should honour one L. De J Galvan, delegate of the then state of San Domingo, who was the only person to vote against the dateline. France abstained (they were still sore over Paris) and Brazil joined them in sympathy. Among the states at the Washington conference there was only one from the Pacific - Hawaii.

It was not to lose its independence until the United States seized it in 1898. Kiribati did not exist at the time and eventually became the only state to be divided by the dateline. Several years ago they moved the dateline so the state could be in the one day, every day, and accidentally they found out their distant Caroline Island - now renamed Millennium Island - will get to see the new sun first. This, and Fiji's declaration of daylight saving, has caused growing neo-colonial bitters among New Zealand government officials.

"While I respect the sovereign rights of any country to get up in the middle of the night if they so wish, whatever they choose to do domestically does not change the facts.

New Zealand will be the first to see the dawn of the new millennium," New Zealand millennium office director Denis O'Reilly says. He slams Kiribati for "unilaterally" shifting the dateline.

All this is a bit rich for a country, New Zealand, which has got to the pole position by declaring daylight savings (just like Fiji) and by a bend in the dateline (like Kiribati). While Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand and Tonga are left to argue over who should get 2000's first light and child, only Samoa has the right to claim to be the last country in the world to farewell the old millennium.

The white sand village of Falealupo at the western end of Samoa is where all days end. An outcrop of rocks just off the coast are regarded by Samoans as the entrance to the underworld - and it happens that the dateline is just over the horizon where the world's day ends.

It thus leaves only one question left - what name to give millennium's first child. Surely not Millie? ■

Food and body shape, a Polynesian issue

But now the talk is shifting to diet and exercise


Traditional dances are a big draw-card for tourists in Fiji

By **MICHAEL FIELD**

Beatrice Faumuina is more than just a big, strong, beautiful and talented discus thrower, but also a product of the way the Pacific was first settled.

Also products of this fascinating story are the awesome rugby stars Joeli Vidiri of Fiji and Tonga's Jonah Lomu. And the symbolism is tragically played out in the hundreds of Polynesians who struggle with a devastating range of diseases like hypertension and diabetes. Politicians might not include it on their agendas but food and body shape is a Polynesian issue. Gyms are opening everywhere and the talk is of diet and exercise. Otago University's Anatomy Department Professor Phillip Houghton, whose ground-breaking "People of the Great Ocean" was published two years ago, says the body mass index (an index based on height and weight) scores Tongans as the world's biggest people and even sedentary Polynesians had greater muscle bulk than well fed, active young Americans. Polynesians are probably the strongest people in the world but there are different ways of looking at strength," he adds. "If you put a Polynesian in the Himalayas a Sherpa would curl up laughing because big people do not do well in rough mountainous country."

Auckland University anthropologist Dr Alexandra Brewis in a recent paper in the International Journal of Obesity says outside the chiefly classes Polynesians traditionally "tended to be tall, well build and muscular, but not characteristically obese". Obesity had increased markedly with the arrival of processed Western food and increased sedentism in the contemporary Pacific. Brewis found a changing mood. Samoan women were striving for thinner body sizes. Just over half of the 84 Samoan women in Samoa interviewed and 65 percent of the Auckland Samoan women had tried to lose weight within the preceding year. Large bodies had prestige in Polynesian societies and the "fat reverence" was so pronounced that "fattening rituals" were practised. Brewis says the veneration of large bodies had gone.

The figure of King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV is a powerful example of this. As a youth he had a Lomu like quality — powerful, fit and very athletic. His Tongan pole-vault record still stands. That ended in 1943 when he became a minister. By 1976 the Guinness Book of Records rated him as the world's heaviest monarch, hitting the scale at an awesome 209.5 kilograms. The grossness nearly killed him and he mounted a weight loss campaign in the honest way — lots of exercise and a strict diet. This year the king, now 79, is down to 130 kilograms. Thousands of Tongans have followed him and the kingdom annually holds a weight loss competition. Pacific settlement and its impact on genetic selection has a lot to do with the way people like Lomu and Faumuina came about. Houghton says Polynesians evolved in a very short period 2000 to 3000 years ago, from a very few people. Key to his study was 13 skeletons exhumed from the mouth of Fiji's Sigatoka River which were among the first ever Polynesians. He recalled that when he first saw the skeletons coming out of the sand it was their bigness that made him realise Polynesians had been subjected to a ruthless maritime selection process. It was the cold that did it. The Pacific can actually be a very cold place, especially for people who were exploring it at sea with Neolithic technology and little protection from the cold winds and wet weather," Houghton says. Polynesians survived by evolving quickly into big muscular people; the bigger you are the more muscle you have, the more heat you can generate.

"What you see is the selection process of evolution.... You can show quite neatly that if you are big and muscular you can survive a few nights of cold at sea in a small boat, but if you are thin and light you'll die of exposure quite quickly."

Houghton's work is controversial but an associated explanation for Polynesian shape is because of the way droughts and hurricanes affected the food supply. Auckland Institute of Technology anatomy and physiology lecturer Elaine Rush studied metabolic rates and found in Polynesian women it was lower than that of the Caucasian and therefore they were using less energy. Certain races had evolved to store fat. In times of famine those are the ones who survive and that's how it used to be in the islands, when hurricanes came through and wiped out the food supply," Rush says. Nowadays food is less of a worry as a flood of western foods arrived and some of the worst, in terms of fat, assumed a cultural status, as Samoa's High Commissioner to New Zealand, Feesago Fepule'ai, noted at a recent Pacific medical conference. The ultimate prize on the acceptance and integration of these foods into our way of life must surely go to my own Samoa where for many years now our young and the not so young lovers have serenaded their sweethearts with the sweet refrain that praises that most desirable of cuisine — the Hellaby corned beef." Quoting from the United Nations Children's Fund he noted "these foods are killing or disabling our people....

"There is a very clear moral dimension here; many of these foods are simply dumped on our people by the food processors of developed countries," Feesago said.

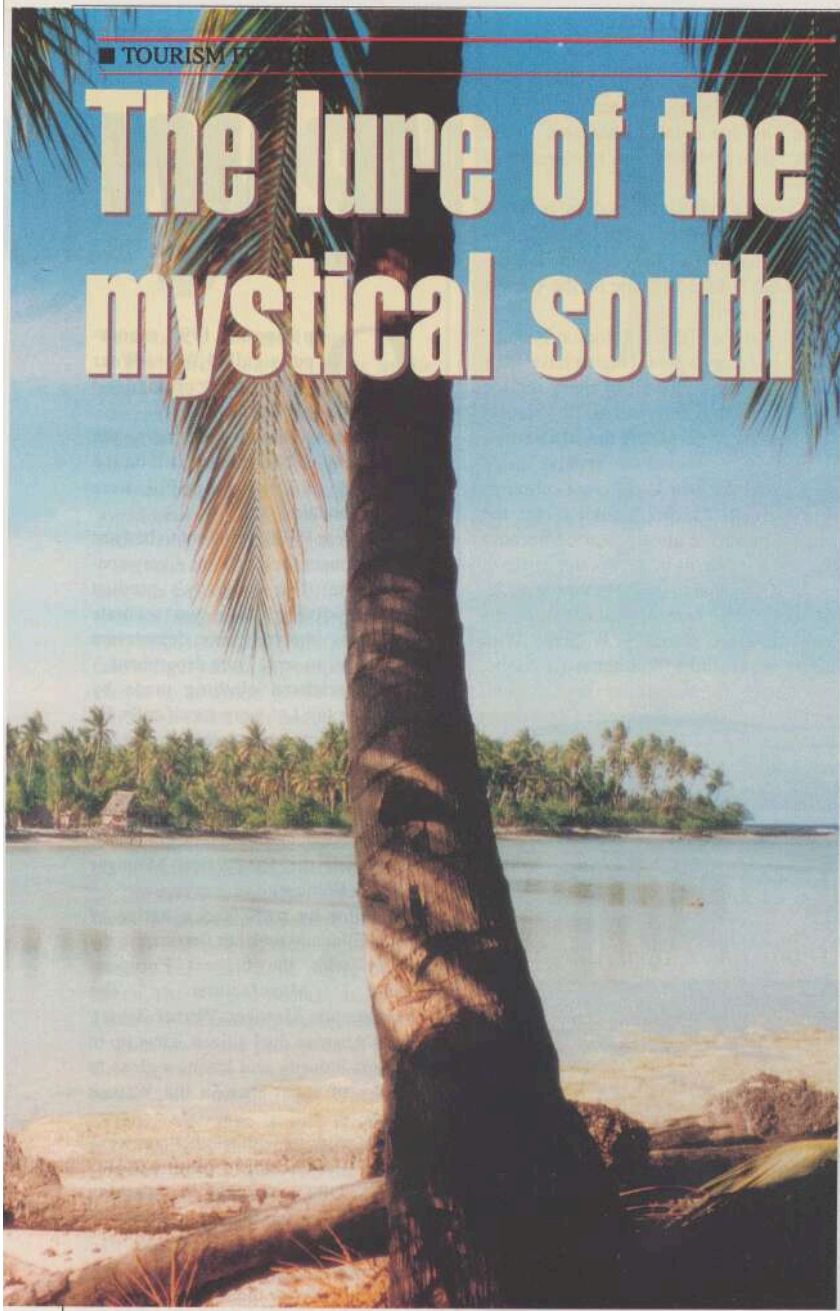
"We all pay a price in obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes and other lifestyle diseases which impose a greater and longer burden on us than something like AIDS has or will."

Auckland's Metro magazine recently noted the "The Polynesianisation of Sport" in New Zealand and quoted then All Black trainer Jim Blair explaining that the Polynesian is basically mesomorphic, tending to be big-boned, muscular, of average height, wide shoulders, thin waist.

"They have a higher proportion of fast twitch muscle fibre which is the source of their explosive style and the reason they are fast over short distances and the reason you don't see Polynesian marathon runners." And the point is that with a good diet, good coaching and money for resources, Polynesians could take over some world sports easily. That's why somebody like Beatrice Faumuina, who won gold at this year's world athletics championships in Athens, is both an inspirational role model and awesome warning to other sports people that the Polynesians are coming. ■

■ TOURISM F...

The lure of the mystical south



The South Pacific. Three words which conjure images of white sandy beaches, exotic food and drink, palm trees... in fact, it can mean just about anything you want it to. It is this mysticism that has drawn millions of people to the region throughout the years, and will continue to do so. Better marketing and increased code-sharing has meant that the market penetration of the South Pacific as a tourist destination is growing.

And the market savvy of these nations is also increasing. Fiji, for example, hosted ninety Japanese travel agents in early April as part of a major promotional effort to bring more Japanese tourists to the country. The travel agents, from Osaka and

Naqoya, visited Nadi, the Denarau project, the coral Coast and an island in the Mamanucas. The agents were hosted by the Japan Asia Tour Operators Committee (JATOC) and briefed on the current "Visit Fiji Travel Agents Programme" that had been introduced to encourage the individual Japanese travel agent to experience Fiji much like a visitor - with two nights free accommodation and reduced air fares.

This offer is good from March 1 to May 31. A reverse attempt to capture a bigger market share is a "Road Show" scheduled for May 18-20 covering Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka for Fiji industry representatives.

A combined South Pacific attempt to increase market penetration is the bid to have a popular common name for the region.

This is being supervised by the Tourism Council of the South Pacific with the results due to be announced soon. The intention of this programme is to prevent dilution of the term "South Pacific" as a region.

The various countries of the region have referred to it as "The South Seas", "Pacific" "Oceania", "Southern Pacific", "Pasifica" and many other terms in promotions. This has created confusion in the market which TCSP hopes to correct this year.

If you are looking for more information on the South Pacific as a tourist destination, it is only as far away as your computer - TCSP hosts a web site on the various Pacific countries.

Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Nauru and Papua New Guinea have their own airlines but not all of them service long-distance international routes. Connections are available through various travel agents including special deals throughout the year to different countries in the South Pacific. Bookings for the Millennium have already started because the first day begins in the South Pacific.

So if you plan to invest in that development or just be here for that occasion, the time to start planning is now. With increased air-links throughout the globe, and better infrastructural development within the countries themselves, coming to the South Pacific is not a problem. In fact, some would say, the problem is it is hard to bring yourself to leave. ■

A wat

On June 30, 1997, a company called Water Wear Fiji Ltd commenced production.

The owners of the company, the Prasad family of Namaka in Nadi on the western side of Viti Levu in Fiji, were quietly optimistic.

Water Wear Fiji Ltd was not to be "just another garment factory", but a very specialised one. The company's product range was divided into two separate departments: the neoprene department and the (hard-to-sew) lycra department.

The specialised clothing made by Water Wear Fiji Ltd were specifically for export. The factory was set up under the Fiji Tax Free scheme, but it has a strong local clientele list as well.

At present, the company employs 16 locals and 2 expatriates. The main expertise is with the Production Manager Margareta Ellmauer.

A tailor by trade and a native of Austria, Ellmauer took her first step in the industry with the biggest European Wetsuit Manufacturer. The Administration Manager, Werner Zysset, a Swiss/Austrian dual citizen, grew up in the sports industry and has now close to 10 years of experience in the Wetsuit Industry.

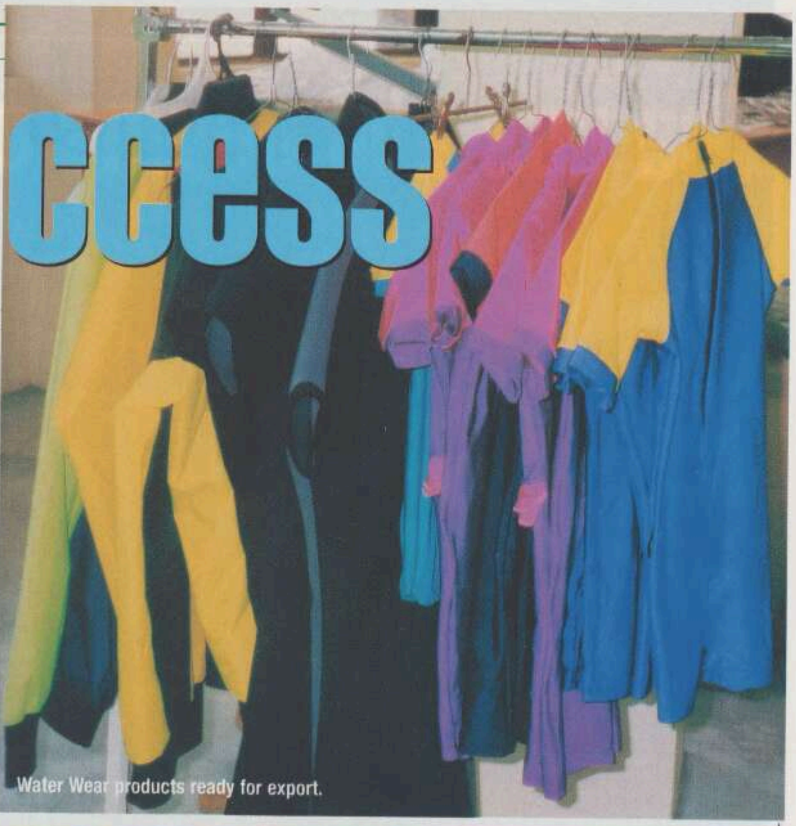
While working with another company, the managers developed (with LIGHTFOOT SPORTS Sydney), a Triathlon Wetsuit which is considered the fastest in the world these days.

Steamers (long arm, long legs) are made especially for the top professionals and Long Johns for the not quite top professionals.

However budget models are available for general water sports enthusiasts. Fortunately, LIGHTFOOT SPORTS followed the two managers wherever they worked and these days, Water Wear Fiji Ltd has a great product in the Neoprene Department.

With the Dive, Surf and Windsurf

ery success



Water Wear products ready for export.

Wetsuits, it is a different story.

The market share for these products world-wide is controlled by a lot of big companies. It is this market share that Water Wear is working very hard to break into.

The company intends to penetrate the world market to the extent of its market share in the local Fijian market.

Around the same time as the triathlon suit was born, a totally different product took its first steps - the STINGRAY SUN PROTECTION CLOTHING. At that time (about eight years ago), people in Australia started to be aware of the danger of the sun's ultraviolet rays and its links to skin cancer.

An ideal protective fabric was found, but it took the marketing company STINGRAY AUSTRALIA many years of hard work to inform and convince the people of Australia of its protective value.

The LYCRA suits with its protective factor 50-plus help to prevent skin cancer, which can break out many years after the damage has been done (up to 30 years later). The biggest damage is normally done to small and very small children.

