eral diseases—hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and gout—arising from a heavy dependence on imported foods and high rates of sugar, alcohol, and tobacco use. Although a health education program has been begun, it will be difficult to reverse patterns of consumption associated with profound changes in Tokelauan lifestyle.

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The Kingdom of Tonga

The shock waves of political change that some people predicted would follow the rumblings of Tonga's "prodemocracy movement" have remained little more than ripples this past year. Accusations of "traitorous activities," "betrayal of Tonga's interests," and "disloyalty to the Crown," are bandied about by elite and conservative elements. But prodemocracy spokespersons stress that they are not trying to do away with the present system by attacking the monarchy or the special estate of nobles for which most people still hold a customary respect. The so-called radicals want to retain the three-tier system, but to have it work as written in the Constitution, without flagrant abuse of common people's rights. There is talk of holding a constitutional conference later in 1992, when some of these issues might be discussed by the country's leaders. In the meantime, prodemocracy supporters, led by some church officials, intellectuals, and the people's representatives in parliament, continue to press for their objectives, which are to ensure the accountability of government ministers to the people and to parliament and to secure a broader basis of political representation for the common people.

At present, some twenty-seven titled nobles are represented by 9 nobles' representatives, while the rest of the ninety thousand Tongans voting at home are also represented by only 9 representatives. Nobles in concert with the ministers of the Crown (who are not elected but appointed by the king) easily outvote the people's representatives on issues running counter to elite interests. They are sufficiently concerned by the criticism increasingly leveled at them to have ordered the minister of police to conduct a secret inquiry into the activities of prodemocracy activists among Tongans living abroad. Increasing numbers of expatriate Tongans would like to influence politics at home, perhaps by exercising in the future some form of nonresident voting rights.

In addition, the fact that ministers of government departments are not only not elected but also have no retiring age imposes a severe ceiling on the ambitions of those below them in the civil service hierarchy. One current fear is that numbers of good, committed, young graduates will become so frustrated with lack of opportunity or promotion that they will leave Tonga. These sentiments were being more openly expressed in November 1991, when New Zealand amended its Immigration Act and placed additional pressures on Polynesian "overstayers." Despite subsequent moves by the

Tongan government and bilateral discussions in both Nuku'alofa and Wellington, Tonga might find itself having to accommodate five thousand reluctant returnees.

The "radicals" have continued to try to enforce greater accountability of government ministers to parliament and to the people of Tonga for their use of government monies by invoking the law to charge ministers with misuse of funds. People generally are becoming more aware of the power of law in defense of their rights. Squash growers brought a case against one of the directors of a major squash export company, who is also the king's nephew, for his supposed mishandling of growers' agreements. People are acutely aware that this is not just the first time a royal person has been brought to court, but part of more general moves to control nobles' abuse of privilege. The failing health of the last prime minister, HRH Prince Tu'ipelehake, it is generally felt, made it difficult for him to control certain of the more renegade ministers, who all have noble status. His successor, Baron Vaea, whose daughter is married to the king's youngest son, has yet to show whether or how he might seek to restrain abuses of ministerial power and privilege.

The group pressing for greater democracy in Tonga seeks to inform the commoner electorate of relevant issues by means of kava parties and other informal talking sessions throughout the kingdom. In Tonga there has been no tradition of ordinary people being encouraged to look critically at their own society. The "radicals" believe that if they alter the groundswell of opinion in Tonga, change will eventuate. Many observers in the country feel that the "radical" people's representatives have gone too far in the relentless criticisms of their social superiors within and outside parliament, and in their constant harping on issues, such as the series of scandals concerning the sale of Tongan passports to nonnationals. Since their election in 1990, the unified thrust of the "radical" representatives has been increasingly frayed by their various business or other personal interests, individual ties of noble patronage, or different church affiliations. Only two, 'Akilisi Pohiva and Uiliame Fukofuka, effectively continue the more heated debates in parliament. Nevertheless, the parliamentary session that began in June, and will lead up to the country's next general election early in 1993, quickly became fiery. On the positive side, relatively free discussion and wide media coverage of controversial issues may be expected to defuse any potential violence arising from political discontent.

The country's current economic problems continue to be the most serious issues discussed. The minister of finance is again on the firing line, for his handling of the nation's budget and for his economic policies, which many people think are inappropriate for the small island kingdom. The government finished the fiscal year with a heavy deficit and a shortfall of T$3.5 million for its recurrent expenditure. It has already reported a T$19.4 million deficit for the first quarter of 1992, an increase of T$4.1 million or 26.6 percent compared with the first quarter of 1991.

