

ment established a new Ministry of Sports and prepared to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Cook Islands self-government on 4 August 2005.

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## FRENCH POLYNESIA

Events in French Polynesia in the period under review were essentially characterized by political upheaval and unrest, with an elected government ousted in a “legal coup,” only to return after another by-election. The country experienced a period of instability but also an unprecedented mobilization of peaceful popular protest, culminating in the largest demonstration march ever seen in Tahiti.

Before the crisis started, the islands were in a state of enthusiasm during July and most of August 2004. The new coalition government of the Union for Democracy (UPLD), Fetia Api, and No Oe E Te Nunaa parties was headed by pro-independence leader Oscar Temaru, who had been elected president in June after the almost twenty-year reign of pro-French Gaston Flosse. The new leadership’s motto, “Tauī” (“change” in Tahitian) was not only conceived in the purely political sense but also reflected a determination to set the whole society on a new course. It

implied a new cultural orientation, away from the French influence and back to the country’s Maohi (indigenous Polynesian) roots, as well as toward a more pan-Pacific perspective. Three events in particular embodied these tendencies.

On 12 July, the new government celebrated the annual autonomy holiday parade. Thousands of people participated, while several guests of honor from other Pacific Islands countries were present. The new president changed the holiday from 29 June to 12 July to honor Francis Sanford, the father of the territory’s first statute of autonomy of 12 July 1977. Flosse had made the holiday 29 June when he created another, enlarged autonomy statute, which passed on that date in 1984 (NT, 28 June 2004; TP, 12 July 2004).

In early August, President Temaru achieved an even greater triumph when he attended the Pacific Islands Forum in Apia, Sāmoa, and French Polynesia was granted long-awaited observer status in that organization. The president welcomed the reintegration of his country into the Pacific family and invoked his vision of a more closely integrated Pacific community in the future. He also formalized the demand that French Polynesia be reinscribed on the UN list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. However, he was careful to present this in his capacity as political party leader, not as president, in order not to create tensions with his anti-independence coalition partners (Temaru 2004; TP, 6 Aug 2004).

Finally, the Tauī also proved its vitality among institutions outside the political spectrum, when in mid-

August the Evangelical Church of French Polynesia, the country's largest denomination, renamed itself Protestant Maohi Church (*TP*, 16 Aug 2004).

While the dynamism of Taui made society aware of the dawning of a new era, the actual business of government was a challenge for Temaru and his inexperienced collaborators. Not only were they unfamiliar with the political system put in place by Flosse and his French bureaucrats, but the latter had also used a "scorched-earth" strategy after their defeat, leaving almost no records in the offices when the new government moved in (*TPM*, July 2005). In order to get an overview of the financial situation of the country, Temaru ordered an audit by a renowned French agency. His determination to uncover irregularities during Flosse's administration reportedly scared the ex-president and his supporters and made them even more determined to sabotage the new government (Regnault 2004, 153–154).

The crisis began in late August when two UPLD representatives in the Assembly of French Polynesia, Hiro Tefaarere and Ronald Terorotua, both with strong labor-union ties, followed by their colleagues Noa Tetuanui and Jean-Alain Frébault (who had previously crossed the floor from Tahoeraa), announced their intention to resign from the UPLD and form their own parliamentary group. They argued that Temaru's government had not kept its electoral promises, especially in the field of social policy. The second issue that roused their discontent was the cross installed by Speaker Antony Geros in the assem-

bly hall, seen by many as an assault on the secular character of the state (*TP*, 13 Aug, 18 Aug, 30 Aug 2004). Temaru tried to appease the dissidents' anger by making concessions. In a dramatic act he personally climbed on a ladder in the assembly hall to take down the cross (*TP*, 17 Sept 2004). Eventually he was able to reconcile with Tefaarere and Terorotua, and both returned to the assembly's majority group. Tetuanui and Frébault, however, refused to do likewise and on 24 September they formally resigned from Temaru's group, leaving the latter without a majority in the assembly (*TPM*, Oct 2004).

Together with independent representative Témauri Foster, the two eventually approached Flosse's Tahoeraa opposition, giving it a new majority. After a televised speech in which Temaru warned the population of a planned attempt to overthrow his government, Flosse declared on 4 October that a "motion of censure is not on the agenda" (*TPM*, Oct 2004). However, less than twenty-four hours later, such a motion was filed by both Tahoeraa and a newly founded assembly group called Te Ara ("The Awakening"), consisting of Tetuanui, Frébault, Foster, and three Tahoeraa representatives—apparently a puppet party set up by Flosse to give his motion the added legitimacy of being a two-party initiative (*TPM*, Nov 2004).