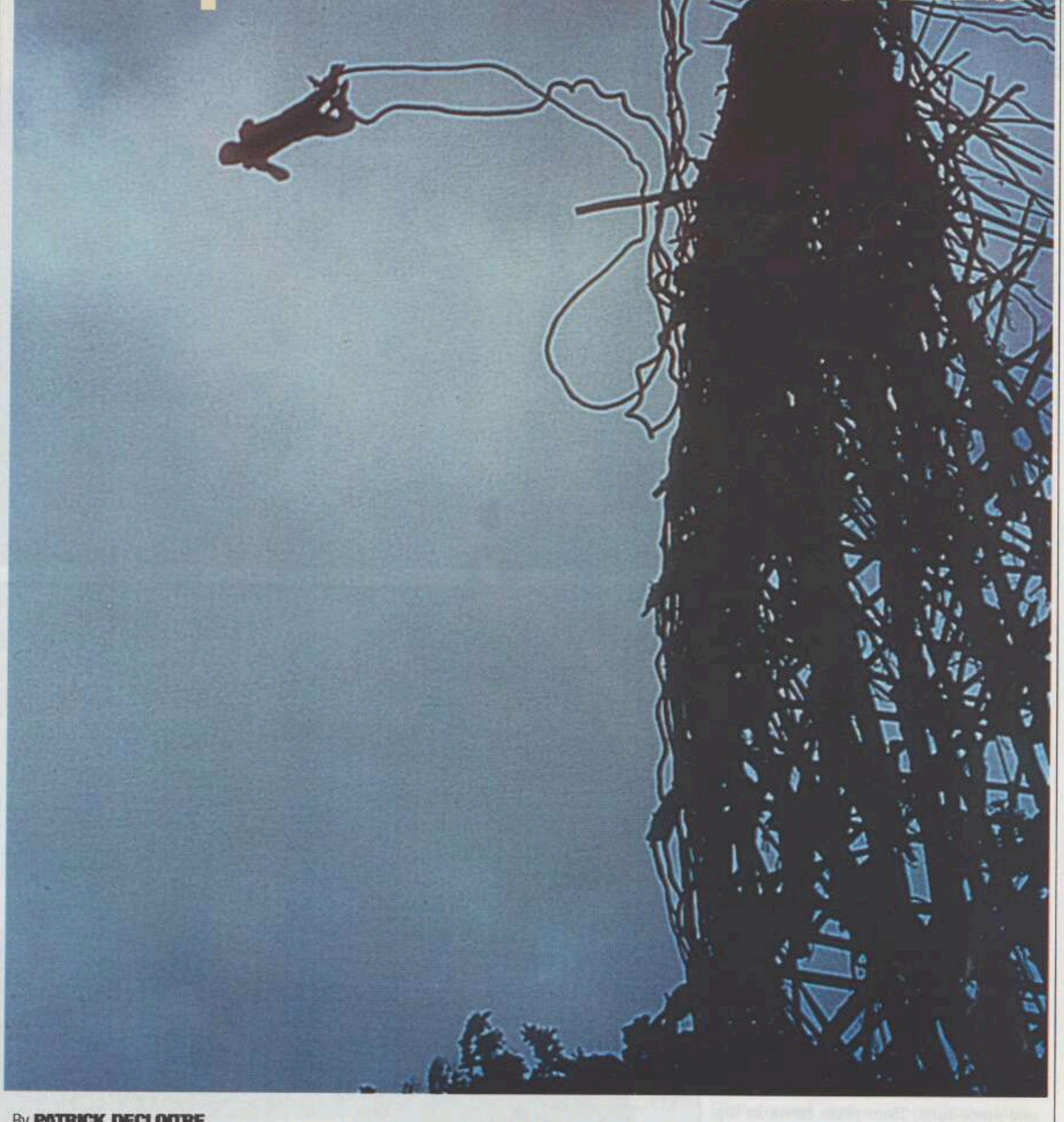
That's why the protection of children these days is so important, regardless of the colour of their skin. Today, the STINGRAY range is sold in Australia, USA, Canada, Japan, Singapore, Dubai, England, Jersey, Spain and Germany and has a very high market share.

Very soon, these STINGRAY products will also be available in Switzerland, China, Greece, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark.

The secret of the success of the STINGRAY range is variety. From top to bottom, from cap to T-shirt and short to one-piece suits, from pram cover to big man shirt (called "Real Man") - everything is available. Unfortunately (or fortunately for Water Wear), the cutting and sewing of Lycra is very difficult. However, the staff are very well trained and are doing an excellent job, balanced between speed and top quality. ■

CURRENCY

The ups and downs of the vatu



By PATRICK DECLOITRE

It was a first in Vanuatu's monetary history, and probably the world: in the lapse of three days, Vanuatu's national currency, the vatu, was devalued by 20 percent and then revalued almost immediately. On March 27, Reserve Bank governor Samson Ngwele announced the surprise devaluation. He justified it by a drop in Vanuatu official foreign currency reserves from a usual 40 million US dollars to a meagre 20 million, leaving the island state with only three months of import cover.

The devaluation rumours had been rife in the previous weeks in Port Vila's financial spheres, who thrive on Vanuatu's tax haven status. Ngwele said the devaluation was meant to counter the damaging effects of the rumours, but also the loss of confidence by local and overseas investors due to political instability in the past few months.

Another factor was the sudden injection into the economy of some 3.5 billion vatu (28 million US dollars) by Vanuatu's National Provident Fund whose management had to refund angry contributors after the January 12 riot in the capital. Substantial pressure had been applied on the vatu, with an increasing number of transactions to sell vatu for sounder foreign currencies.

But after the devaluation announcement was made on that "black Friday", strong statements were made by then Finance minister Vincent Boulekone. He "categorically refused" to endorse the decision, saying he was not consulted by Ngwele beforehand.

"This would create commercial, economic and social problems. This would increase the prices here and reduce purchasing power", Boulekone said. He immediately sent faxes to all financial institutions in Vanuatu, including commercial banks, asking them to suspend foreign exchange dealings until the Reserve Bank issued its new exchange rates the next Monday.

At the same time, he also ordered the Central bank to reverse the devaluation. Ngwele was sacked at the week end and replaced by Michael Hililan. In these circumstances, all banks then froze their dealings, as a precautionary measure. "We don't really know what to do now. In fact, we dealt with the Reserve Bank at the new devalued rate and now they're asking us to freeze transactions", a financial market source said at the time. At the devalued rate, one US dollar is worth 148.79 vatu, as opposed to around 121 before. However, when it was revalued, it came back with a slight difference. One now needs some 125 vatu to make a US dollar. The political context surrounding the vatu's hiccups was also of significance: a new Prime minister was to be elected on March 30, with no one prepared to make the hard decision, that some financial observers thought was realistic.

"This is a political argument versus an economic argument. Maybe the outgoing finance minister is pushing for the next government to take the hard decision", sources said. "But given Vanuatu's economic situation, it's extremely unlikely that Vanuatu can sustain the pre-devaluation rate. Even if the devaluation doesn't help Vanuatu's economy in the long term, at least it reduces pressure on the Reserve Bank to sell foreign currency". They even predicted greater pressure on the vatu, if the devaluation was to be reversed. "If the devaluation is voided, on Monday morning, in front of the bank we'll have a mile-long queue of people wanting to change vatu into foreign currency". But on that one, they seem to have been wrong : the revaluation, decided by new Finance minister Sela Molisa minutes after he was sworn in on March 30, was also accompanied by strong fencing against any move to speculate against the vatu.

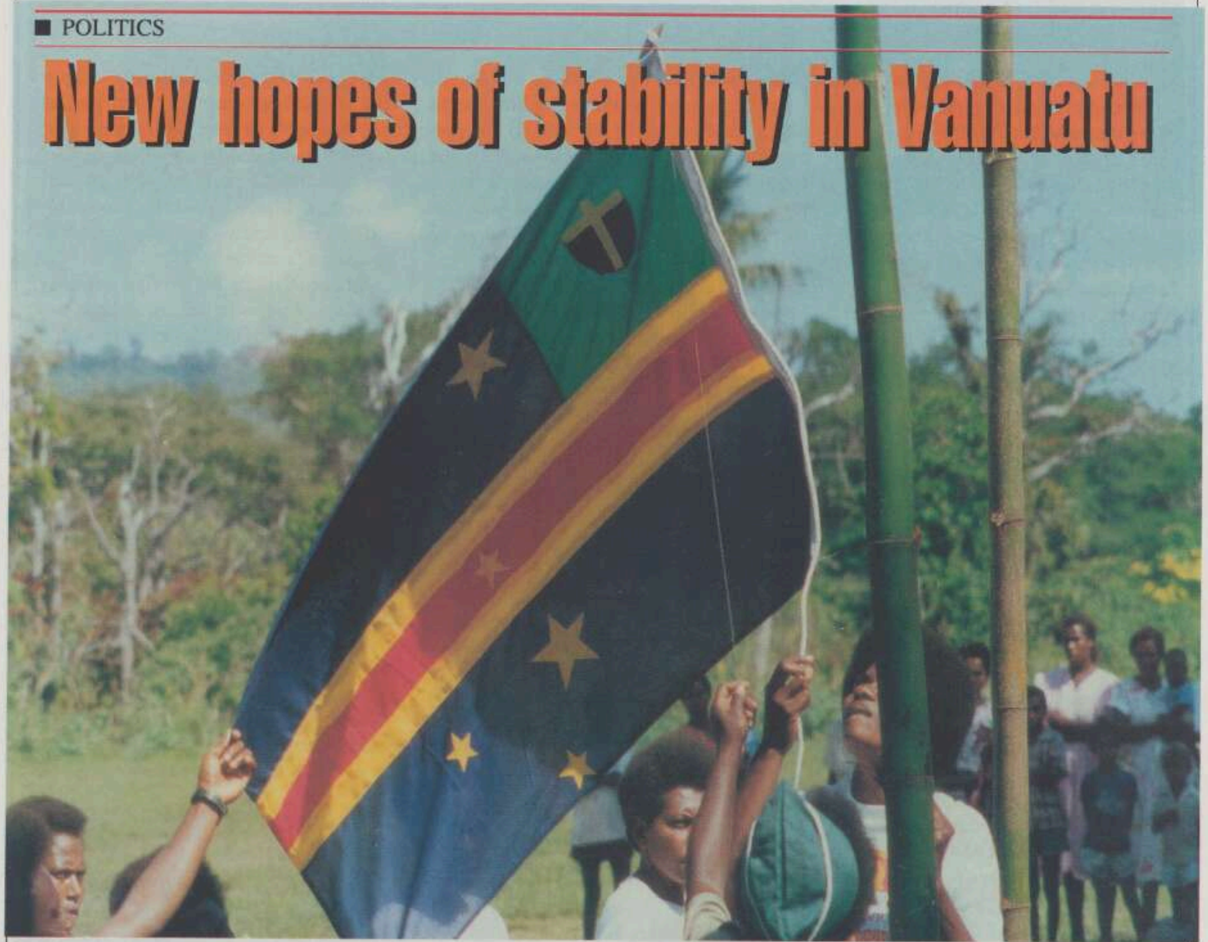
'This is a political argument versus an economic argument. Maybe the outgoing finance minister is pushing for the next government to take the hard decision'

All applications for foreign currency purchases were to be lodged at least two days beforehand, and had to be related to genuine trade transactions, such as import bills settlements. Other requests for foreign currencies (for travelling purposes, for instance) were also restricted to a maximum of 200,000 vatu (1,600 US dollars) per head.

Commercial banks here agreed to play the game and have since applied tight monitoring on all request, refusing those they thought could be identified as speculatory moves by individuals, especially in the small retail business sector.

We believe there's no need to devalue at this stage", Kalpokas said minutes after he was elected prime minister, while Molisa held his first meeting with Reserve Bank officials in his Parliament office. ■

New hopes of stability in Vanuatu



By **PATRICK DECLOITRE**

As Vanuatu's new prime minister, Donald Kalpokas, came to power, on March 30, new hopes were nourished here, especially in the business community, which has suffered from a perennial instability for the past two years and, more recently, from the adverse effects of social upsurge.

In his first speech after his election, Kalpokas pledged to put back Vanuatu on a healthy economic path as a matter of "first priority". His new government's priority was a "better economic basis to restore the confidence".

"There's been a lot of economic mismanagement", he said. Kalpokas announced tough economic measures "to steer Vanuatu away from an economic catastrophe and put it back on the path of recovery". The new government also urgently passed a bill to authorise further spendings to pay civil servants, since no 1998 budget had yet been voted.

One day after he came to power, on April 1, Kalpokas's government found itself confronted with a legal padlock on the country's cash box. An earlier presidential order warranting payments for an extra 1.6 billion vatu (12.8 million US dollars) in the first quarter of 1998 had lapsed, and his government could not legally pay its bills.

The 1998 budget has not yet been passed, a delay the former government explained by new budgeting guidelines imposed by an Asian Development Bank-coordinated comprehensive reform program initiated last year.

Finance minister Sela Molisa told parliament the authorised expenditures were based on last year's budget, totalling some 6.6 billion vatu (53 million US dollars) and could be estimated to another 1.6 billion vatu until end of June.

But the opposition said the 14-day notice calling for this legislature's first extraordinary session had not been respected.

They also raised concern that the 1998 budget, when it is finally passed later this year during an ordinary session, could duplicate the sums already spent.

"It is unfortunate (my) government must bear the responsibility for this situation. But the interest of the nation must come first. There are regulations to follow, but it's up to every individual to challenge the decision if they don't like it. We must make sure the government can function", Kalpokas told the 52-seat House.

"If this is not done, the government cannot resume payments of bills, salaries to the public servants and MPs. This is already the situation since April 1", deputy prime minister Walter Lini said. Under the ADB reform programme, a "rightsizing" of the public service, including sackings and payment of redundancy allowances, is also to be included in the 1998 budget. The bill, which was supported by 33 MPs, authorises the finance minister to "make funds available" to allow the government services to function for three months after March 31 or until the 98 budget is voted, "whichever of these events comes first".

To top off, two cyclones, Yali and Zuman, destructively accompanied the change of government in Vanuatu, on both sides of the island state : Yali struck southern Tanna, Erromango and Anatom islands on March 22 with winds gusting to 70 knots (125 kilometres per hour).

A Royal New Zealand Air Force Orion reconnaissance flight later found these islands could face serious food shortage in the coming months. One week later, Zuman went for Vanuatu' northern Santo and caused crop and structural damage to the east side of the island, Vanuatu's biggest.

There, it is the copra industry, a major revenue earner, that could be seriously affected in future: hundreds of coconut trees were blown down. ■

Vanuatu's new government

By **PATRICK DECLOITRE**

Vanuatu's new prime minister, who was elected last month by 35 of the 52 members of parliament, announced his coalition cabinet as follows: Prime minister : Donald Kalpokas (Vanuaaku Pati -VP-); Deputy Prime minister, minister for internal affairs, also responsible for police, labour, immigration, judiciary : Walter Lini (National United Party - NUP); Education, youth and sports : Joe Natuman (VP); Finance : Sela Molisa (VP); Infrastructure, public utilities : Stanley Reginald (NUP); Lands, geology, mines : Silas Hakwa (VP); Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries : John Morrison Willy (VP); Trade, business development : James Bule (NUP); Health : John Robert Alick (NUP).

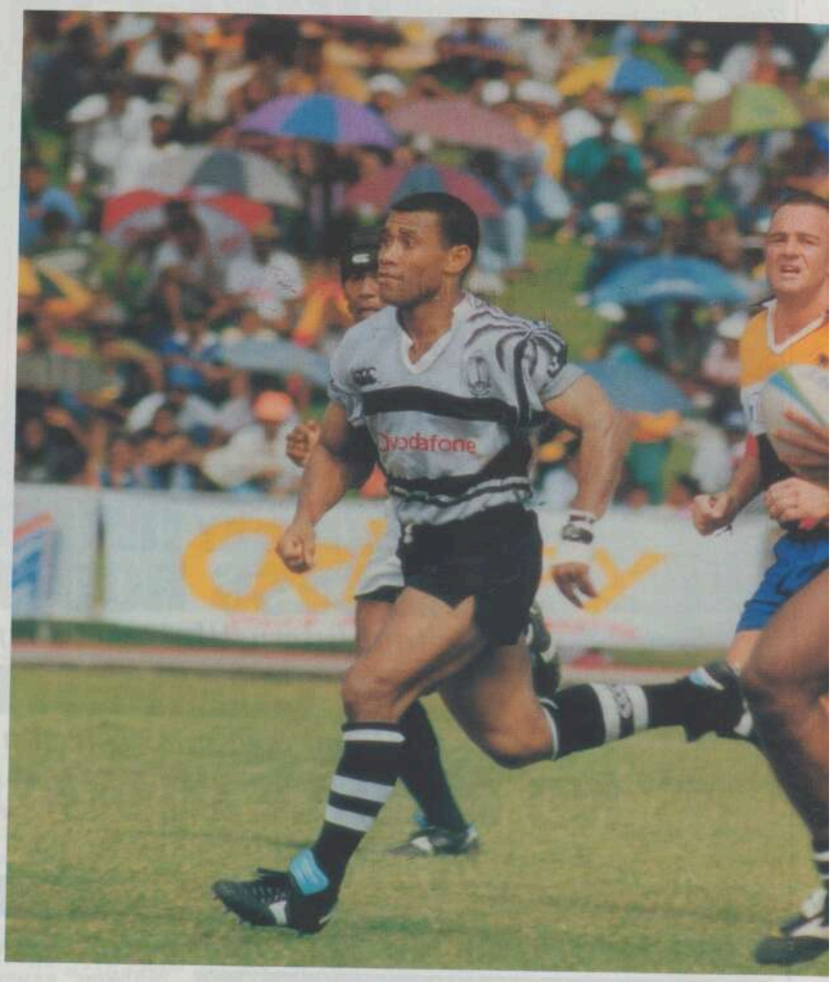
Assisting prime minister on economic reforms : Daniel Bangtor (VP); Assisting prime minister on foreign affairs : Clement Leo (VP).

Assisting the minister of education: Willie Ollie Varasmaite (VP); Assisting the minister on economic development : Steven Iatika (Independent). ■

Rugby become

Professionalism creates new challenges for Pacific Rugby

By **ATAMA RAGANIVATU**



Most encyclopaedias claim the chief exports of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa to be, respectively, sugar, coconut products and timber. However, if current trends continue, these commodities may soon be superseded in all three countries by professional rugby players.

Nobody has actually sat down and calculated how much the economies of the trio benefit from "The Brawn Drain" - mainly in the form of remittances sent to family back home - or even the number of Fijians, Tongans and Samoans currently playing overseas. Statistics revealed by such an exercise would, many people believe, be startling.

Although there are those who found that places like New Zealand were not paved with gold and returned home bitterly disillusioned, nonetheless, the stream of players constantly travelling between the Pacific Islands and New Zealand has, generally speaking, been beneficial for both the individuals concerned and their Kiwi clubs.

Joeli Vidiri's involvement with New Zealand rugby has certainly benefited him. The son of a Nausori highlands taro farmer, Vidiri arrived in Auckland in 1994 with hardly a cent in his pocket. For the last three years, his contracts with Auckland Blues in the Super Twelve competition have guaranteed him $NZ65,000 per annum and, if he graduates to the All Blacks this season, as generally expected, that income will swell out to a figure in excess of $NZ300,000.

Vidiri, naturally enough, is reluctant to discuss the financial aspects of his career as a professional rugby player. But he happily concedes that he now enjoys a lifestyle far more agreeable than anything he could aspire to in Fiji.

