

owner representative, the Native Lands Trust Board. Meanwhile, Indo-Fijian tenants in parts of Viti Levu have already begun to enter into de facto share cropping arrangements with their Fijian landlords. Lease renewals could very likely become an explosive political issue. Fijian politicians, such as former Minister of Primary Industry Koresi Matatolu, have already linked renewals, on whatever terms, to Indo-Fijian acceptance of Fijian political dominance. In all, 1994 was a relatively quiet year for Fiji after the turbulence of the February snap elections. With the review of the constitution, negotiations for the renewal of expiring agricultural leases, and the law-and-order situation likely to dominate Fiji's public agenda in 1995, 1994 may come in due course to be seen as the lull before the storm.

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NEW CALEDONIA

If the 1980s were a time of confrontations, when Kanak nationalists gained greater access to the political power structure, the 1990s seem to be a time of negotiations over the self-determination issue. Director of the Protestant Educational Alliance Billy Wapotro says that no one wants to return to the violence of the past and that Kanak nationalism must now employ "strategies to exorcise fear." Even Jacques LaFleur, leader of the pro-French *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République* (RPCR)—and a fellow Protestant—is capable, Wapotro believes, of a "cure of the soul." In fact, LaFleur first proposed a "consensual solution" in 1991, to make the 1998 referendum on independence less of a "guillotine." Sylvain Pabouty, of the Political Bureau of the *Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste* (FLNKS), calls its new task a "labor of ants": day-to-day dialogue and mutual education that may not show up in the news headlines.

French Minister for Overseas Territories Dominique Perben reiterated his commitment to "Matignon II." The Matignon Accord of 1988 brought peace and granted more local power and development money to the FLNKS-ruled Northern and Islands Provinces, while the RPCR still controls the more populous, multiethnic and industrial Southern Province. Perben vowed to infuse the postconfrontational phase of Matignon with more "elan" to achieve two goals: interethnic consensus and socioeconomic progress. He announced a 2.28 percent increase in his ministry's budget and

listened favorably to the request of Paul Neaoutyine, president of FLNKS and mayor of the northern town of Poindimié, to keep the French aid money flowing. French High Commissioner Alain Christnacht, respected as a Matignon supporter, was replaced in August by Didier Cultiaux, former administrator of Réunion. In less than a month, the new commissioner's own staff went on strike, and he began to clamp down on both union picketing and the proliferation of squatters around Noumea. On a visit to a local educational agency, Cultiaux said that the Kanak identity is not only traditional but also "mixed," because of colonialism. "We must not forget," he added, "that we are a francophone ship in an anglophone ocean."

In May, the pro-independence Protestant churches called together an international roundtable to evaluate progress under the Matignon Accord. The general conclusion, Wapotro said, was that "1998 is a race we don't want to run." He was particularly concerned that young Kanaks should be well grounded in their own culture as they seek diplomas for jobs in the modern sector. The curricula of the former Kanak Peoples Schools have in large part been absorbed by the Protestant educational system.

The role of the FLNKS in nation-building has changed, now that it has been participating in local governance for over six years. Willy Gorodité of the Poindimié mayor's office says that voters are expecting tangible, material rewards, such as jobs for educated young Kanak. Of 211 graduates from the "400 cadres" training program, 74 percent are Kanak, mostly female, and

employed by the government. The Northern Province is using French aid to build schools, clinics, and a new cross-island road, as well as investing in a nickel mine and a tourist resort. The road is costly and, like the new ferryboat between Noumea and Ouvéa, has become a target for loyalist critics of "wasteful" spending.

In the fall, party congresses met to organize their campaigns for the spring 1995 elections. LaFleur warned his followers about the danger of "racist independence" after 1998 if the FLNKS won, and called for a thirty-year pact on New Caledonia's future after the 1995 vote. He proposed territorial unity, more devolution of decision-making from Paris to Noumea, and hard work by all Caledonians to prove themselves worthy of autonomy. LaFleur also suggested rewording the 1998 referendum to "avoid the direct and fatal question of yes or no to independence." These ideas, along with his proposal that a party must obtain at least 5 percent of all registered voters to win a seat, were opposed by the FLNKS. A millionaire businessman who has been accused of monopolistic cronyism to keep control of the local economy, LaFleur decried the closure of Noumea's port for two weeks by labor unions and recommended that France build a second port to prevent New Caledonia from being held "hostage." Loyalty Islander Dick Ukeiwe, who had left the RPCR in 1993 to form his own party, returned in September to the loyalist fold, which he said represented "the voice of reason."