The extraordinary assembly session of 8 October, which was called to debate this motion, became a forty-eight-hour ordeal. Temaru, with his ministers and representatives, gave long speeches testifying to their achievements, and tried to convince

Noa Tetuanui to give up his “treachery” and return to the UPLD, on whose list he had been elected. But all attempts were unsuccessful, and late on the night of 9 October, the motion of censure passed with a slim majority of 29 to 28 votes (*TP*, 9 Oct 2004; *TPM*, Nov 2004).

After only four months in office, Oscar Temaru’s government had been ousted. From then on the situation became increasingly confusing. According to the Statute of French Polynesia, a government overthrown in a motion of censure remains in power as a caretaker administration until the assembly elects a new president. However, the two sides could not agree on a date for this vote to take place (*TP*, 12 Oct 2004; *TPM*, Nov 2004).

While the parties fought a legal battle over scheduling the vote, Temaru and his followers began to organize their resistance against Flosse’s return to power. Even before the vote of censure, Temaru had asked the French government to dissolve the assembly and call for fresh elections in order to create a clearly mandated majority (*TP*, 6 Oct 2004). This request was supported by large sections of the country’s population as well as the opposition parties in France. However, the ruling right-wing government of French President Jacques Chirac refused to comply. French Minister for Overseas Territories Brigitte Girardin—who had already contributed to political destabilization in Tahiti after the elections in May by stating that “the electoral process is far from being completed” (*TPM*, June 2004)—said that there was no reason for a dissolution as

long as there was no blockade of the country’s political institutions (*TP*, 12 Oct 2004).

On 16 October, Tahiti experienced the largest demonstration in its history when more than 22,000 people (official estimate) marched through the cities of Faa’a and Papeete to support Temaru’s call for the dissolution of the assembly and fresh elections (*TPM*, Nov 2004). Among the marchers were deputies from the opposition French Socialist Party, the most notable being Christian Paul, former minister for overseas territories in Lionel Jospin’s left-wing government (1997–2002), as well as Hawaiian independence activist Henry Noa. A petition demanding the dissolution was signed by almost 43,000 people during the following weeks (*TP*, 17 Nov 2004). Flosse’s followers, on the other hand, could mobilize only about 300 participants for a counter-demonstration in early December (*TP*, 4 Dec 2004).

Unimpressed by the October march, Lana Tetuanui, the assembly’s third vice speaker from Tahoeraa, opened an assembly session for the presidential vote, and on 22 October, Flosse was unanimously elected president. Under Flosse’s orders, the assembly building had been occupied by a militia made up of members of the Groupement d’Intervention de la Polynésie (GIP; see below), who intimidated all non-Tahoeraa supporters present, including Assembly Speaker Geros (*TPM*, Dec 2004). Geros contested the legality of the session presided over by Lana Tetuanui, as there was no legal basis for his replacement by one of the vice speakers (*TP*, 22 Oct 2004). French High

Commissioner Michel Mathieu, however, had given written orders to Lana Tetuanui to open the session (*TP*, 18 Oct 2004), thereby violating his required neutrality in local politics. Finally, on 25 October, the date set by Geros for the election session (for which Flosse had filed his candidacy and thereby implicitly recognized the illegality of his election on 22 October), Geros himself was absent, as Oscar Temaru had invited all his representatives to a meeting at the presidential palace. Inspired by Gandhi, they decided to hold a "spiritual fasting" on the palace grounds in order to underline their continuing demand for the assembly to be dissolved (*TP*, 25 Oct 2004).

In the following days, the situation in Papeete became more and more tense. On 26 October, Flosse presented his cabinet of seventeen ministers, almost all of them drawn from his previous cabinet (*TP*, 26 Oct 2004), while Temaru declared that he was still the only legitimate president since Flosse's election had taken place under illegal circumstances. While Temaru, his cabinet, and a growing number of supporters held out at the palace, other groups of UPLD supporters, led by land rights activists Joinville Pomare and Clément Pito, began to occupy public buildings in Papeete, including the land affairs office, the government printing office, and the government information technology center (*TP*, 3 Nov 2004). At the same time, many public service employees began to strike and occupy their own office buildings to protest a situation in which they were receiving orders from two different govern-

ments and did not know which one to be loyal to. All this increasingly paralyzed the economic life of French Polynesia. Brigitte Girardin, however, still refused to dissolve the assembly, using the argument that there was still "no institutional blockade," even though there obviously was (*TP*, 23 Oct 2004; *TPM*, Nov, Dec 2004).