"I have the best of everything," he claims. "All I could wish for is available to me here in Pukekohe (a south Auckland suburb where he lives). I am even close to some Indo-Fijian traders who provide me with my favourite foods, raw fish and taro. The only thing I miss is family and friends in Fiji. But, I am in a position to fly home whenever my rugby commitments allow, so I see them all regularly." Vidiri will hit the "jackpot" if he is selected for the All Blacks and that is where the rub lies for Pacific Islands rugby.

s big business

Samoa. Only the most devout of nationalists would blame the 30 who have reluctantly (and make no mistake, the majority do it with great reluctant) forsaken their spiritual homes for the one chance they are likely to be given in life to secure the financial futures of both themselves and their families. Fiji, Tonga and Samoa have long had to be content playing cameo roles on the international rugby scene. It was British soldiers who introduced the game to Fiji in 1880, however 33 years were to pass before the Fiji Rugby Union came into being.

The Marist Brothers religious order claims the honour of bringing rugby to Samoa at the beginning of this century, but the earliest recorded match in Tonga did not take place until 1923 - only a year before the Fiji and Western Samoa representative teams met each other for the first time. The Friendly Islands' original club was not formed until 1939.

By the mid 1960s, the Fijian national side had established itself as very popular tourists in Australia, Britain and New Zealand, and they subsequently evolved into the dominant force of sevens rugby.

Western Samoa, as they were then known, became the darlings of the 1991 World Cup and, four years later, again reached the quarter finals of the 1995 tournament.

Tonga invariably test their neighbours in the annual Pacific tri-nations championship. However, victories for the Pacific outfits over rugby's powerhouses have been few and far between. The biggest scalp captured by Fiji remains a British Lions unit en route home after a draining and disappointing tour of New Zealand over twenty years ago. Tonga's greatest moment of glory - defeat of Australia's Wallabies at the lowest ebb in their history - is even further back in the memory. Samoa's best international successes, though very creditable, have all been against teams in decline. The truth is that Tonga, Fiji and Samoa have always been too small, in terms of both populations and economies, to be consistently competitive against the rugby world's elite. The advent of professionalism has, inevitably, widened the gap. Rugby has always been an expensive business to run effectively. Professionalism considerably adds to the costs

To make really substantial amounts from their limited years of participation in the game, our players must make themselves available to other nations (most obviously Australia and New Zealand, though do not discount the British teams recruiting Pacific Islanders in the not too distant future). As a consequence, fewer and fewer gifted Tongan, Fijian and Samoan players are making themselves available for island combinations.

At the time of writing, 43 players of Pacific islands heritage were attached to Super Twelve squads. Just 13 of those have declared themselves accessible to the selectors of Fiji, Tonga and

The monetary benefits of being an All-Black have drawn many Pacific Islanders.

involved in the administration of the sport in Tonga, Fiji and Samoa, as those countries strive to avoid being left further behind New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, France and England. Traditionally, the Pacific trio have relied heavily upon wealthy private benefactors' generosity for funding. However, this is inadequate to meet today's needs and corporate sponsorship is absolutely essential for the development of rugby in the region. Unfortunately, Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga do not offer value for money to any major would-be international sponsor wishing to adopt a team to provide world-wide exposure. Competition for the sponsors' dollars has never been more intense, and sadly, the region's teams have little to offer potential backers when compared to thousands of other sporting organisations around the globe. Fay Richwhite's sponsorship of Manu Samoa is, though neither party will disclose the actual amount involved, believed to be so large one is tempted to call the merchant bankers philanthropists rather than sponsors. However, it has been insufficient to prevent the majority of gifted Samoan players, eligible to represent both countries, opting for New Zealand rather than Samoa.

Lack of funding affects all facets of rugby, from junior matches at village level, through coaching, schools rugby, refereeing, the acquisition of training facilities and administration, to international fare. Now it is not just high profile Pacific Island players like Joeli Vidiri and Waisele Serevi who ply their trades overseas. Last year, Jack Komaitai, 28 years of age and no longer required by the Fiji national side, appeared to be in the twilight of his rugby career. Then he was recruited by Eastern, an unpretentious club based in the small, rural town of Waikouati in New Zealand's Otago province. Eastern provided Komaitai with free accommodation and meals, plus $NZ200 spending money a week - hardly a fortune, but sufficient for him to turn his back on the Fijian army after ten years of service.

For Komaitai, and his estimated two hundred or so compatriots in New Zealand in a similar position, the attractions of the Land of the Long White Cloud are twofold. "I enjoy the standard of rugby here, all teams we meet are tough," he told me shortly after arriving and then added: "I am also hoping to get a good job". The acquisition of a "good job" would, of course, not only have added to his disposable income, but in addition greatly aided Komaitai's hopes of acquiring permanent residency in New Zealand. Komaitai was comparatively lucky. Drafted into the North Otago provincial selection for its 1997 National Provincial Championship campaign, he immediately proved himself one of Division Three's most exciting players and now works on a farm owned by a team-mate.

Although some would question whether being a farm labourer in a remote and desolate nook of the South Island can be classified as "a good job", the former Lebanon peace-keeper is undoubtedly satisfied with his current lot in life. "I am very pleased to have come to New Zealand," he recently confirmed with a huge smile. Unless radical changes are made over the coming years, rugby in the Pacific will almost certainly continue to struggle, with our sides decimated not only by the poaching of Super Twelve teams but resurgent Australian rugby league clubs too. Even the proposed introduction next year of a Pan Pacific Championship, involving Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Canada, Japan, USA and Hong Kong, will not fill the coffers of our national administrative bodies to any great degree.

The fielding of a combined team in the Super Twelve is a more exciting and, potentially, far more lucrative concept.

But, such is the strength of opposition from New Zealand and South African officials to the proposal, it is unlikely to come to fruition. The most revolutionary idea in circulation is promoted by ambitious figures within the Samoan and Fijian rugby unions. It involves Tonga, Samoa and Fiji combining their resources to form a test team, just as the West Indies have united in international cricket and Europe for Ryder Cup golf.

According to these individuals, who declined to be named for political reasons, the new entity would commence through the issuing of shares to gain initial funds. The proceeds would then be used to secure the services of suitable players not already snapped up by Australia and New Zealand. In theory, this combination would develop into a unit powerful enough to become a huge force on the international scene and generate sufficient money to enhance all aspects of local rugby.

Pacific teams must increase sponsorship deals to compete with the bigger nations.

Although the young Turks rely a great deal upon sheer speculation for their claims, the idea does have much merit.

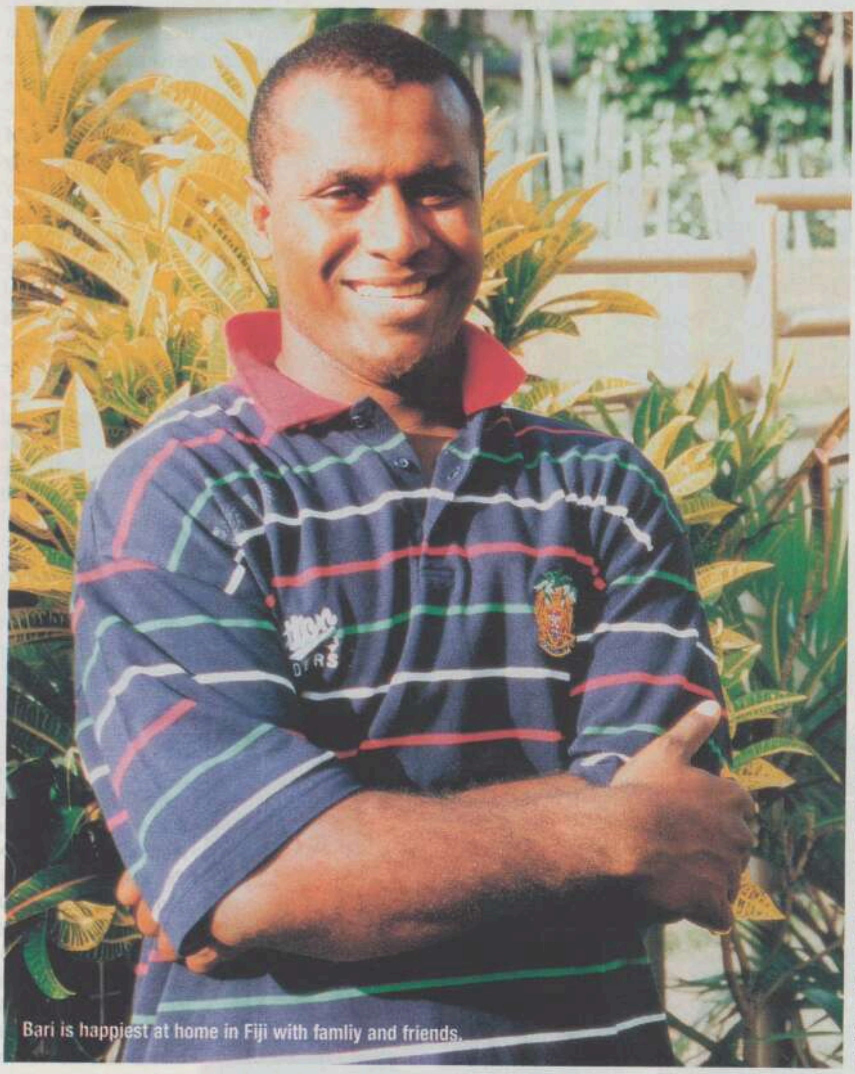
Conservative elements within the Tongan, Fijian, and Samoan administrative bodies are much less enthusiastic, believing a united team will diminish the standing of their individual countries in the international sporting arena. New Zealand Rugby Union office bearers are even more vehement in opposition, because most of the players initially targeted are currently attached to their teams. But the Kiwi view is short-sighted. Once a combined team starts producing significant revenue, money will be pumped into junior development and eventually all its members will be locally produced and locally based.

Anybody viewing college rugby in Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga could not fail to be impressed by the extraordinary potential of young players in the Pacific Islands. It is a sign of the times that most of those stars of the future aspire to play for Australia or New Zealand.

This is another negative aspect a combined team might well eliminate. In view of the colossal cost of maintaining professional teams and the uncertainty of rugby's future in South Africa, the New Zealand Rugby Union urgently needs another regular opponent to draw huge numbers to their stadiums. The combined team would be capable of doing this. If the prospect of a combined side proves unpalatable, then local officials should, at the very least, try to promote the introduction of transfer fees throughout rugby. This would enable our teams to gain some compensation for the loss of key young players. Irrespective of what path they choose to follow, the region's rugby administrators will have to tackle immense challenges with the advent of professionalism. ■

COVER STORY

Has Bari burned his bridges?


Bari is happiest at home in Fiji with famliy and friends.

By **ATAMA RAGANIVATU**

THE future in professional rugby of Manasa Bari, one of Fijian sport's few superstars, is now very much in doubt after Otago highlanders ditched him from the current Super Twelve Series. He breached his contract by playing in a relatively meaningless sevens competition, and seriously injuring a shoulder, while holidaying at home. Bari also has a contract with Otago for the New Zealand National Provincial Championship, which extends through to 1999, and this too is in jeopardy.

"We will review Manasa's situation closer to the time the NPC commences (August)," John Hornbrook, the Otago Rugby Union secretary was quoted as saying immediately after the Highlanders made their announcement.

Should Bari be banished from the professional rugby circuit, it will be a severe setback for a player who had seemed destined to succeed Waisale Serevi as the great shining light for the game in Fiji.

Ironically though, Bari preferred soccer until well into his mid-teens. His birthplace, Tavua, is a hotbed of the round-ball code and his school, Tavua College, offered little encouragement to budding young rugby players.

It was after leaving school that Bari, realising he did not have the gifts to become a second Diego Maradona, turned to rugby and joined the Tavua Old Boys club.

Originally a halfback, he rapidly earned a reputation for himself as a player of immense promise following a switch to the wing.

However, it was a huge surprise when the selectors of Fiji's national sevens side picked him for their squad to contest the 1994 International Sevens at Suva. Although his team were surprisingly beaten by Eastern Fiji in the final, Bari impressed sufficiently to be given a ticket to the prestigious Hong Kong Sevens.

Still two months short of his twentieth birthday, the inexperienced Bari let nerves get the better of him at the Son Kon Po Stadium. Nonetheless, he scored two tries in both the games in which he appeared - against Portugal and South Korea in preliminary round encounters.

Amidst the fumbles and weak tackles, Bari's immense potential was obvious enough for the Australian club Warringah to recruit him. Professional rugby had not been legalised then and the promise of a job and accommodation was all that Warringah could use to lure the Levuka teenager to Sydney's North Shore.

For the unemployed Bari, who had been raised in the village of Tavualevu by his grandparents, that was enough and he set off for an adventure in the "Big Smoke". With Bari notching some crucial tries, Warringah reached the Sydney competition final and his performances for them earned him a call up for the Australian Barbarians. Even so, Warringah decided against offering terms generous enough to tempt him into staying for the 1995 season and he returned to Fiji in time to win selection for his country's Hong Kong Sevens expedition that year.

On this occasion he did himself full justice in the British territory then known as The Crown Colony. However, his enduring memory is of a refereeing error which robbed him of the chance to score what may well have been a crucial try in the final against New Zealand. Fiji lost 17-35. A star of the victorious New Zealand side was compatriot Joeli Vidiri. The Nausori Highlander's defection to Kiwi rugby meant that a vacancy existed in Fiji's 15-a-side selection and Bari filled it.

Bari claimed the most tries during Fiji's tour to Wales and Ireland late in 1995, but abbreviated forms of rugby provided him with greater glory. He received the Player of the Tournament accolades at the Japan Sevens, Air France Sevens in Paris and Brisbane's Ballymore Tens. It was after the latter competition that Queensland rugby officials approached Bari and offered him the opportunity to show his wares in the Sunshine State.

Encouraged by Fiji team-mate Jacob Rauluni, already a Brisbane resident, and intent upon emulating another countryman, Ilie Tabua, who had gained considerable fame in Australia, Bari enthusiastically signed a contract with the Brothers club.

Reports initially coming out of Brisbane suggested that Bari was taking to Australian life and Australian rugby like the proverbial duck to water. He even talked about rejecting Fiji and setting his sights upon being with the Wallabies at the 1999 World Cup. But complications soon arose. It transpired that Bari had also signed a contract with the Waikato Rugby Union in New Zealand and made a verbal commitment to Otago.

The Waikato offer was, potentially, the most lucrative of the three and, suddenly, a career with them was the scenario he favoured. But, it became apparent only Brothers' document was binding. In spite of that, it required a great deal of persuasion from Bari's elders back in Tavualevu before he reluctantly agreed to take the field for Brothers.

Bari gritted his teeth and ably fulfilled his obligations to Brothers. However, any thoughts of wearing the green and gold of Australia were quickly forgotten and all hopes of a full appeasement between Brothers and Bari ended when they declined to release him for Fiji's tour of New Zealand. Waikato, their attitude soured by the acrimonious tug-of-war with Brothers, lost interest in Bari and the Otago Rugby Football Union won his signature by default for 1997.

Bari's form both with the Highlanders in the Super Twelve and Otago's National Provincial Championship fluctuated. He had great difficulty in adjusting to the harsh cold of a lower south Island winter and an environment very different to Tavua.

His late return after playing a major role in Fiji's World Sevens Cup win at Hong Kong, as well as the celebrations afterwards, did not endear him to Otago officials either. Nevertheless, Bari was showing glimpses of his best towards the end of 1997 and the prospect of him and All Black Jeff Wilson sharing the wings at Carisbrook, this season, had Otago fans drooling with anticipation. Fiji desperately needs "The Black Pearl", as he is affectionately known, honing his skills in the world's toughest competitions and, at 23 years of age, Bari still has plenty of time to prove his true worth, if given the scope to do so.

Short and stocky, he is a speedy and nippy opportunist who has been compared with the most venerated winger ever produced by Fiji - Senivalati Laulau. Despite Bari's undeniable gifts, it is doubtful if he, given his track record, will readily find another Super Twelve or NPC team willing to provide a lifeline if Otago discard him. For the good of Fiji, Bari, and, in all probability, Otago, let us hope reconciliation is achieved. ■

Manasa Bari (kneeling second from right) with Fiji national team-mates in Suva

■ STOCK MARKET

Making SSEx internationally compliant

The smallest stock exchange in the world - in Suva, Fiji - is undergoing a review by a United Nations Development Project Mission to make sure it is internationally compliant. The Suva Stock Exchange (SSEx) call market has been up and running for the past two years and the review comes as trading is starting to pick up.

The review will include a look at the operational, supervisory and regulatory framework within the Fiji stock market and whether they are in compliance with Capital Markets Development Authority requirements.

SSEx initially had four companies listed on the big board but this has increased to eight this year. There are no restrictions on buying and selling of stock within the exchange other than Fijian Holdings Ltd, which allows for only indigenous Fijian stock ownership.

Other companies listed are burns Philp Toyota, Flour Mills of Fiji, Fiji Sugar Corporation, South Pacific Distilleries, Rewa Rice Ltd, Fiji Television, Carlton Brewery Fiji Ltd and Fijian Holdings. Buying and selling of listed stock must be done within the exchange as required by the CMDA.

With Fiji's proposed tax on all interest earned on deposits in banks, analysts predict that more people will be looking for alternative sources of investment.

The exchange was initially trading once a week but was forced to increase call times, and may continue to do so because of increasing demand.

"It all depends on the demand we get on the market for listed stock," said the manager of the Suva Stock Exchange Mesake Nawari. SSEx had initially operated as a trading post.

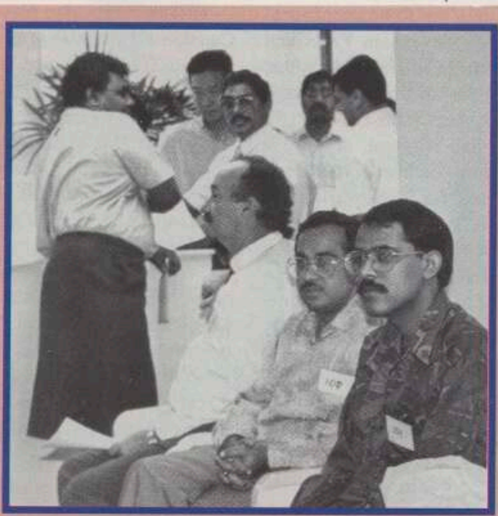
At the moment, he said, the exchange was experiencing an average of 10 orders for each call session. And two more companies, Vanua Levu-based Pacific Islands Gold and Emperor Gold Mining Ltd have shown interest in getting listed.