"A consensual solution," Gorodité, says, "means to live together." That theme is argued strongly by François

Burke, president of the *Union Calédonienne* (UC), the largest party in the FLNKS. Founded in the 1940s on the motto Two Colors, One People, the UC has come out in favor of multiracial independence through negotiation. On the eve of the twenty-fifth UC Congress in November, Burke continued to speak of evolutionary change: "We are living in a period of long-term apprenticeship . . . we are not ready for independence in 1998, it's a reality." He opposes LaFleur's thirty-year pact on the grounds that the country will need maximum flexibility in the decades ahead. Yet the UC reaffirmed its goal of independence by proposing that France concede some government powers after the 1995 elections, namely those over immigration, foreign trade, mineral resources, labor laws, and education. Other FLNKS parties, such as PALIKA (*Parti de Libération Kanak*), criticized growing "immobility" in the decolonization process. The idea of national union lists in the local 1995 elections, to mobilize sentiments for independence in 1998, won both UC and PALIKA support.

Caught in between, the Wallisian minority (9 percent of the population) is being courted by both sides as a potential swing vote. Michel Hema, of the moderate *Union Océanienne* (UO), wants to establish a Wallisian voice in New Caledonia separate from the RPCR, which he says used his compatriots as "cannon fodder" against the Kanaks in the 1980s. Yet the UO will not come out in support of Kanak independence until it gets "guarantees," Hema says, "for our children." Wallis and Futuna, as an overpopulated, resource-poor French territory, is

not a viable place to return to if the Kanaks decide immigrant workers and their families are not fellow "victims of history." In the March 1993 legislative election, police chief Aloisio Sako led a rival faction of the UO that was open to independence; it won 300 more votes than Hema's moderates. On 12 February 1994, Sako formed a new political party, the *Rassemblement Démocratique Océanien* (RDO), 92 percent of whose founding delegates voted in favor of Kanak independence. Sako says that many Wallisians have now grown up in New Caledonia, and they hope to find a place in its future while recognizing indigenous paramountcy.

French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, who is himself running for the national presidency in 1995, supports centralization to ensure that France remains a united republic in 2015. Pasqua suspended Sako and called for a disciplinary council to address the Noumea police chief's "lack of reserve." Sako received support from the FLNKS, Oscar Temaru of Tahiti, Kamilo Gata (Wallis and Futuna's delegate to Paris), and New Caledonia's largest labor union, USTKE (*Union Syndicaliste des Travailleurs Kanak et des Exploités*), but a hearing in August imposed a one-year suspension on him and referred his case to Paris for further review. The RDO accused local loyalists of "telecommanding" trumped-up charges from Pasqua, even though the independence issue should be a legitimate topic for the 1995 elections as well as the 1998 referendum. Despite Perben's rhetoric about consensus, the Sako affair raises serious questions about the kinds of free speech that France is willing to toler-

ate. LaFleur's condemnation of "racist independence" in September incurred no rebuke from Cultiaux.

Union activity was strong again in 1994, from a violent nickel truckers' strike in May, to a stoppage of Air France flights out of Noumea in July, to port closures in August and September, each of which lasted about two weeks. Led by Louis Kotra Uregei, USTKE sees itself as the multiracial vanguard of a new nation: socialist and supportive of Kanak sovereignty. USTKE is reconciling with the FLNKS after bitter accusations following the assassinations of Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwene Yeiwene in 1989 by a Loyalty Islander (Uregei's province). Tahitian docker organizer Michel Teharuru argues that New Caledonia's resources should be nationalized and that more local industries should be developed to reduce import dependency. Most critics of the status quo agree on broadening the economic base in a society distorted by the inflationary "hardship" salaries paid to French metropolitan officials. In October, the *Société le Nickel* (SLN), New Caledonia's largest mining firm, announced that because of a global rise in nickel demand, it would increase production by 20 percent.

Internationally, the Melanesian Spearhead Group supported Vanuatu's suggestion that the three French Pacific Overseas Territories be permit-

ted observer status at the South Pacific Forum. The FLNKS rejected the idea, preferring observer status as a political party. In March, the United Nations Committee on Decolonization expressed concern that the seizure in Noumea of a cache of arms linked to right-wing French extremists was a sign that the self-determination of New Caledonia was in jeopardy. Yann Célené Uregei traveled to New York in October to request renewed pressure from the United Nations committee for the freedom of Kanaky. Delegates from the post-Matignon Consultative Council on Customary Affairs went to Vanuatu and Fiji to study land-tenure systems and found Fiji's tourist hotels impressive. The FLNKS has invested heavily in tourism in the North and Islands but sometimes comes into conflict with local chiefs over land use.

As the FLNKS celebrated its tenth anniversary on 18 November, UC President Burke warned that the twenty-first century will belong to the Asia-Pacific, so that dialogue, sound leadership, and gradual change are the keys to the country's future. One month earlier, French troops had reminded New Caledonians of the past alternative, by conducting field exercises in the North (with Australian and New Zealand military personnel observing).

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