As the blockades continued, both parties sent delegations to Paris to advocate their respective positions (*TPM*, Dec 2004). The French public became more and more aware of events in Tahiti, now featured in cover stories in the Paris media (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 28 Oct 2004; *Libération*, various issues in Oct 2004; *L'Express*, 7 Feb 2005), which for the first time provided relatively well-informed, balanced coverage that was increasingly critical of Flosse and his system (Regnault 2004, 165–169). Even within Chirac's ruling Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) party, previously unconditional support for Flosse began to crumble, as Béatrice Vernaudo and one other UMP deputy advocated the dissolution of the assembly (*TP*, 4 Nov 2004).

While the negotiations were under way, on 15 November 2004 the French State Council (highest administrative court) decided on a complaint filed by Flosse after the 23 May 2004 elections. The council found that Flosse's complaint was justified, on the grounds that the curtains of the polling booths in Mahina on Tahiti's east coast had the dark blue color of the mayor's party, which is part of UPLD. According to the ruling, those colored curtains could have influenced the voters, and therefore

the election in the Windward Islands constituency (Tahiti and Moorea) was declared null and void, and a by-election called for 13 February (*TP*, 15 Nov 2004). However, the French State Council did not follow up complaints by UPLD concerning the outer islands, where other important irregularities may have taken place. With this one-sided action, the council once more demonstrated that the French authorities were not behaving neutrally. With the decision to hold by-elections in the Windward Islands, Temaru and his followers insisted on fresh elections in all the outer islands constituencies as well. They also demanded that until the elections took place, the country should be run by an appointed neutral caretaker administration, in order to prevent Flosse from using public resources for campaigning as he had done in previous electoral campaigns (*TPM*, Dec 2004).

Several rounds of negotiations in Paris got nowhere. In the end Flosse left the negotiation table, arguing that the public buildings were still occupied by Temaru's followers, although Temaru had promised to clear all of them (*TP*, 29 Nov 2004).

Frustrated with the failed negotiations, Tahiti's politicians reluctantly accepted the status quo and began to organize for the by-elections. UPLD, already comprising four allied parties in addition to Temaru's pro-independence Tavini Huiraatira, was joined by two new constituent organizations, Jacky Bryant's local Green Party (Heiura-Les Verts) and Stanley Cross's culturalist Te Hono Party (*TP*, 8 Nov 2004). On the national level, UPLD

received support from the French Socialists as well as from all other left-wing parties (*TP*, 27 Jan 2005).

While UPLD's strength thus seemed to be reinforced, Tahoeraa became weakened when two of its collaborators—ethnic Chinese community leader Robert Tanseau, and Flosse's former sports minister and chairman of the Tahoeraa youth wing Reynald Temarii—left Tahoeraa to run on their own tickets (*TP*, 12 Dec, 20 Dec 2004). Temaru's former coalition partners—Philip Schyle's Fetia Api and Nicole Bouteau's No Oe E Te Nunaa—decided to run on a common-list-styled Alliance pour une Démocratie Nouvelle (ADN), refusing the possibility of any governing coalition with either UPLD or Tahoeraa (*TP*, 1 Feb 2005).

In the subsequent campaign, Tahoeraa once again tried to polarize voters between the political concepts of autonomy (implying continuing ties with France) and independence, presenting the latter as a recipe for chaos and economic misery and itself as the only "saviour of autonomy" against the "evil independentist" UPLD. In the pro-Tahoeraa weekly *L'Hebdo*, Temaru and his collaborators were virulently attacked. Similarly, Bouteau and Schyle were denounced as "false autonomists" because of their previous participation in Temaru's government (*L'Hebdo*, 10 Feb 2005). Both UPLD and ADN, on the other hand, tried to avoid the controversial independence issue and focus instead on economic and social issues, criticizing Flosse's governance and promising a better way to run the country. UPLD stressed the merits of its previous gov-

ernment and promised to change the ways of the country for the benefit of its people. While Temaru's first government was referred to as the period of Taui, the period after February 13 was designated Taui Roa ("big change") (*TPM*, Feb 2005; *To'ere*, 3 Feb 2005).

Political campaigning even included the publication of books. In late 2004, political scientist Jean-Marc Regnault published an analysis of Oscar Temaru's rise and fall titled *Taui: Oscar Temaru/Gaston Flosse, le pouvoir confisqué* ("Taui . . . the power confiscated"), denouncing the complicity of the French state in what had been called Flosse's "legal coup" (Regnault 2004; *TPM*, Nov 2004). The first printing sold out within two days. Following this enormous success, Tahoeraa severely attacked Regnault, accusing him of partiality and questioning his academic credentials. In January 2005, Flosse's director of communications, Yves Hauptert, published his own political analysis as a reply. Entitled *Taui, l'espoir trahi* ("Taui, the hope betrayed"), the work accused Temaru of incompetence and having an evil mind, while presenting Flosse as the country's "saviour" (Hauptert 2005).