"Since we opened the call market there has been an increased interest, not only from institutions but by private people as well," Mr Nawari said.

"Business confidence is building in the people. There is a definite rise in investor confidence, which is a good indicator of an economy." The local interest in buying and selling of stock piqued after a lot of publicity was generated around a take-over bid recently. Rumours of a take-over bid fuelled interest and, when the order was made, trading on the exchange was suspended to give shareholders time to make up their minds. The take-over bid was successful and this intrigued a lot of people in the capital because it was so public.

The idea of a Wall street in Suva City may be hard for some to grasp but SSEx has the works - brokers to take individual orders to buy or to sell (at a price), set trading times twice a week, links to international exchanges and just about everything you can expect to get anywhere else. The exchange has available the latest financial reports and dividend amounts of listed companies.

It deals with registered bonds including FDL (long-term), FDB (medium term) and the Credit Corporation tradeable term deposit.



Traders wait for a call session to begin in Suva.

The recent demutualisation of Colonial Mutual Life saw more possibilities open up for local stockholders. They had the option to deal with the Suva exchange or directly with the Corporate Registry Service based in Melbourne. SSEx set up a scheme called the Suva Stock Exchange Colonial Small Shareholder Exit Scheme which negotiated stock selling for interested local Colonial stockholders.

The lowest stock holder for Colonial in Fiji stood at $1,500 in stock with shares selling at a cost of 6.48 each.

"This scheme significantly minimised difficulties that Fiji residents wishing to buy or sell Colonial shares may have faced and also minimised transaction costs especially sales fees," Nawari said.

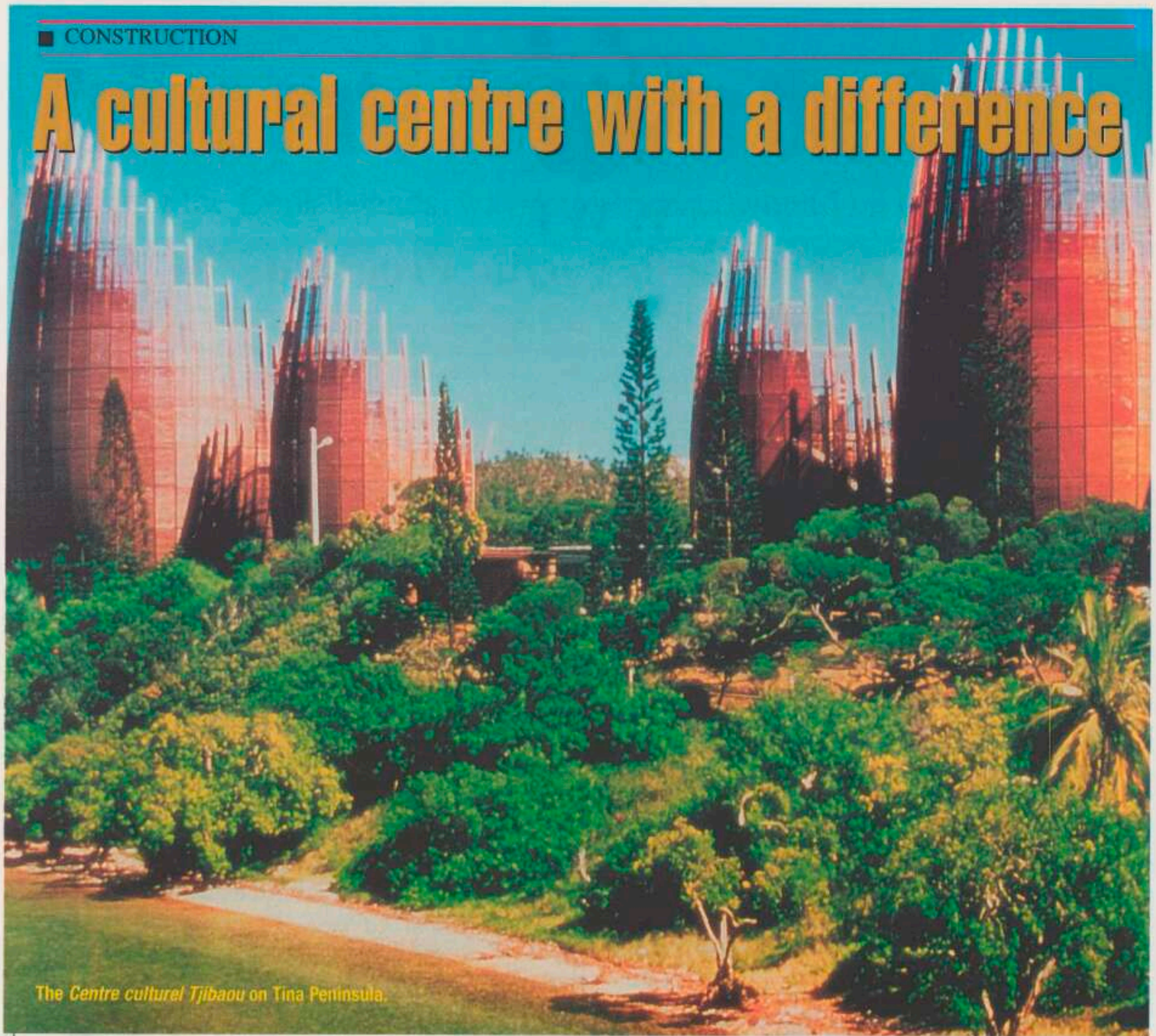
The same sort of dealing holds true for anyone holding stock in a foreign owned company who wants to trade from Fiji. Shareholders of companies listed on the Melbourne Exchange can buy and sell through the Suva exchange which is equipped with overseas trading facilities. Interested people can buy shares into companies like Goodman Fielder, ANZ, Cable and wireless, which are not listed on the Suva exchange.

To get through a stock exchange, an order has to be placed with the brokers. These are then brought to the market, although there is no actual trading between call market sessions.

Trading occurs at 10.30am every Monday and Thursday. Once an order is recorded during a call session, a market officer will issue the contract note number (usually prepared by the appointed broker). There is a note for both buyers and sellers.

Afterwards individual notes are sent to the exchange for clearance. Everyone is charged a selling cost of, at the most, 2.5 percent of stock traded on the day. This cost is shared between the Suva Stock exchange, the overseas brokers and the corporate registry in Melbourne. ■

A cultural centre with a difference



The *Centre culturel Tjibaou* on Tina Peninsula.

On the peninsula of Tina in Noumea, New Caledonia, a magnificent tribute to the Kanak cultural heritage has been built.

The *Centre culturel Tjibaou*, opening this month, has been named in recognition of the Kanak leader, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, for his contribution to cultural development. Construction, on its 8-hectare site, began in March 1995. Since the beginning of the project, designer Renzo Piano was sensitive to the need to integrate the buildings with the natural environment of the Bay of Tina site.

"The space between nature and the building should be intimate because they sweat the same odours, breath the same breeze, and form together a sole and unified space, semi-built, but never quite finished," he said. He drew from the design of traditional houses the shape of the interior skeleton of the buildings.

The ten soaring cases (pavilions), which combine futuristic techniques with traditional materials, form three villages constituting the main building of the cultural centre. Each case has an average area of 90 square metres, with the highest reaching 28 metres.

They are connected by a spine, evoking the central alley specific to traditional Kanak houses. Piano won the project to design the cultural centre after an international competition was launched in 1991. His project was selected by both the then President of the Republic of France Mr Francois Mitterrand, and the President of the Agence de Developpement de la Culture Kanak (ADCK), Madam Marie-Claude Tjibaou - widow of the influential Kanak leader.

The centre, which is on the site where the notable festival, Melanesia 2000 was held in 1975, aims to recognise Kanak culture as fundamental to New Caledonia. According to an information kit provided by the ADCK "the cultural centre will be a centre of development, creation and diffusion of traditional and contemporary Kanak culture".

"It will also be the principal place for the coming together of all cultures present in New Caledonia, and a key point in the network of cultural exchange flowing between this country (New Caledonia) and the rest of the Pacific region". ■

Crime rate drops in the Cooks

'It is not the Cook Islands' way to over-react when in a personal crisis'

The cultural make-up of the Cooks has helped prevent some of the problems that could have occurred with redundancies.

By **FLORENCE SYME-BUCHANAN**

New Zealand consultants were wrong when they said there would be more crime in the Cook Islands during the height of country's economic depression and public service layoffs.

Consultants working with the Ministry of Finance anticipated a wide range of social problems would happen with so many people out of work. Instead, the Cook Islands crime rate has dropped in the last six years with the lowest number recorded in the last three years - the most problematic the country has had in terms of its economy. Chief Probation Officer Angeline Tuara says the consultants would have been making forecasts from experience in their own countries.

"But it didn't happen for us that way, former public servants didn't want to blacken their name by getting into trouble, they wanted to get another job."

She says the Probation Service was more objective in its forcast, "but we had to learn too," as the problems of 1995 - mass public service sackings and the economic crisis - were firsts for the Cooks. Tuara says it is not the Cook Islands' way to over-react when in a personal crisis.

"We have this way of picking ourselves up and getting on with it." She says also the huge migration overseas may have "prevented any major problems that may have occurred during this period." Local newspapers have reported that up to 4000 people have left the country in the last two years.

This has reduced the Cook Islands population from 22,400 in December 1995 to 18,000 last year. Statistics also show that alcohol related offending is decreasing yearly.

In 1995 there were 61 alcohol related óffences, dropping to 50 in 1995 and 28 last year.

According to figures released by the New Zealand Public Health Department, Cook Islanders are the South Pacific's biggest drinkers. The average Cook Islander consumes 8.7 litres of alcohol a year, compared to 1.3 litres in Fiji and 1.4 litres in Samoa.

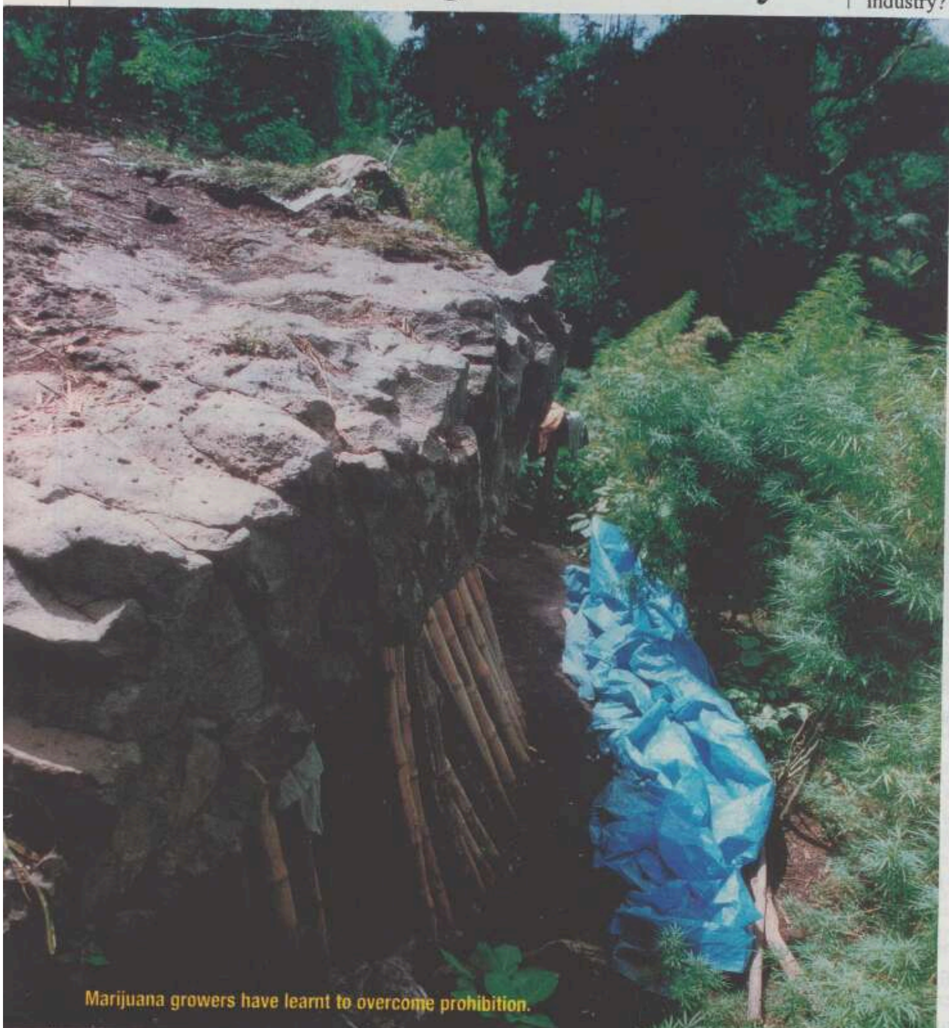
Although men are committing less crimes in recent years, they offend far more than women in the Cooks.

The number of females offending has steadily dropped from 31 in 1991 to just five last year. By comparison, 138 men offended in 1991, a figure that decreased in 1997 to 116.

More long term unemployed people have appeared in court in the last two years that those with jobs. ■

Weed money

Pacifica's underground industry



Marijuana growers have learnt to overcome prohibition.

By **LISA WILLIAMS**

IN the Cook Islands, the shock of marijuana use amongst locals is still being felt amongst those who take the high moral ground and insist the drug is still the domain of tourists.

But cases coming into court and recent street polls surveying public opinion on marijuana use have shown that times are changing. Are we looking at a day when marijuana will be as freely available to consenting adults as alcohol and cigarettes? Not if the Police, the churches and the general public have their say. Now and again cases come up in the Rarotonga High Court and the public goes into shock-dismay that it's happening in Paradise. But what the cases and their sentences hide is the green growth of an underground tax-free industry here, smack in the capital of idyllic Cook Islands.

But just how big is the local dope industry? Is the Raro Special going to be as well known in the export circles as the Fiji variety - which often ends up on the market here?

Police have no idea.

One source claims a good supply could keep a dealer making up to $5,000 a day easily, tossing in the example of the latest police haul with a $250,000 street value. Officials haven't confirmed what they think the value is.

What they do know is that marijuana is flying into the country from a variety of sources - many point the finger at Fiji - and they don't have the drug dogs or the manpower to stop it. "A (drug) dog costs more than an officer - and then you've got to feed it and keep it trained," says Police Commissioner Tevai Matapo. Numbers of those dealing or selling are harder to come by, mostly because the industry is so new and there are more new faces all the time. Police say the numbers are tiny and the talk of an industry is exaggerated. They base that stance on the few cases they've handled.

What is a fact is that cannabis is here, and it can be bought. Costs vary, according to demand and supply. Four years ago, when there were few suppliers, it cost up to $1,000 for a gram. During a glut, it could go as low as $200 an ounce, just over 28 grams. Comparing the marijuana market to the price of gold, smokers are paying much more for weed than they would for the precious metal. "Put it this way," says one insider, "from one plant you could make yourself $3,000. There's no set-up costs and a very high return. It's sort of the business everybody would like to have. It's illegal but it's out there." A family man is currently facing charges in one of the biggest cannabis busts in the country - the 40-odd plants were much more than the one or two grown "for personal use".

Another source says the haul by Police, currently before the courts, can't compare to more than 200 plants which were lifted from the Titikaveka area just before Christmas. No-one knows who stole the plants and it can't be reported to Police.

"It's everywhere," is the common response from those asked who've indulged in one joint, or two, or three. "If I want it, I know where to go and get it," says one informant. "You can spend $20 or you can spend hundreds of dollars. It depends on how much you buy."

An informant says one dealer sells by the ounce (just over 28 grams) and clients come from all walks of life - including the business community. "It's definitely not kids who are paying the big money. People working and earning see it as recreation, like drinking and smoking - that's what they see when they spend their money.

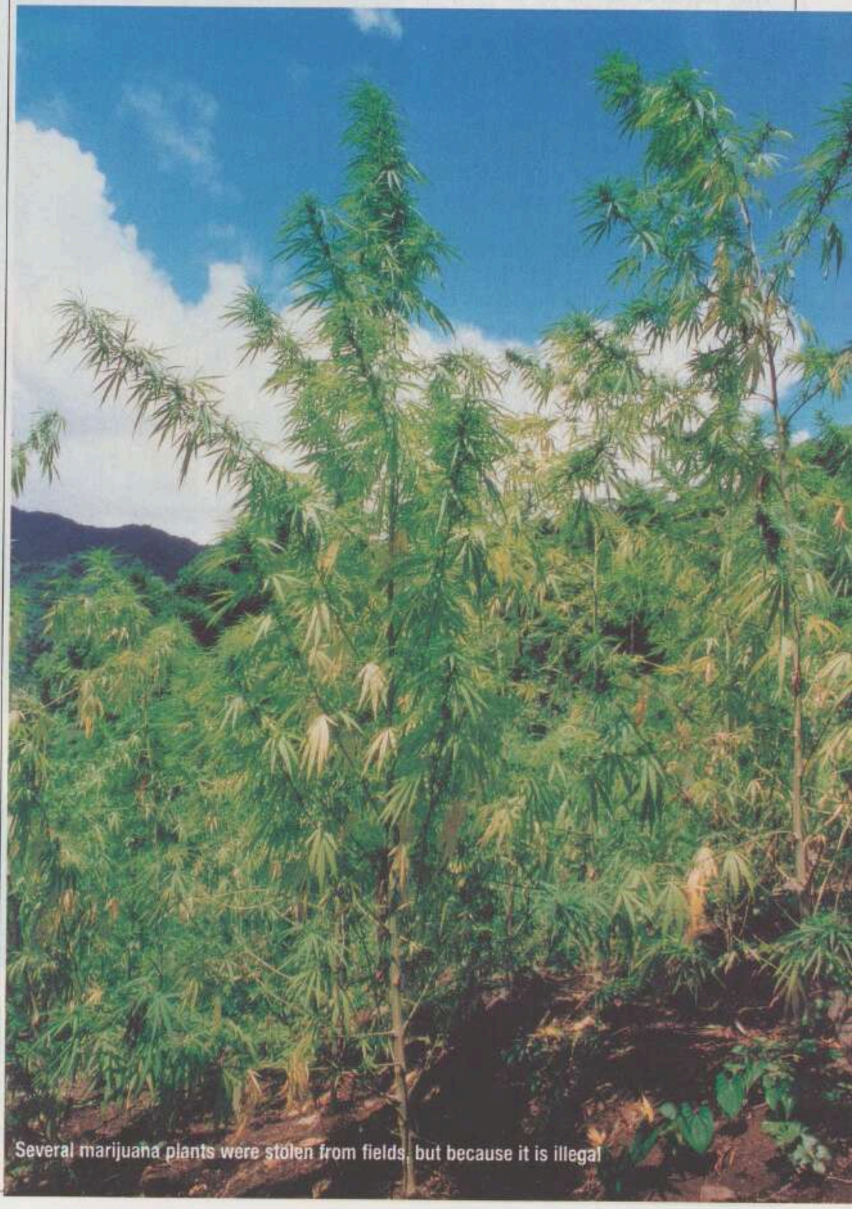
"They don't see anyone getting hurt. It's a marketplace - demand and supply. I know one person who's renovating a house from the money (made from selling marijuana). It's good money." Raro is not Suva, where the access is as easy as asking your taxi driver to drive you to the nearest dealer, but many young people who've been here in the last ten years know times have definitely changed. The whiff of "smoke" at parties and nightclubs, and the sight of people openly sharing a joint is nothing new, although it still shocks many who had no idea "it" had come to the Cooks.