In an effort to raise the necessary

revenue to meet the 1992–93 estimated expenditures, many government departments have increased charges for services. The trust fund set up from the sale of 450 Tongan passports issued to the Hong Kong Consulate, finally audited in October 1991 at US$2,191,140 and located in San Franciso, may be called on to help the shortfall of funds. In addition, the current session of the Legislative Assembly has already imposed a round of import duties, particularly on beer, cigarettes, petrol, and diesel fuel; rates on wharfage; stamp duties; a levy of 70 seniti per T$100 on foreign-exchange transactions; and a room tax on tourist accommodations. These measures are likely to bring sharp increases to the already high cost of living. Remittance earnings in 1991, estimated at T$22.1 million, declined by T$3.7 million, or 14.4 percent, compared with the T$25.8 million received in 1990, so that there is now also less cash coming in from overseas to meet increased local prices for goods and services.

Inflation has been running officially at about 10 to 12.5 percent throughout the year, but, unofficially, in terms of prices at the local market, money appears to go much less far. The prices of local crops rose, most acutely in Tongatapu, as availability fell due to a prolonged drought since October 1991, the worst experienced in the kingdom for eight or nine years. A basket of six yams was selling for up to T$100 at Talamahu Market in Nuku'alofa at the time of the Free Wesleyan Church Conference in May 1992. This important conference, which brings together all Free Wesleyan ministers in Tonga every three years, was the occasion for the retirement of the Reverend Dr 'Amanaki Havea, a prodemocracy supporter, as president of Tonga's largest church body (after sixteen years, from 1971 to 1977 and since 1981). He was replaced by the Reverend Sione Lepa To'a.

The scarcity of local foodstuffs has been exacerbated by the use of extensive areas of garden land for the more lucrative production of squash for export to Japan. Tonga had its first ever trade surplus of T$100,000 in November 1991, from the sale of squash, which at that point had garnered T$4.6 million. But the profits from the sales of squash are not equally distributed throughout the kingdom.

Nor is there an agricultural export facility for controlling the quality of produce since the Tonga Commodities Board, the country's largest employer, finally folded in 1991. A new government holding company, Tonga Investments Limited, was created in its stead. In February 1992, its new seven-man board of directors, which includes the prime minister, the minister of justice and attorney-general, the minister of labour, commerce and industries, the former general manager of the Tonga Development Bank, who had been seconded to the Tonga Commodities Board, and two private-sector directors, selected managers for five new companies to be launched. Each will operate as a private entity, with facilities and property leased from Tonga Investments, and continue services formerly provided by the Tonga Commodities Board (TCB).

Primary Produce Exports Limited will have the responsibility of exporting vanilla, pumpkins, coconut, and

other agricultural produce. Frisco Company will operate the former TCB building materials and furniture enterprises. Coconut Oil Mills Limited will handle copra purchases and milling. Homegas Limited will take over bottled-gas distribution, while Palm Soaps Limited will continue the manufacture of toilet soaps and laundry products. The old commodity board's construction, plumbing, engineering, and financial divisions, as well as the Haveluloto premises, will be closed. The Pili quarry is to be sold by tender.

Among other issues likely to be raised during the current parliamentary session is the contract given to a Chinese entrepreneur, Dr Sam Ling Wong, for the construction of a projected 86-room hotel next to Fua'amotu International Airport. No Tongan labor will be used, nor will local businesses benefit by the project. More than 7,900 tonnes of construction materials, the biggest such shipment ever to arrive in the kingdom, came from the People's Republic of China in March 1992. It included 44.9 tonnes of foodstuffs to feed the 84 Chinese construction workers. On arrival, the shipment was found to have no proper quarantine papers and to contain insect infestations that necessitated immediate fumigation at a cost of T$4,000. To date, little work has been seen on the site.

In August 1991, Minister of Defence and Foreign Affairs HRH Crown Prince Tupouto'a led Tonga's delegation to the South Pacific Forum in Pohnpei. The year saw the departure of Chief Justice Geoffrey Martin, who has presided over more than two hundred cases in the Supreme Court since 1984, and the arrival of another British lawyer as his successor. In September 1991, the kingdom's second television broadcasting service began regularly scheduled transmissions of news, sports, educational, family, and Christian programs to Tongatapu and 'Eua. Tonga's Sixth Development Plan, containing no major departures from the most recent previous plans, was released in October 1991.

Later the same month, Tonga hosted the 31st South Pacific Conference, which brought to Nuku'alofa 250 delegates and observers from more than 27 nations. It was the first such conference and the largest international meeting convened in the kingdom. In his opening address, Chairman the Honourable Dr Langi Hu'akavameiliku questioned the weighting of developmental priorities between economic and social goals, and asked, "Why is it that, as we grow economically and have more, our social problems grow faster?" Further, he suggested that the coming Age of the Pacific refers only to the economically and politically more important Asian and Pacific rim countries. "The Asia-Pacific Economic Council has been established at a meeting in Australia, and we are seen but not heard. Would we be equals even if we could join? We begin to wonder whether we are in the Pacific!" he said. "And, even among ourselves, we don't know whether we are equal or Pacific peoples or clones of the façade of Western society"—sentiments expressed increasingly frequently this last year by Tongan educational and political leaders.

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