The campaign, accompanied by multiple provocations and incidents (*To'ere*, 17 Feb 2005; *L'Hebdo*, 10 Feb 2005), politicized society to a degree seldom seen before. Almost all households declared themselves by hoisting either Temaru's light blue and white flag, or Flosse's orange banner. On 5 February, the campaign reached its climax with another mass march of 15,000 to 25,000 UPLD supporters

to downtown Papeete (*TP*, 5 Feb 2005), while Tahoeraa, in considerably smaller numbers, organized various automobile convoys around the island to show its presence (*TPM*, Feb 2005). On election day, the situation remained tense, with hundreds of enthusiastic party supporters beleaguering each polling station. This time, however, the authorities rigidly enforced the rules and banned any display of political symbolism within the polling stations.

The election results consolidated UPLD support in the Windward Islands by giving it an overwhelming victory, more than 6,000 votes ahead of Tahoeraa. Tahoeraa also lost the lead in almost all municipalities, while in 2004 it had still maintained the majority of votes in most rural districts of Tahiti. The political map of Tahiti turned from orange with some blue spots to an almost pure blue (*To'ere*, 17 Feb 2005). With 46.94 percent of the votes, UPLD obtained the one-third-of-seats majority bonus and received 25 of the 37 seats in the Windward Islands constituency, while Tahoeraa, with 40 percent of the votes, won only 10 seats. ADN, which had hoped to attract many voters frustrated by the political polarization, obtained only 10.56 percent, less than Fetia Api and No Oe E Te Nunaa combined in 2004, and just enough for Bouteau and Schyle to retain their 2 seats. None of the smaller parties received the 3 percent necessary to be eligible for a seat (*NT*, 14 Feb 2005). The results confirmed once more, after the mass protests in October, that the UPLD's slight victory in 2004 was not an accident,

as Flosse and his Paris supporters wanted to believe, but rather the first indication of a deeply rooted popular desire for political change (*TPM*, Dec 2004).

Oscar Temaru's new popular mandate was still hard to translate into a stable political majority. As the representation of the outer islands remained unchanged, with most of their representatives members of Tahoeraa, there was still no clear majority in the assembly as a whole, with 28 seats for UPLD, 27 for Tahoeraa, and 2 for ADN (*NT*, 15 Feb 2005). With ADN insisting on their political neutrality, Temaru was 1 seat short of an absolute majority. As in the aftermath of the 23 May 2004 elections, a period of rumors and uncertainty followed.

Although Flosse had announced that he would resign if his party lost the election, he still tried to hold on to power by all means (*NT*, 15 Feb 2005). This time, however, his stubborn behavior met resistance from some of his own followers. Two of his ministers, Jean-Christophe Bouissou and Georges Puchon, openly criticized his refusal to honor his previous announcement (*NT*, 18 Feb 2005). UPLD then filed a motion of censure against Flosse, which was adopted by the assembly on 18 February with the support of UPLD and ADN (*NT*, 19 Feb 2005).

After some more destabilization attempts by Tahoeraa, Oscar Temaru was finally elected president on 3 March with a bare majority of 29 votes. The twenty-ninth vote was cast by Jean-Alain Frébault, who had once more crossed the floor and joined the

UPLD, suggesting a pattern of opportunism on his part. Tahoeraa's surprising counter-candidate, Bora Bora Mayor Gaston Tong Sang, received 26 votes, while the two ADN representatives abstained. In his inaugural speech, Temaru underlined once more that independence was not on his immediate agenda. Instead, his government would focus on consolidation of the country's economy and reform of the ineffective and inflated bureaucratic apparatus, creating more transparency in government operations. The new president also declared he would govern with the present majority in the assembly and no longer insist on fresh elections for the outer islands (*TP*, 3 March 2005; *TPM*, March 2005).