And it's not only the young, but the old, the travelled, the educated and illiterate, the trendy and conservative types who are indulging. You'd be surprised at the people who've participated in the crime of "cannabis possession".

While many will have a free joint or take one puff and wonder over the fuss, there are enough buying marijuana on a regular basis to help suppliers flourish all over the island. More street opinion has it that Police know most people smoke, or are technically in possession of weed, but don't crack down unless they come across dealers.

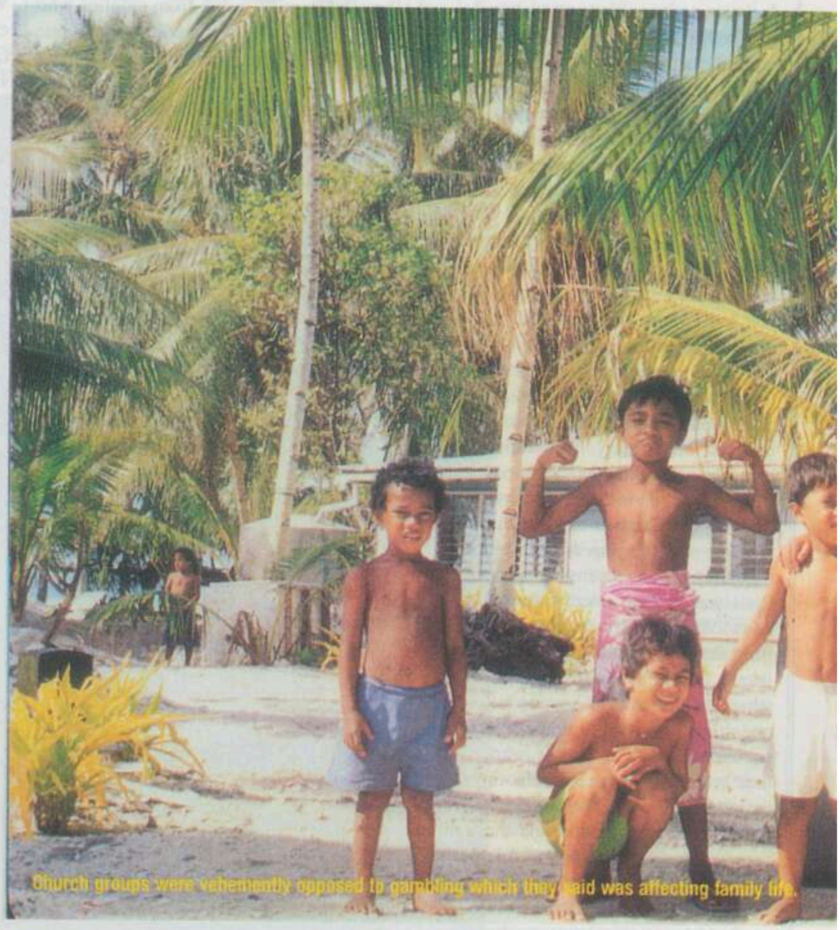
CIB's Tere Patia denies that, claiming there are a select few who are breaking the law and everyone he comes across will be charged. Curiously enough, the industry thrives despite the rumour-mill ensuring that nothing happens without everybody knowing. In the weed industry, the police breaks allegedly come from stoolies who point the finger via an anonymous phone call at suppliers. It's still an industry where buyers don't dob in their suppliers unless they've been sold some really poor quality smoke for high prices; where other people buy then sell half of what they buy at higher prices just to make their money back. "It has happened that people nark on other people because they might be selling a better quality product than what they have... they get upset," says one buyer. While moral judgement and laws on cannabis have not changed in the Cooks, time has not done the same to 1990s Cook Islanders.Four years ago, there were a handful of known smokers on the island.

Nowadays, even dealers don't know who's who. ■


Several marijuana plants were stolen from fields, but because it is illegal

Gambling repeal hails new poli

By GIFF JOHNSON



Church groups were vehemently opposed to gambling which they said was affecting family life.

AN unprecedented campaign by churches in the Marshall Islands brought the resounding defeat of gambling in late March, after weeks of debate in the Nitijela (parliament).

In the end, despite attempts to delay consideration of anti-gambling legislation until the next parliamentary session in August, two separate measures were passed, handing President Imata Kabua a major defeat - the first ever for a president in the Marshalls' 19 years of constitutional government.

The gambling legislation fractured the government's cabinet, with just three members supporting the President's pro-gambling position, two voting with the church-led opponents, and two others abstaining (which has the effect of supporting the anti-gambling legislation).

Above all, as the dust settled from the vote, two new developments had ushered in a new era for the Marshall Islands.

For a country which remains tightly controlled by paramount chiefs, the vote showed, for the first time, that the community can control the outcome of a vote in the Nitijela. The second development was that Speaker Kessai Note demonstrated that he is a power to be reckoned with who is not taking his marching orders from the President.

Note has been Speaker for more than 10 years. During the 17 year tenure of President Amata Kabua (who died in 1996), Note managed the parliament for the President's party. But not any more.

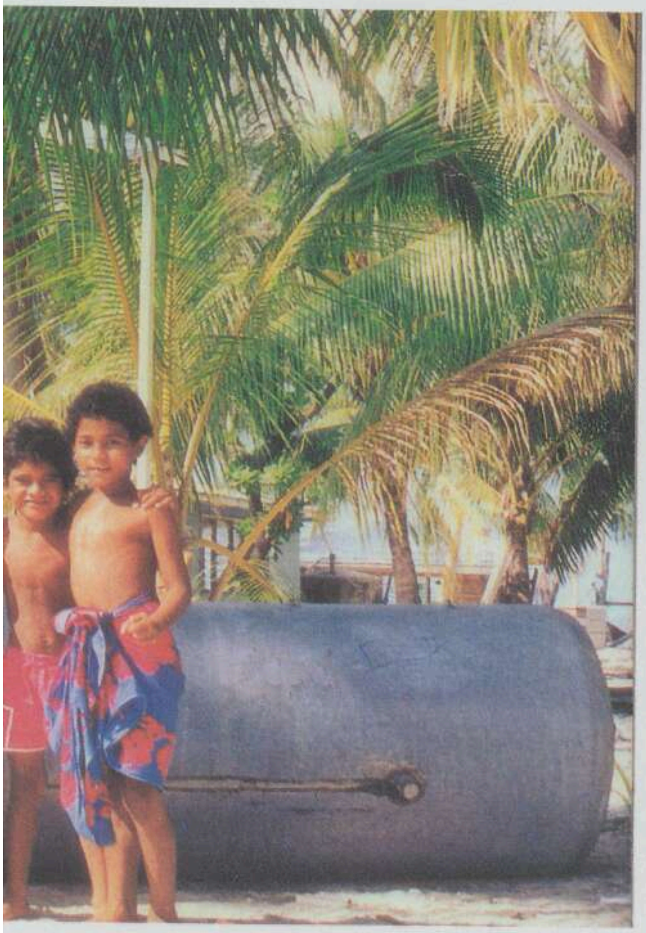
Angered by Note's show of power during the session, the President and other pro-gambling legislators were preparing to go to court in mid-April to challenge the Speaker's action in ruling Kabua, Foreign Minister Phillip Muller and Majuro Senator Tony deBrum ineligible to vote on the second bill that allows 'soft' gambling, such as raffles and bingo, by churches and other non-profit groups.

These legislators believe that the Speaker overstepped his legal authority by declaring a conflict of interest and barring them from voting. They say they didn't have any conflict with the bill concerning non-profit fundraising. The President had attempted to derail consideration of this second bill - the first bill repealed the law legalising gambling; the second made all gambling illegal except for non-profit fund raising activities - until the August session.

'For a country which remains tightly controlled by paramount chiefs, the vote showed, for the first time, that the community can control the outcome of a vote in the Nitijela'

But, as he had in the first vote, Note ruled that the three leaders, because they either owned or had an interest in gambling activities, could not vote. The first bill had passed easily 18-7. Nevertheless, to get to consideration of the second bill the next and final day of the session, gambling opponents had to defeat the President's motion to defer. Without passage of the second bill, the Marshalls would have been left with a previous law on the books allowing local governments the right to legalise gambling, a move that would have had the effect of maintaining the status quo gambling situation.

cal era in the Marshall Islands



Gambling had been legalised two years ago with the promise that it would be restricted to foreign visitors and be tightly regulated to provide income for the government.

But according to Finance Minister Ruben Zackhras, no money has been earned by the national government, and the gambling has been a local, not tourist, activity.

Only the Kwajalein Atoll Local Government had received any benefit from gambling, netting about $120,000 a year in taxes. Church and community leaders complained that since gambling - primarily in the form of poker machines - got going, rank and file Marshallese have lost huge sums of money and been unable to put food on their tables, pay their children's school tuition and doctors' fees, and meet other family needs. Never in recent times have the churches been more organised and unified. Church members and students from many different religious groups jammed the Nitijela chamber day in and day out for two weeks, returning each day to make sure the leaders got their anti-gambling message.

Nitijela members, long used to delivering their nationally broadcast remarks to an empty chamber, were feeling the pressure. At one point, the President commented of the packed spectator benches, "I'm not intimidated by their presence, I'm honoured." During the final debate prior to the vote, Arno Senator Nidel Lorak's remarks against gambling were repeatedly interrupted by applause from the hundreds of onlookers in the parliament chambers - another unprecedented development of the community protest.

The churches gained the support of the Majuro Chamber of Commerce and the Council of Iroij (chiefs) in supporting a repeal of the gambling law. The anti-gambling legislation was introduced by longtime Senator Ataji Balos, a confidant of the President, both of whom represent Kwajalein Atoll. The legislation was also supported by the third Kwajalein Senator Laji Taft, who chaired the special committee that held public hearings on the bills before their passage. Taft said it was clear that public opinion was overwhelmingly against gambling, and that he supported the repeal of gambling.

"The public told us two years ago that they didn't want gambling, and now they're telling us again," Taft said just prior to the vote. Two years ago, despite overwhelming popular opposition, gambling was approved. But times are clearly changing. The Marshall Islands Journal, commenting on the first ever opposition victory in this country's parliament, said: "Two years ago an 18-7 vote against gambling would have been unthinkable (during the rule of first President Amata Kabua). Tuesday this week it happened." The President may go to court challenging the Speaker's actions, and there is discussion among the pro-gambling faction to resurrect the gambling legislation in the August session of Nitijela. The next national election, however, is just around the corner (late 1999). Now that voters have had a taste of the power they can wield in the political arena, the big question that remains unanswered is: will they use it in the next national election? ■

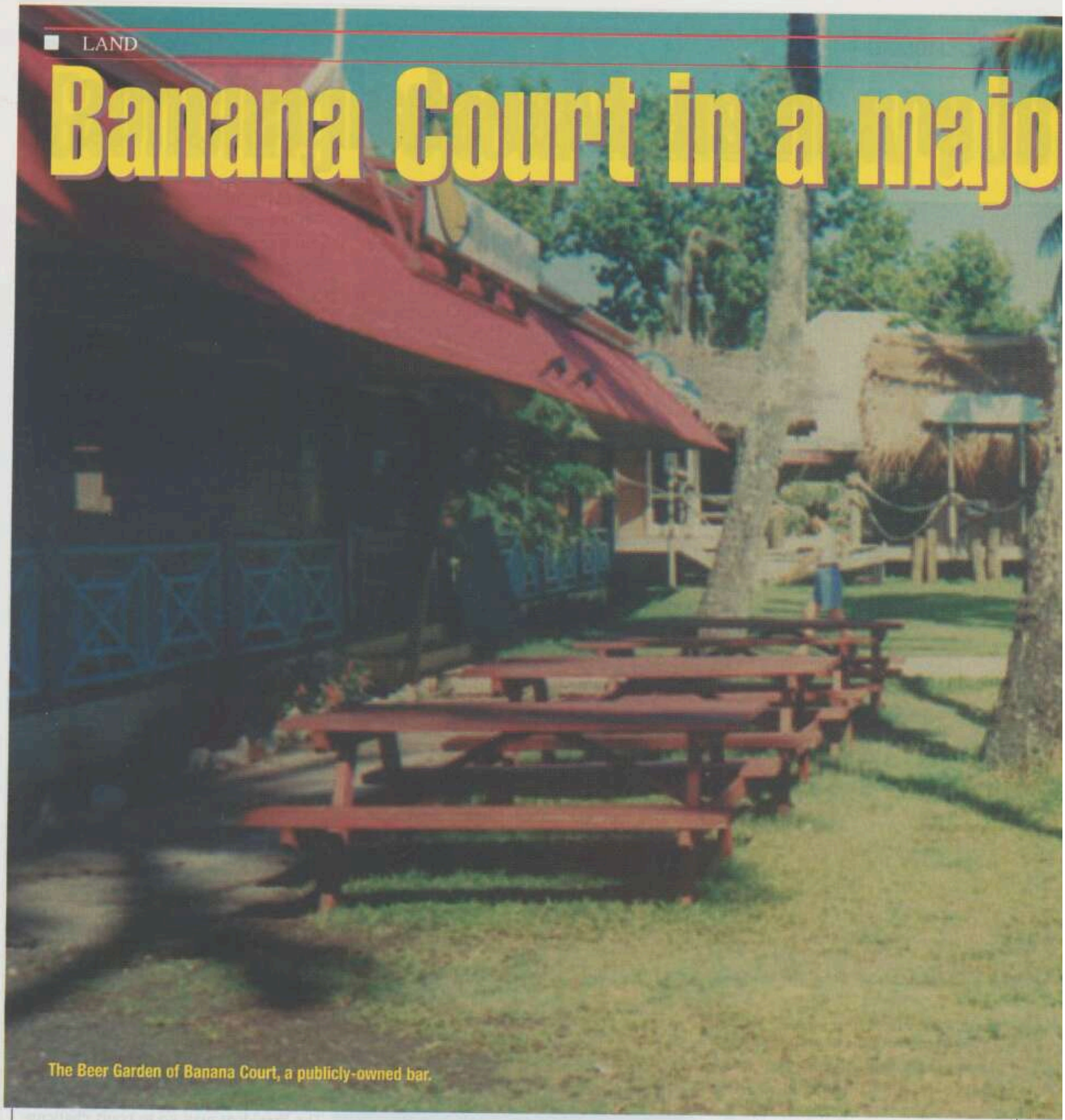
A delay to August, too, would have deflated much of the church-led anti-gambling movement. But when Kabua's motion deadlocked at 13-13, the Speaker cast the tie-breaking vote to kill the motion and move forward with the vote.

Shortly after the speaker's action, Kabua and Muller, who had already been disqualified from voting and were minutes away from departing to Christmas Island in Kiribati for a Micronesian leaders meeting, left parliament followed by several of their supporters. Gambling opponents then were able to muster enough support to pass the bill 12-11, making all gambling illegal except fund raising by non-profit groups.

'No money has been earned by the national government, and the gambling has been a local, not tourist, activity'

LAND

Banana Court in a majo

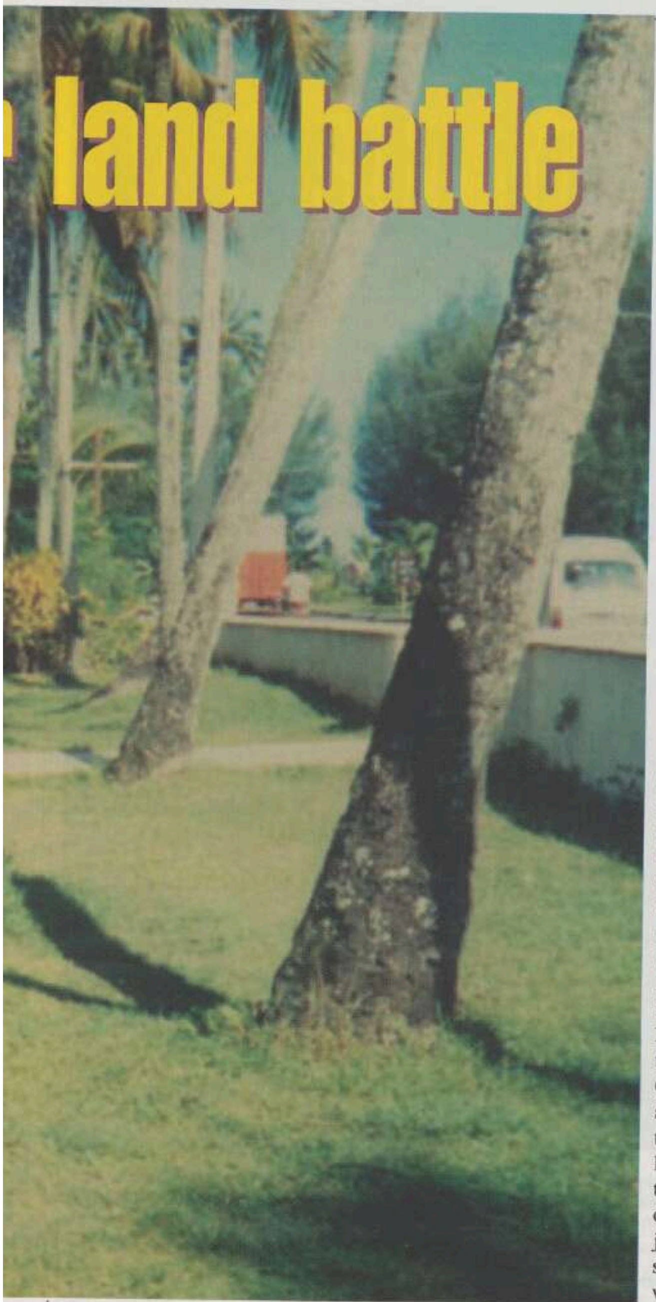


The Beer Garden of Banana Court, a publicly-owned bar.

By **FLORENCE SYME-BUCHANAN**

THERE'S been little laughter or music at the legendary Banana Court Bar for almost two years - a place where generations of Cook Islanders had their first drink, dance and date. As the saying went, 'You hadn't been to Rarotonga until you'd danced and drunk at the BC,' as it is still fondly known amongst older revellers. First timers expecting a grandiose establishment instead found a sprawling, slightly seedy bar bursting at its aged seams with a huge sweaty Friday night crowd, delirious with drink and loud electronic island music pumped out by Kaina Express.

The reputation for being the best night spot in the Cook Islands was one the run-down bar had for over 20 years - only to gradually lose it with management changes and the Cook Islands economic decline. Competition with newer, more efficiently-run bars, and a shortage of booze money, has made subsequent come backs in the early 90's shortlived. That has been to the detriment of Government coffers as the Banana Court complex is state-owned. Adding to its problems, one of the



Cook Islands biggest landowning chiefly families, Ngati Karika, is to enter into new negotiations with Government over prime land in central Avarua, capital of Rarotonga - the Banana Court included.

At present the Ngati Karika are paid a pittance in ground rental - $105 a year - for about three acres of land on which a number of Government buildings sit.

This includes the foreshore area where the BC stands.

The rental dates back to 1905 when the land was originally given to government to build a hospital.

A sanatorium operated up until 1922, then Otera Rarotonga was built accommodating expatriat New Zealand Government workers. Otera Rarotonga was later converted into the still famous but now silent South Pacific bar.

The Banana Court complex has a number of tenants operating a travel agency, cafe, jewellery shop and a private medical practice. All rentals are paid to the Government, but some tenants want to pay their rental directly to the landowners instead.

Expectations are that the Banana Court will eventually be sold and as the landowners, the Karika family say they've got first option. The price just has to be right, says Ian Karika who is Chairman of the Banana Court Company - a position he holds thanks to Government and past negotiations to involve the landowning family in the day-to-day operations of the property.

But Karika board members hold no voting rights and the final say still rests with Government. However, the ace card the family holds is undisputed landownership. They want to negotiate an "amicable agreement" says Ian Karika, but haven't ruled out taking the matter to court if dissatisfied with future bargaining.

"Eighteen months ago the Prime Minister said they wanted to return all Crown land to the landowners, but any buildings would belong to them." Several other landowning families in Rarotonga are now actively seeking the return of lands given to government in the early 1900's for public use such as schools, but no longer used for the purposes they were originally intended. Early March saw the first forced occupation ever in the Cook Islands of Government buildings by another landowning family, who were demanding their land back. First given to Government by Willie and David Isaiah to build a school in 1914, houses for expatriat teachers and part of the

Ministry of Works was built on about seven acres. Because teachers no longer live in the houses and part-closure of the Ministry of Works, the family believe they are justified in seeking the return of the land in the district of Arorangi on Rarotonga.

It was the first matter involving state assets that the recently established Cook Island Investment Corporation had to settle. A few days after the occupation, an "amicable agreement" was reached, according to Investment Corporation Chair John Tierney. This saw the occupiers vacate the premises and "return the property in its original condition respecting the Crown's titleship and ownership of property and chattels. The occupiers believe they made their point and are happy to leave," said Tierney in a press statement. Before talks with the Investment Corporation a descendent of the Isaiahs, Mariia Maurangi, told Cook Islands News that, "we have to take back what is rightfully ours. There's no school there and there haven't been any teachers on the land for a long time."

"We need to claim what is rightfully ours," Maurangi had said. And as another descendent said, "this is a message to our people". This could well mean landowners will hold Prime Minister Sir Geoffrey Henry to his word that all lands will be returned to their rightful owners. Meanwhile, people still talk of the BC heydays.

Its brightly painted frontage and famous banana sign are constant reminders of when it all used to be fun and land battles with the Crown were unheard of. ■

In the name of charity

By LISA VAINERERE

Police are cracking down on the Cook Islands biggest gambling craze this century.

Housie nights have caught on in a big way, and the rush for licences by non-profit organisations has prompted local Police to tighten up on restrictions.

Cook Islands Commissioner of Police Tevai Matapo says complaints began last year over abuse of the system by operators.

The Gaming Laws stipulate that 80 per cent of the proceeds have to go back into prizes. Some say the prizes have been unrealistically low for the crowds they receive.

Matapo admits that Police had not been keeping an eye on Housie nights - "mainly because we entrusted licencees to play by the rules. But bits of information dribbled in that perhaps some of them were abusing their licences."

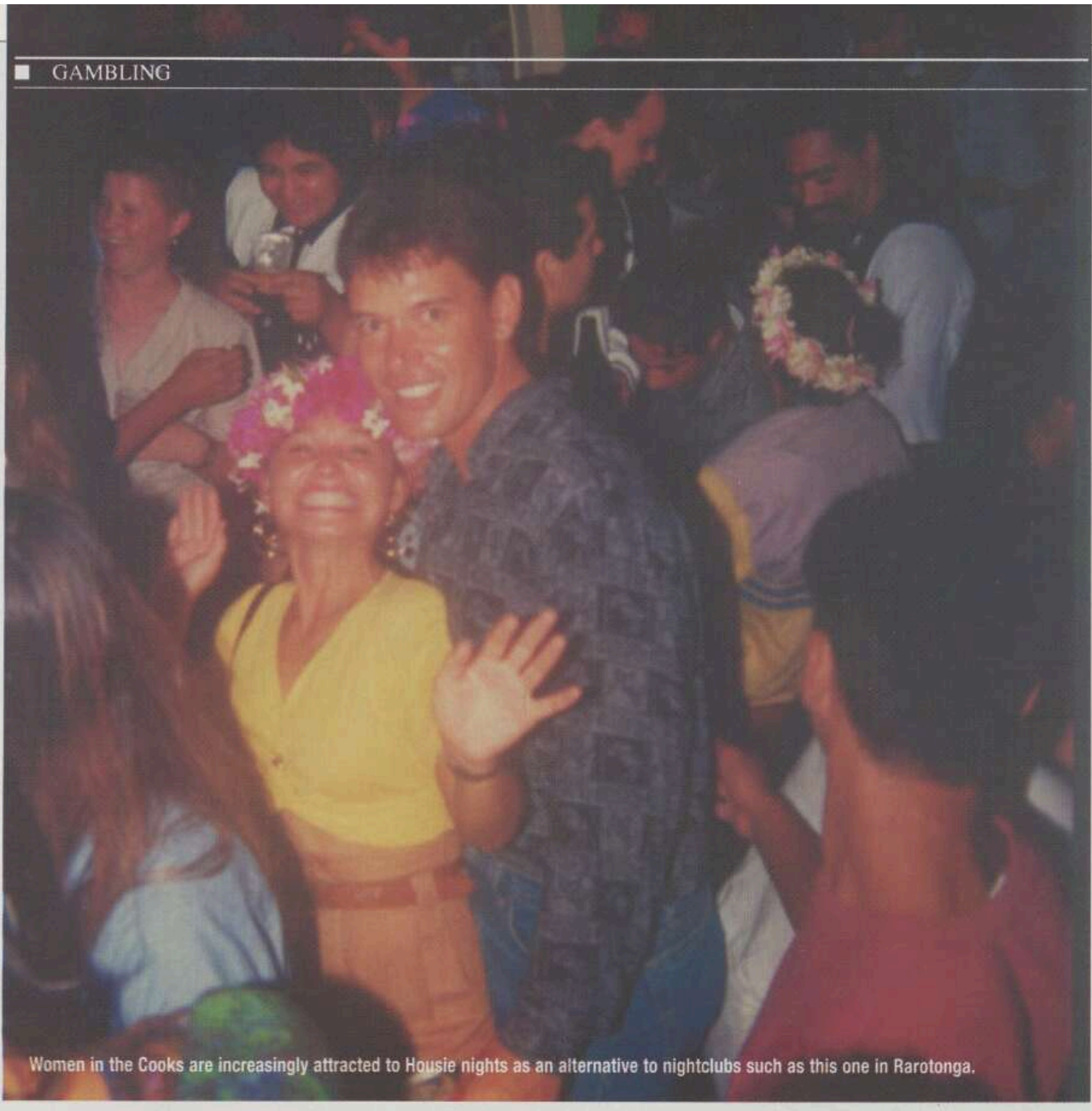
The abuse ranges from organisers spending a few thousand on home improvements or vehicles, to saving more for the kitty by cutting down on player prizes.

"That abuse of licences made us decide to revamp the whole issue of Housie permits and tighten up on issuance," he says. Part of the new rules ensure that operators prepare quarterly accounts clearly showing the 80-20 split between prizes and fundraising/operating expenses. One operator has already lost their licence. But on an island where there is Housie six days a week in numerous villages, closing one down does not dent the gambling sport which is providing fierce competition for Tattslotto. It's easier than selling raffle tickets, and for players, it's perceived as easy money. The new trend offers a whole new perspective on why people gamble in the islands.

Housie addiction stems from legitimised gambling, Matapo says. "Provided the public wants it and there's a public demand for it, who am I to pass judgement others," he says.

"What does concern me is the money that's being spent on housie means someone's missing out at home. "I've also noticed, on some housie nights, young children just wandering around outside. They're waiting for their parents until late, and that's uncivilised if those parents are there for three or four hours leaving their kids unsupervised because they're so absorbed in the game." Most of the housie players are women and the enjoyment, most say, goes beyond filling in a few cards and calling 'House'.

"I can get out of the house, meet my friends and have a few drinks," says one elderly woman. "If I win, that's good, if I



Women in the Cooks are increasingly attracted to Housie nights as an alternative to nightclubs such as this one in Rarotonga.

don't better luck next time. It's no good to depend on the money, that way you never win." But people do depend on Housie money, and spend big dollars on that dependence.

One young mother denies she is hooked, although she takes her young toddlers with her when she can't get a baby sitter. She is known as a "regular".

"If I win I give all the money to my husband, He uses it to pay the bills," she says. "But he doesn't like me going to Housie saying it's a waste of money." The Police admit that they do not know how much money "non-profit" organisations are getting in the name of charity.

"It's very difficult to assess from the documents provided because all these said were the income and expenses," says Matapo. "The prizes were not separated".

Most of those found abusing the Gaming Act have got off with a warning because of the lack of evidence, he says.

Now, apart from compulsory quarterly accounts, the new system includes breakdown of expenditure, lists of prize winners, and annual fees for $112.50 including VAT.

Housie is now almost reaching saturation point in terms of available nights and venues, and it is still growing.

"In three months operation, a group made $14,000 and paid out $11,500," says Matapo. "They made $2,400 when their expenses were taken out."

The pressure to keep numbers straight is growing, he says, "although I still have to understand Housie's purpose and why it was introduced". In Raro, 21 licences were issued last year.

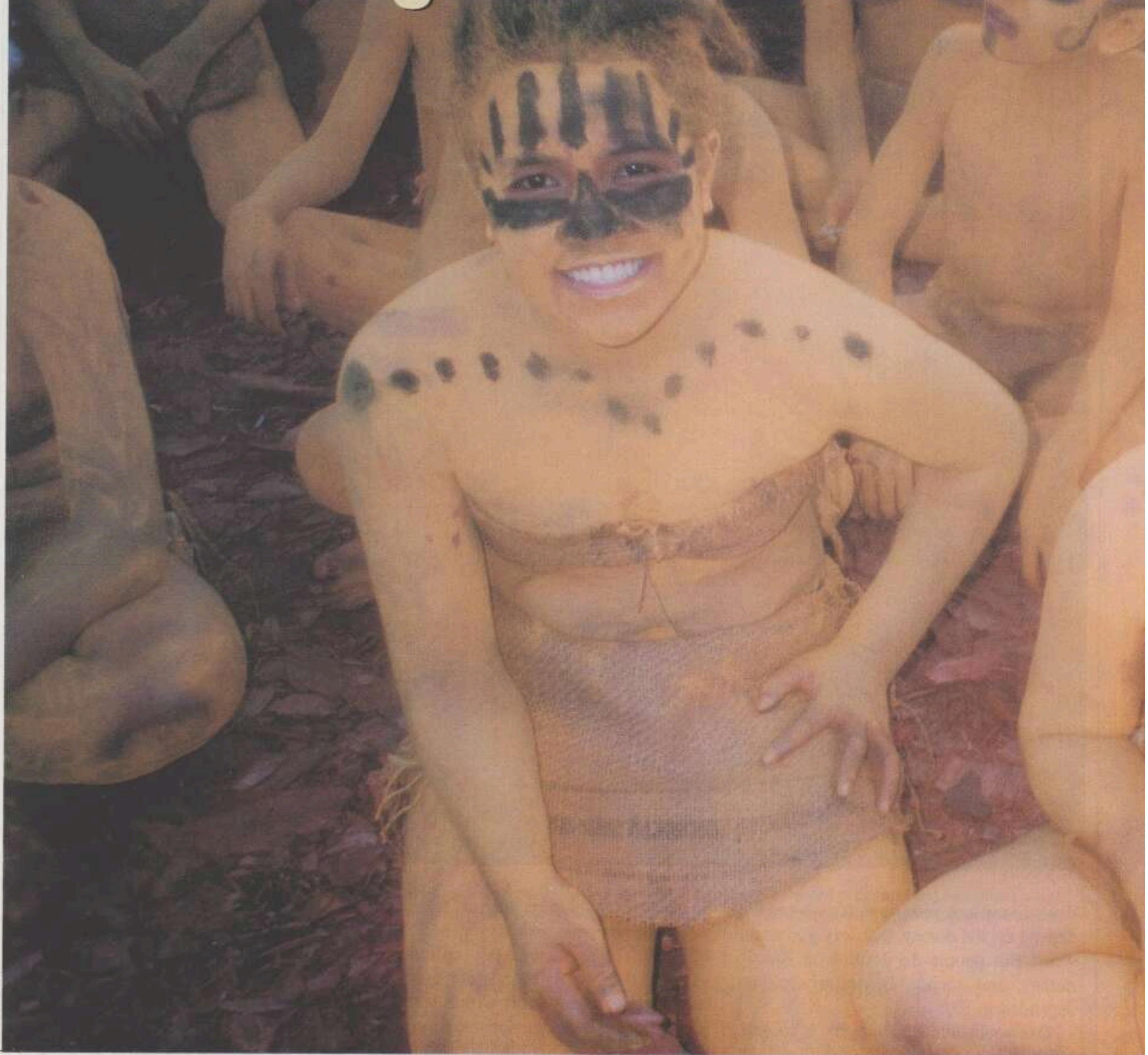
It's easy money, says Matapo, but it raises the question of charity. "How do you classify charitable? Is it raising funds to go overseas and raise more funds? Is it to pay for sports trips and people's airfares?" he asks.

The same paradox applies to raffle schemes. In the end, Matapo says, Housie gaming highlights a matter of honesty for the operators. "They need to be fair to their clients," he says.

"That's the main thing". ■

■ NEWS

Violence against women on the



By PATRICK DECLOITRE

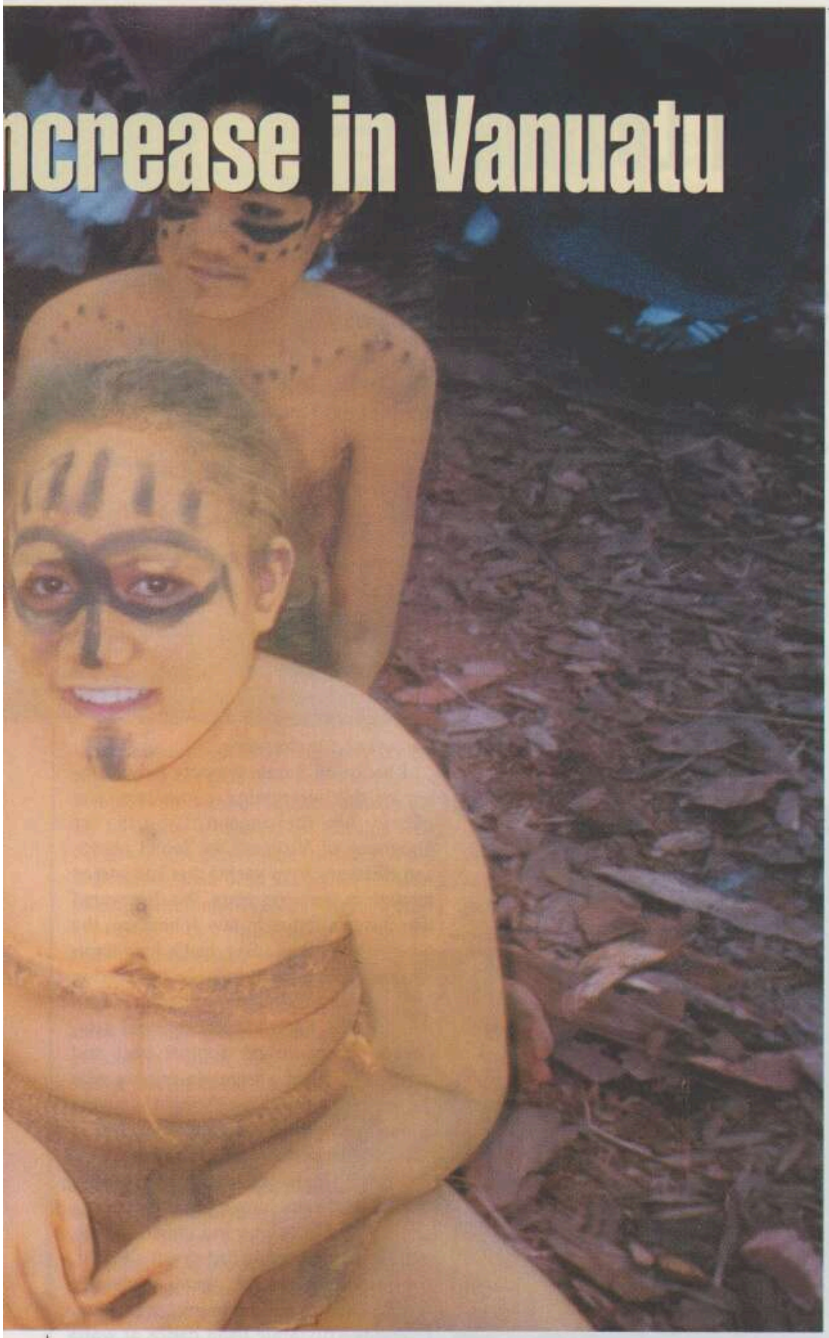
In the face of an increasing number of rapes and abuses on teenage girls, Vanuatu's women have blamed the local authorities, including the police, for not doing anything to tackle what is becoming a nation-wide problem.

Although the most recent concern in the region was to combat a new type of criminals in the South Pacific, paedophiles, Vanuatu still seems to have to come to grips with a problem from within: in the past few weeks, Solomon said teenage girls ranging from age 12 to 16 had been victims of brutal rapes.

The worst case was a nine-year old girl, Emily William, who was raped early last March in Lokaim village, on Tanna island (250 kilometres, 138 miles south of here).

She died one month later. Early reports indicate the rapist was a close member of the family.

"She didn't get attention, nothing happened. There are so many other cases unreported in this country and hidden ", she



ncrease in Vanuatu

said. "We are shocked no official action was taken against the alleged perpetrator of the crime until poor Emily died a month later", Solomon said.

"The authorities of Tanna, the police, the health department, the provincial administration and the local chiefs must explain why and how this apparent lack of action after a violent sexual assault occurred". Referring to other reported rapes recently in other islands of this archipelago, she said domestic violence in Vanuatu was "endemic". "This can't be allowed to continue, it's a great concern for us, this has been on for quite a while and it's increasing, rape, domestic violence at home and in public." "People are not taking it seriously. The law is already in place, so it has to be enforced; whenever the rapist is identified, he should be condemned." The roots of such brutal actions were to be found deep in Vanuatu's male-dominated, traditional culture and "custom".

"Recently a man told a court when he felt his sexual impulse he didn't know where to go, so he went to a girl and raped her. He couldn't refrain. That's the practice. Is that a good enough excuse at all?" Solomon said.

"Sex can be controlled by human beings and we're human beings today. If someone thinks he cannot control this, then it's too bad." She also blamed foreign influence through the introduction of television here (five years ago) and violent, sexually-oriented video tapes for rent here for the upsurge and change in men's behaviour.

"And newspapers, they're available everywhere in Port Vila. That could also contribute to this kind of reaction from a man". "Rape is something police cannot stop, women either. They must work with us to create awareness among young girls. It's everyone's responsibility, starting from home to the highest level", Police spokesman Pakoa Samuel said.

"But sometimes, women claim they have been raped when they were consenting to start with. In our culture, to 'force' has a slightly different meaning. Some women also dress in a way that encourages men to rape them.

Short dress, that sort of thing. Of course, there are the genuine rape cases". Police last month issued a warning to parents, telling them to ask their children not to go alone at night or know what to do if confronted with a potential abuser.

"There are so many unreported cases, many of them are exclusively dealt with by traditional chiefs. Very few get reported. But often women who have been raped are ashamed to talk about it. This is our custom. What we hear is only the tip of the iceberg", Samuel said. Solomon agreed and called on a nationwide concern including parents, churches, government and villagers to tackle the issue.

"The key is education. The culture doesn't allow us to talk about sex openly, this is still taboo. But it can't be taboo anymore, we have to break the wall of silence imposed by culture. Everyone will have to join hands", she said. ■

Water Music of Lokona

Pictures and Text by **SALLY ANDREW**

Sailing across the patch of water between the north-east tip of Santo and the southernmost Banks Island in northern Vanuatu, our curiosity was piqued. Each nautical chart and guide-book showed a different name for our destination. I wondered which one the local folks used - Lokona (or Lacona, Lakon, Lakoon), Gaua (or Gow) or Santa Maria? In the hopes of catching a big fish for the village, we trailed our line astern. We were lucky. Within five minutes we landed two neon-bright mahimahi.

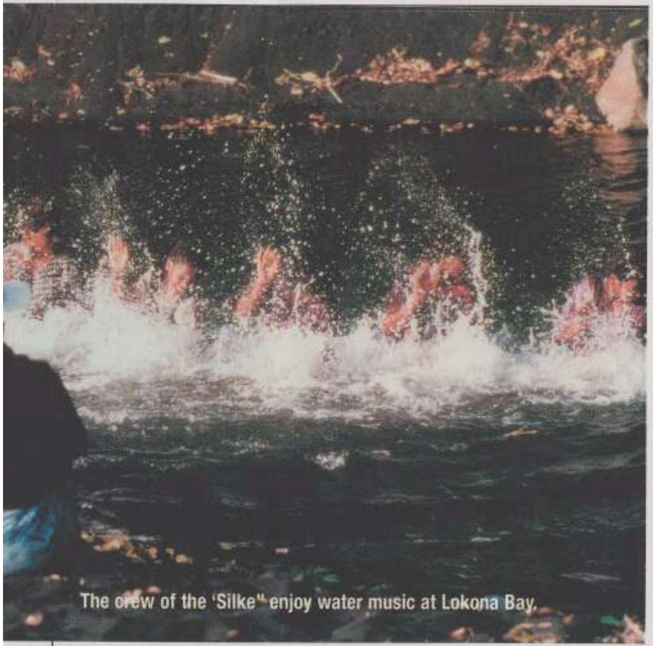
Arriving at Lakona Bay, we anchored far out in the rolly bight. Before the hook was on the bottom, four canoe-loads of smiles paddled out to greet us. We storied-on a bit, in mixed Bislama and English, then asked the oldest man, William, if he would like a fish. Foster struggled to hold one up, looked at it, and muttered: "Oh, mi tink se em i smol tumas - I think this one's too small." he set it down. William waited patiently, a question mark on his face, as Foster put the gaff in the gill of the second bigger fish, hidden on the floor of the cockpit. With great difficulty, he hoisted the fish, passed it over the boat's lifelines and lay it in the canoe. William's eyes grew big! The fish was over 1.5 metres long.

"I think this one's too small"

I beckoned Susan, the only lady member of this welcoming committee, and offered her the second fish. In her "Logbook of Visitors" we found photos and messages from yachts that had passed through in previous years. We discovered that Susan's father-in-law Johnathan, the big chief of Lakona Bay, had a long tradition of greeting yachtsmen. he had died in 1991 and his son Johnstar was following in his footsteps. Sadly, the photos were deteriorating because of tropical heat and moisture. I filled a page, describing who we were and where we thought we were going, then found a sealable plastic box in which Susan could store the book.

In the logbook, entry after entry described "water music". Guide books alluded to this unique and unusual tradition. Cruising friends had raved about it. But what was it? We were entranced. "Water music - a booming, splashing, throbbing, rhythmic hand dance at waist height in the sea - terrific." "The women made water music for us - what a delight." I couldn't wait to see and hear it myself.

We landed the dinghy near the river. Walking north along the beach, we met Stephen, a baker by trade, who had a tale to tell. His ear was quite a sight. Twenty-four hours earlier, while hunting wild bullock, Stephen had thrown a knife which

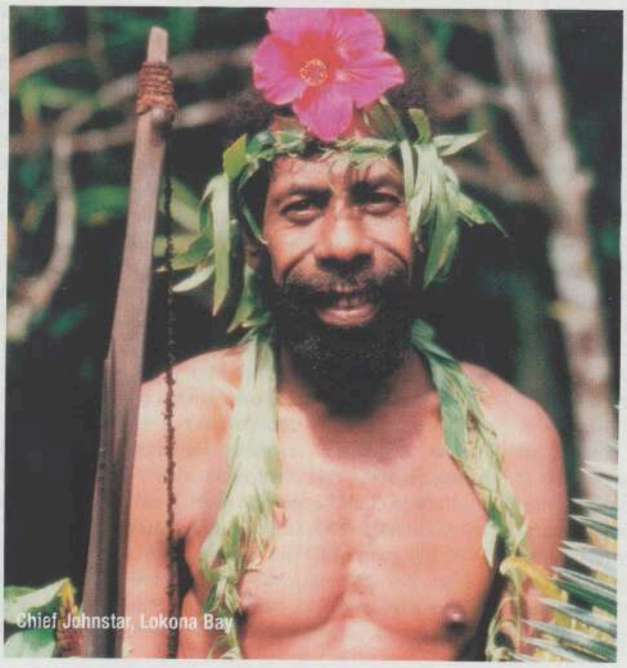

The crew of the 'Silke' enjoy water music at Lokona Bay.

bounced back - partially severing his ear and cutting his face. The scar was healing nicely, even without stitches, though the ear itself was a little offset! Hunting wild bullock is dangerous and difficult, if not impossible, with bush knives. In contemplating alternative technology, Foster explained the principals behind a crossbow. I suggested Stephen stick to making tasty gateaux - it would be safer. Stephen guided us to a copra-kiln where the local school teacher George and his Merelav wife Olive were busy. In the middle of our conversation I heard George call the island Gaua. Aha! The answer to the mystery... or partially. When I asked, he explained that the people in the north call it Gaua, the people of the west call it Lakona, but the whole island is often referred to by its European name, Santa Maria.

Back at Susan's house, big stone bowls lay scattered about the ground. These, she said, came from old villages high up the slopes of the volcano. Nowadays, pigs drink water out of the bowls but, in the time before, they may have been used for grinding kava.

The chief's grounds had a large kitchen with a raised platform inside, and a very large sleeping house. Johnstar emerged, tired after yet another futile excursion to the top of the volcano hunting wild bullock. The main course for an imminent religious fete was being none too cooperative.

Inside the cook house lay two canoes built by carvers from a nearby island. Susan wanted her picture taken with the larger canoe, and eight men carried it into the shade of the nabbanga tree. Johnstar posed first, in traditional clothes. Afterwards, laying the sacred namele leaf aside, he invited his family to join him.


Chief Johnstar, Lokona Bay

An entourage of 9 dogs, 6 pigs, 2 ducks, 1 cat, and many chickens wandered through the homestead. Barks, squeals, quacks, meows and cackling were interspersed with laughter. Johnstar asked for some help fixing holes in the canoe's hull caused by faults in the wood and/or adzing a mite close! Foster rowed back to Fellowship and gathered an impressive selection of his tools - his Japanese pull-saws, carving chisels, a wood shaver. files, two pot epoxy, tin snippers, screws, screwdrivers, a handmade ironwood hammer, a rasp and an electric drill.

While working on the canoe, the guys told us that they had foreseen our arrival by looking at our reflection in the clouds over the lake on top of the volcano. The American yacht Silke appeared on the horizon. John and Joanne anchored near us and we rowed over to say hello. Jo put together a magnificent impromptu lunch and by the time we were finished eating and catching up on each others news, it was time for WATER MUSIC!

As shadows lengthened and greenery glowed, we sat on the black sand of the berm next to a small lagoon and watched. Five ladies waded waist-deep, then all at once began slamming, slapping, stroking the water and creating fantastic sounds like nothing I'd heard, like nothing I'll ever hear again. I added "water music" to my long list of Pacific highlights. After the performance, Susan offered to give us a lesson. Joanne and I jumped in the water fully clothed and gave it a try. After practice, I got the great booming sound mastered.

It was great fun - water flying, eyes scrunched shut, concentrating on body movement and force.

Coming out of the water, exhausted and wet but laughing and pleased with myself, the tropical air felt ice cold.

The sun was setting, and as we rowed back to Fellowship for another rolly night at anchor, we wondered.

Perhaps the Bankis women would lead the way in the aquarobics rage of the next century. ■

ART

Wave of new art in Suva

Josua Toganivalu with "The Power of Love".

By **PAULINE WALKER**

Taller than most people looking at them, and too heavy to be hung, twelve two-metre-square paintings leaned against the walls of the exhibition space. Diverse in design but sharing a common palette of earth colours, the impressive display of huge canvases constituted the "first fruits" of a group of remarkable young artists.

This was "Red Wave: An Exhibition of Contemporary Oceanic Art", presented recently on the Suva campus of the University of the South Pacific by its Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture.

The twelve artists, ranging in age from 18 to 27, all live in Suva now but come from various backgrounds - Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, even one from China. All had participated in a two-week art workshop at Oceania Centre, leading up to this exhibition. Using only three colours - burnt amber, burnt sienna and ivory black - the artists drew on their own personal and cultural histories to create new images and symbols. The paintings therefore record both technical explorations and self-discoveries by young people at the beginning of their artistic careers. The operator of a large tourist resort in Yasawa wanted to buy all twelve outright, but they were not for sale. They constitute part of the growing archive of creativity that Oceania Centre is generating under the directorship of Professor Epeli Hau'ofa.

"Red Wave" - a literal translation of the Tongan phrase peau kula and Fijian biaukula - may suggest the rise and swell of a tidal wave. It has the sense of a momentous happening. Apart from the stunning display, a momentous thing is happening here: namely the opening of windows (and ultimately doors) for young artists, none of whom had ever painted on canvas before. And a door indeed opened for the "Red Wave" artists. It is a large, handsome door - their first commission.

Since he could not buy the dozen paintings exhibited at Oceania Centre, Garth Downey, owner of Fiji's Yasawa Island Resort, has commissioned a whole new set. He has contracted, through John Pule who conducted the free two-week Multimedia Art Workshop, for ten young artists to produce forty works on paper, three on one-metre-square canvases, and one gigantic canvas three metres square for his resort. Eight artists will each paint five works on paper, and Delia Xie will do the three one-metre paintings on canvas.

Josua Toganivalu will take a three-metre-square canvas to Yasawa and work on site. The canvas is to be mounted on a wall, becoming a permanent fixture of the resort. The total value of this contract is $15,980. In addition to a two-week holiday at the resort, each artist will receive over $1000, the exact amount depending on the number and size of paintings he or she produces.

"They are extremely lucky to get a commission this size so early," John Pule commented. "It shows the confidence Garth has in these young artists. And he wants to support them, which is a very good sign."

These young people were given a new voice, or, more precisely, have begun to find their own voices. Fiji and the region will certainly hear more from them. ■

A new role for the ministry of Pacific Island affairs

David Barber
WELLINGTON

If Pacific Island youngsters living in New Zealand need role models - and there is no doubt they do - they couldn't do much better than Fuimaono Les McCarthy.

Born and educated in Auckland until the age of 13, he then-went to his ethnic homeland, Western Samoa, with his parents, Fuimaono Mosope McCarthy, of Falealili, and Riverlina Fitisemanu, where he attended Samoa College. After returning to New Zealand, he joined the police force in 1973. In a 25-year career, he rose from constable on the beat to detective and finally to Superintendent - the highest rank attained by a Pacific Island person in the history of the force. During his career, he studied part-time to complete two law degrees (with honours) and a Masters of Business Administration.

He headed the police legal division in Auckland from 1989 to 1993 before being promoted to take charge of the internal affairs division at national headquarters in Wellington. Resigning from the police last October, he began working on his own account as a barrister in Auckland.

On March 2 this year he became chief executive of the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. He left the police after a quarter of a century in search of a new challenge. At 47 years of age, this father of five has certainly found one in what he describes as a "very rare opportunity to serve the Pacific people in New Zealand". He took over a ministry that has been the Cinderella of government departments since it was founded eight years ago. It had done little to improve the lot of New Zealand's 170,000- odd Pacific Island community, and for the past year has been in transitional turmoil. With Pacific people featuring poorly and all too prominently in national statistics on unemployment, health, housing, income levels, life expectancy and educational achievements, McCarthy has no illusions about the task ahead.

The Pacific Island population is growing rapidly and is forecast to reach 600,000 by the middle of the next century. "That gives our job increasing urgency," he says. "It's going to get worse if we don't act now. If our disadvantaged position in society is carried forward in these population projections, the situation is quite dire." McCarthy's first job is to restore credibility to the ministry, a quality it lost because of internal wrangling, lack of accountability in the past and the inevitable pain and confusion of a year's restructuring.

It will not be easy, especially with his constituency - the Pacific Island community. For as a result of restructuring, the operations division in Auckland, which was the most visible example of the ministry's work, has been downgraded and its satellite offices in Tokoroa, Nelson and Hastings closed.

After a major strategic review completed before he joined, the government has reaffirmed the ministry's prime role as policy advice. This may sound like bureaucratic chair shuffling, but in fact is a major change of emphasis for a ministry with an all too modest budget of just under $NZ4 million this financial year.

The budget has been realigned to provide for more policy advisers and the operations division, which used to take the lion's share and had semi-autonomous status (even having its own logo) will now work only on pilot projects stemming from approved policy. McCarthy admits he will have some difficulty explaining this to island community leaders who used to be able to go to the operations division Tagata Pasifika with pet projects and get funding for them.

Now, he says, there is no money for them and the ministry's work will be largely invisible - or at least the results will be much longer term.

This change is in line with the government's policy of mainstreaming services to the Pacific Island community. It marks firm rejection of a proposal to create a new Crown agency or "super ministry" to provide a one-stop shop for Pacific people to access government services - a proposal rightly rejected as apartheid by ACT leader Richard Prebble, who was the first minister of Pacific Island affairs. With the ministry now unified, McCarthy says: "Our role is to influence the decision makers in the mainstream government departments in policy areas affecting Pacific Island people.

"We have to play by the rules that apply to all other government departments," he says. "We are not here to play one department off against another, but to supply up-to-date information on Pacific people's views so that policy decisions in the long term may be made more effective." He knows the island population's problems cannot be solved by just providing more money - even if the government was prepared to be generous.

"The pit has a bottom," he says. "The money will always run out. Hopefully, well thought out policies will stand the test of time and be a much more effective way of changing Pacific Island people's circumstances for the better." Coming in with the advantage of a newcomer, he says the divisions that have racked the ministry in the past should be left in the past. "We have a very difficult role to play and we can't succeed if we spend time in conflict amongst ourselves." ■

Club Ed, Fiji: A far cry from dreary old classrooms

Jemima Garrett

SYDNEY

Recently a friend was telling me a story about meeting a man from Fiji driving a taxi in Melbourne. The man from Fiji was a university student and my friend was perplexed when he discovered that he was studying at Central Queensland University. How could someone who was studying at a university based more than 2000 kilometres to the north of Melbourne be working there when not attending lectures.

Quite simple. Central Queensland University is an entrepreneurial outfit that has taken its campuses to where the students want to go. Despite its name it has campuses in Sydney and Melbourne, as well as 5 cities in Queensland. In the next few months Central Queensland University, through its corporate partner Campus Group Holdings, will open a campus in Suva which will revolutionise the educational scene in the Pacific.

By 2001 it plans to have 2500 full-fee paying students from all over the world studying for bachelor and masters degrees in Fiji. It will also offer english language courses and a University preparation course called Unilearn. Most of its students will be from countries such as China and India where there is a big demand for overseas education, seemingly little affected by Asia's economic troubles.

For Fiji, the university will have enormous benefits. Purely as an investment, the university is a major new asset. As Professor John Sharpman, the man charged with developing the Suva campus, points out it is not a smokestack industry. He estimates each student is likely to spend between F$10-15,000 a year in Fiji over and above tuition fees making CQU an industry worth more than $25 million annually if student targets are met.

Unlike Fiji's other major growth industry, garment manufacturing, the university is a prestige industry which sets Fiji among the top rank of developing nations and it brings well paid jobs with prospects. How many of those jobs will go to people from the Pacific is another matter but certainly, over time, some will. That, along with the potential competition for students, has the region's premier university, the University of the South Pacific (USP), worried.

When it comes to competition for students the USP probably has little need for concern. There is no doubt that CQU, with its focus on courses in business administration, accounting, marketing, management, tourism and computing, will duplicate some courses on offer at USP. However, its fees of around $10,000 a year, will rule out all but the most wealthy Pacific Island students. In fact, the new university is more likely to slow the brain drain of Pacific Island students travelling overseas for tertiary studies. Parents of students already studying in Australia have told Professor Sharpman they could save $14,000 a year by sending their children to CQU's Suva campus.

AusAID, the Australian government aid agency, which sponsors a lot of students in Australia, is also likely to be impressed by the cost savings involved in keeping students in the region. Perhaps where the USP has more to worry about is in competition for its University preparation courses. The Central Queensland University's Unilearn program, at 21 weeks, is more affordable and will probably be on offer at Labasa on Fiji's second island (which at the moment has no tertiary education facilities) as well as in Suva.

The other dimension USP will need to come to terms with is the inevitable comparisons between the two universities. In some ways this will act as a stimulus for USP forcing it to look at how it presents its programs and to improve those which are ailing. Fortunately for USP, the CQU appears to be taking a conciliatory approach, despite its status as a fully commercial operation.

Professor Sharpman points to particular areas such as technology, in which both universities face substantial costs and could work together for mutual benefit. One of the hallmarks of the CQU campus will be its 21st century technology. It plans fully interactive links with its campuses in Sydney, Melbourne and Rockhampton as well computer labs and electronic library facilities with links with the rest of the world. Just how far it can get with those links may well depend on the extent to which USP is willing or able to share facilities.

The first students are due to enrol at the CQU Suva campus, which is located at the former telecom training site on Suva point, in July or August and work is continuing apace to avoid the deadline being put back. When it opens the campus is expecting to have around 250 students, 50 of whom have already begun their programs through CQU's earlier arrangement with the local training provider Jobs Fiji. The rest will come from overseas. But will they come? CQU is confident they will.

Although the decision to locate the campus in Suva is something of an historic accident (prompted by the offer of the telecom site) Professor Sharpman say it has crucial advantages over Australia. Apart from the cost of living, which is substantially lower, and the idyllic setting, it overcomes one of the major problems facing Chinese students wanting an Australian education - poor visa access. Since the Tianamen Square incident more than 10 years ago Australia has severely restricted student visas to Chinese students because it found so many were overstaying or coming with no intention of returning home.

CQU has solved many of the visa problems for Chinese students in Fiji by offering to handle all their visa applications and arranging for streamlined processing by Fiji immigration. It will also post a bond to pay for students return airfare if they drop out or fail to meet the university's requirements. CQU will offer extracurricular activities such as visits to villages and access to Fiji's tourist facilities. The world of the commercial university is certainly a far cry from the dreary old classrooms many of us are familiar with - so much so one CQU official has dubbed its Suva campus Club Ed. ■

SHIPPING

COLUMBUS LINE

WEEK: 14-04-1998

AUSTRALIA / NEW ZEALAND TO FIJI TO WEST COAST NORTH AMERICA

IMPORT EXPORT
SCEDULE

AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND FIJI NORTH AMERICA

VESSEL	VOY	MELBOURNE*	SYDNEY*	AUCKLAND*	SUVA*	LAUTOKA	LOS ANGELES*	VANCOUVER	SEATLE	OAKLAND	NEW YORK
COLUMBUS CALIFORNIA	055N	SLD	SLD	SLD	SLD	SLD	25-27/04	30-30/04	29-29/04	27-27/04	02-02/05
ARGENTINA STAR	004N	19-20/04	22-24/04	28-29/04	02-03/05	03/04	16-18/05	20-20/05	18-18/05	23-23/05	
OREGON STAR	003N	03-40/05	06-08/05	12-13/05	16-17/05	17/05	30/05-01/06	04-04/06	01-01/06	07-07/06	
COLUMBUS CALIFORNIA	056N	17-18/05	20-22/05	26-27/05	30-32/05	31/05	13-15/06	18-18/06	17-17/06	15-15/06	20-20/06
ARGENTINA STAR	005N	07-08/06	10-12/06	16-17/06	20-21/06	21/06	09-09/07	08-08/07	06-06/07	11-11/07	
OREGON STAR	004N	21-22/06	24-26/06	30/06-01/07	04-05/07	05/07	18-20/07	23-23/07	22-22/07	20-20/07	25-25/07
COLUMBUS CALIFORNIA	057N	05-06/07	08-10/07	14-15/07	18-19/07	19/07	01-03/08	05-05/08	03-03/08	08-08/08	
ARGENTINA STAR	006N	26-27/07	29-31/07	04-05/08	08-09/08	09/08	22-24/08	27-27/08	26-26/08	24-24/08	29-29/08
OREGON STAR	005N	09/10/08	12/14/08	18-19/08	22-23/08	22/08	05/07/09	10/10/09	09/09/09	07/07/09	12/12/09
COLUMBUS CALIFORNIA	058N	23-24/08	26-28/08	01-02/09	05-06/09	05/09	19-21/09	24-24/09	23-23/09	21-21/09	26-26/09
ARGENTINA STAR	007N	13-14/09	16-18/09	22-23/09	26-27/09	26/09	10-12/09	15-15/10	14-14/10	12-12/10	17-17/10
OREGON STAR	006N	27-28	30/09-10/02	06/07/10	10-11/10	10/10	24-26/10	29-29/20	28-28/10	26-26	

WEST COAST NORTH AMERICA TO FIJII (U.S. SERVICE)

SCHEDULE

NORTH AMERICA FIJI

ARGENTINA STAR	004S	25-25/03	26-26/03	*27-27/03	28-30/03	11-12/04	12/04	
OREGON STAR	0035	08-08/04	09-09/04	10-10/04	11-13/04	11-13/04	25-26/04	26/04
ARGENTINA STAR	005S	13-13/05	14-14/05	15-15/05	16-18/05	30-31/05	31/05	
OREGON STAR	004S	27-27/05	28-28/05	29-29/05	30/05-01/06	13-14/06	14/06	
ARGENTINA STAR	006S	01-01/07	02-02/07	03-03/07	04-06/07	18-19/07	18/07	
OREGON STAR	005S	15-15/07	16-16/07	17-17/07	18-20/07	01-02/08	01/08	
ARGENTINA STAR	007S	19-19/08	20-20/08	21-21/08	22-24/08	05-06/09	05/09	
OREGON STAR	006S	02-02/09	04-04/09	05-07/09	19-20/09	19/09		

FIJI TO NEW ZEALAND (SOUTHBOUND SERVICE)

EXPORT
SCEDULE FIJI NEW ZEALAND AUSTRALIA

VESSEL	VOY	LAUTOKA	SUVA*	AUCKLAND*	MELBOURNE*	SYDNEY*
ARGENTINA STAR	004S	11/04	11-12/04	15-15/04	19/20/04	22-24/04
OREGON STAR	003S	25/04	25-26/04	29-29/04	03-04/05	06- 08/05
ARGENTINA STAR	005S	30/05	30-31/05	03-03/06	07-08/06	10-12/06
OREGON STAR	004S	13/06	13-14/06	17-17/06	21-22/06	24-26/06
ARGENTINA STAR	006S	01/08	01/02/08	05-05/08	09-10/08	12-14/08
OREGON STAR	005S	01/02	01-02/08	05-05/08	09-10/08	12-14/08
ARGENTINA STAR	007S	05/09	09-09/09	13-14/09	16-18/09	
OREGON STAR	006S	19/09	19-20/09	23-23/09	27-28/09	30/02-02/10

NEPTUNE SHIPPING LINE

NEW ZEALAND – FIJI – NEW ZEALAND DIRECT SERVICE

VESSEL	VOY	LYTTLETON	TAURANGA	AUCKLAND (LOAD)	LAUTOKA	SUVA	AUCKLAND (DISCHARGE)
CAPITAINE WALLIS	12	SLD	SLD	SLD	SLD	15-15/04	21-21/04
CAPITAINE WALLIS	13	24-24/04	27-27/04	28-29/04	05-05/05	06-06/05	21-21/04
CAPITAINE WALLIS	14	15-15/05	18-18/05	19-20/05	26-26/05	27-27/05	02-02/06
CAPITAINE WALLIS	15	05-05/06	08-08/06	09-10/06	16-16/06	17-17/06	23-23/06

AUSTRALIA – FIJI DIRECT SERVICE – NORTHBOUND

VESSEL	VOY	BRISBANE	SYDNEY	MELBOURNE	LAUTOKA	SUVA
CAPITAINE WALLIS	10	17-17/04	20-20/04	23-23/04	01-01/05	02-02/05
FUA KAVENGA	228	02-02/05	05-05/05	08-08/05	16-16/05	17-17/05
CAPITAINE TASMAN	11	17-17/05	20-20/05	23-23/05	31-31/05	01-01/06

FIJI – AUSTRALIA DIRECT SERVICE – SOUTHBOUND

VESSEL	VOY	LAUTOKA	SUVA	BRISBANE	SYDNEY	MELBOURNE
CAPITAINE TASMAN	9	-	SLD	17-17/04	20-20/04	23-23/04
FUA KAVENGA	227	25-25/04	-	02/02/05	05-05/05	08-08/05
CAPITAINE TASMAN	10	-	11-11/05	17-17/05	20-20/05	23-23/05

FIJI – FUTUNA – WALLIS – NOUMEA SERVICE

VESSEL	VOY	NOUMEA	SUVA	FUTUNA	WALLIS	FUTUNA
MOANA III	9	12-20/04	23-23/04	25-25/04	26/04-04/05	05-05/05

BURNS PHILP SHIPPING AGENCIES (FIJI) LTD

VESSEL	NZOL CAMPAIGNER	NZOL COMMANDER	NZOL CHALLENGER	NZOL CRUSADER	NZOL CAMPAIGNER	NZOL COMMANDER
VOY	V08S/96	V09S/98	V10S/98	V11S/98	V12S/98	V12AS/98
SOUTHBOUND	-					
SURABAYA	-	-	29/04	14/05	29/05	14/06
JAKARTA	-	-	01/05	16/05	01/06	16/06
PORT KELANG	-	18/04	04/05	19/05	04/05	04/06 19/06
BANGKOK	-	23/04	10/05	25/05	10/06	25/06
SINGAPORE	15/04	30/04	15/05	30/05	15/06 30/06	
NOUMEA	27/04	12/05	27/05	12/06	27/06 12/07	
SUVA	29/04	14/05	29/05	14/06	29/06 14/07	

SHIPPING

VESSEL	NZOL CAMPAIGNER	NZOL COMMANDER	NZOL CHALLENGER	NZOL CRUSADER	NZOL CAMPAIGNER	NZOL COMMANDER
VOY	V08N/98	V09N/98	V10N/98	V11N/98	V12N/98	V12AN/98
NORTHBOUND						
SURABAYA	29/05	14/06	29/06	14/07	29/07	14/08
JAKARTA	01/06	16/06	01/07	16/07	01/08	16/08
PORT KLANG	04/06	19/06	04/07	19/07	04/08	19/08
SINGAPORE	06/06	21/06	06/07	21/07	06/08	21/08
BANKOK	10/06	25/06	10/07	25/07	10/08	25/08

MANILA/TAIWAN/HONG KONG/KOREA SERVICE

PORTS	BAI HE KOU V275/276	XIAO SHI KOU V252/253	BAI HE KOU V277/278	XIAO SHI KOU V254/255	BAI SHI KOU V279/280
*MANILA	-	26/04	10/05	07/06	28/06
*KEELING	-	22/04	13/05	03/06	24/06
*KAOSHIUNG	-	20/04	11/05	01/06	22/06
*HONG KONG	-	01/05	22/05	12/06	03/07
*BUSAN	-	02/05	18/05	13/06	04/07
SUVA	06/05	27/05	17/06	08/07	29/07
AUCKLAND	09-10/05	01/06	20/06	11/07	01/08
LYTTLETON	14-15/05	05/06	24/06	15/07	03/08

* FEEDER SERVICE LAUTOKA – VIA RELAY

CHINA/JAPAN DIRECT SERVICE

PORTS	BAI HE KOU V275/276	XIAO SHI KOU V252/253	BAI HE KOU V277/278	XIAO SHI KOU V254/255	BAI SHI KOU V279/280
DALIAN	-	30/04	21/05	11/06	30/06
HUANG PU	-	27/04	19/05	09/06	02/07
*NANJING	-	28/04	20/05	10/06	03/07
*QINGDAO	-	27/04	13/05	08/06	29/06
*SHANGHAI	-	29/04	15/05	10/06	01/07
*XINGANG	-	29/04	20/05	10/06	28/06
KOBE	20/04	11/05	01/06	22/06	13/07
NAGOYA	-	-	-	-	[illegible]
YOKOHAMA	22/04	13/05	03/06	24/06	12/07
SUVA	06/05	27/05	17/06	08/07	29/07
AUKLAND	09-10/05	01/06	20/06	11/07	[illegible]
LYTTLETON	14-15/05	05/06	22/06	13/07	03/08
KOBE	01-02/06	21/06	10/07	29/07	24/08
NAGOYA	-	-	-	-	-
YOKOHAMA	03-04/06	23/06	11/07	30/07	26/08

* FEEDER SERVICE LAUTOKA – VIA RELAY NAGOYA CARGO CENTRALISED TO KOBE FOR LOADING (FCL ONLY)

NEW ZEALAND – FIJI

CONTAINER (DRY / REEFER), LCL & BREAKBULK SPECIALIST

VESSEL	DIRECT JAIBARU	DIRECT KIWI	DIRECT EAGLE	DIRECT FALCON	DIRECT KIWI	DIRECT EAGLE
VOYAGE NO.	V356	V358	V360	V363	V365	V367
BRISBANE	-	24/04	08/05	29/05	12/06	26/06
AUCKLAND	-	25-26/04	09-10/05	30-31/05	13-14/06	27-28/06
SUVA	15-16/04	29-30/04	13-14/05	03-04/06	17-18/06	01-02/07
LAUTOKA	16-17/04	30/04-01/05	14-15/05	04-05/06	18-19/06	02-03/07

AUSTRALIA/FIJI – INTER ISLAND

VESSEL	FUA KAVENGA	CAPT TASMAN	FUA KAVENGA	CAPT TASMAN
VOYAGE NO.	V227	V10	V228	V11
BRISBANE	-	17/04	03/05	14/05
SYDNEY	-	20/04	-	17/05
MELBOURNE	-	23/04	09/05	20/05
LAUTOKA	-	28/04	17/05	28/05
SUVA	-	29/04	18/05	29/05
NUKUALOFA	-	09/05	24/05	04/06
APIA	-	04/05	20/05	31/05
PAGOPAGO	-	06/05	21/05	01/06
LAUTOKA	27/04	-	27/05	-
SUVA	-	12/05	-	07/06

AUSTRALIA/FIJI – INTER ISLAND

VESSEL	FUA KAVENGA	CAPT TASMAN	FUA KAVENGA	CAPT TASMAN
VOYAGE NO.	V227	V10	V228	V11
BRISBANE	-	17/04	03/05	14/05
SYDNEY	-	20/04	-	17/05
MELBOURNE	-	23/04	09/05	20/05
LAUTOKA	-	28/04	17/05	28/05
SUVA	-	29/04	18/05	29/05
NUKUALOFA	-	09/05	24/05	04/06
APIA	-	04/05	20/05	31/05
PAGOPAGO	-	06/05	21/05	01/06
LAUTOKA	27/04	-	27/05	-
SUVA	-	12/05	-	07/06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LABASA: 816 022 SAVUSAVU: 850 001 SIGATOKA: 500 321 or simply call your nearest post office and ask for EMS Service.


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