On 7 March, the change of government concluded with the presentation of Temaru's new cabinet of sixteen ministers. As he had in 2004, Temaru took the portfolios of foreign relations and municipal development. Vice President Jacqui Drollet held the portfolios of tourism and civil aviation. Also familiar from Temaru's first cabinet were Emile Vanfasse as minister of finance and economy; Emile Vernaudeau as minister for postal services, telecommunications, and sports; Keitapu Maamaatuaiahutapu as minister for fisheries and maritime resources; Jean-Marius Raapoto as minister for education; James Salmon as minister for equipment, transport, and energy; and Gilles Tefaatau as minister of lands, surveys, and housing. Newly appointed to the cabinet were former labor union leader Pierre Frébault as minister for labor; former television journalist Ahiti Roomataa-



roa as minister for agriculture; Georges Handerson with the portfolio of environment and disaster prevention; Pia Faatomo as minister of health; Patricia Jennings as minister for social affairs; Tina Cross (co-leader of Te Hono) as minister for women and family; former boxing champion Tauhiti Nena as minister for culture and youth; and Natacha Taurua as minister for traditional arts and crafts. Directly taken over from Flosse's last cabinet was Louis Frébault as minister for the development of the outer islands—an appointment seemingly designed to halt his brother Jean-Alain's recent pattern of political switching (*TP*, 7 March 2005).

A few days later, however, the new government was challenged by another serious political crisis. This was triggered by members of the Groupement d'Intervention de la Polynésie (GIP, Polynesian Intervention Grouping), a service agency for public works and security services under direct orders of the presidency and created by Flosse in the mid-1990s. On 9 March, Temaru had removed from office GIP commander Léonard Puputauki, a faithful supporter of Flosse, and replaced him with his own right-hand man, Robert Maker. However, GIP members refused Maker entrance to the GIP headquarters. Temaru called on the mutineers to be loyal to the government, but later in March the crisis became more critical when more than a hundred GIP members with trucks and bulldozers, led by Puputauki, blocked the bridge leading to Papeete's port facilities, cutting off access to the country's oil reserves and thereby

threatening the energy supply. They demanded that the president recall Maker and instead appoint Puputauki's lieutenant, Yannick Boosie. Faced with a collapse of the country's economy, Temaru finally had to give in to the mutineers' demands, a humiliating experience for the new government. However, Temaru made Boosie's appointment temporary and at the same time appointed a commissioner to audit the GIP (*TPM*, April 2005).

These events indicated more clearly than ever that the GIP was not a neutral institution serving community interests, but a militia under Gaston Flosse's personal orders. As such it was almost impossible for another government to control and therefore it represented a constant threat to political stability. It had been revealed earlier that an intelligence cell within the GIP had used highly sophisticated technology to spy on anyone Flosse was suspicious of, including some of his own supporters (*TPM*, Oct, Dec 2004). In controversial testimony during the political turmoil of October 2004, a former GIP member had even claimed that GIP members had abducted, tortured, and murdered Jean-Pascal Couraud, a journalist critical of Flosse who mysteriously disappeared in 1997 (*TPM*, Nov 2004). The 2002 disappearance of Fetia Api founder Boris Léontieff and some other party leaders in the Tuamotu archipelago also remains unexplained (*TP*, 20 May 2005; *TPM*, June 2005).

With one crisis, if not resolved, at least temporarily deferred, another soon followed, this time within the UPLD and again involving Hiro Tefaarere. Tefaarere had headed the assembly as Speaker on an interim



basis since November 2004, when Antony Geros, elected in May 2004 for a one-year term, had lost his seat when the elections in the Windward Islands were declared invalid.

Although UPLD once more designed Geros as its candidate for the position in the election scheduled for 14 April, Tefaarere refused to respect this decision and declared himself a candidate. Geros received a small majority of 28 votes, against 26 for Tahoeraa's Lana Tetuanui and ADN's usual two abstentions, while Tefaarere obtained only his own vote (*TPM*, May 2005). Even if this result did not actually threaten the government's majority, it gave the impression to outsiders that the UPLD was having difficulty maintaining internal discipline, a situation exploited and exaggerated by the opposition press (*L'Hebdo*, 14 April 2005).

Another issue that came up quite surprisingly in the course of Taui was the question of customary leadership. On 12 March, about thirty descendants of ari'i (royalty), led by Joinville Pomare, descendant of Tahiti's royal Pomare lineage, demanded the creation of a "Royal Customary Council" as a consultative political institution. They insisted that the voices of customary leaders needed to be heard in a second house besides the assembly, and they cited as models the Customary Senate (representation of Kanak Chiefs) in New Caledonia, as well as the customary royal institutions in Wallis and Futuna (*TP*, 13 March, 4 May 2004). As French Polynesia is one of the least traditional societies in the Pacific, such a proposal is unlikely to find support among the country's population. The

French wiped out its chiefly leadership more than a century ago, and various voices denounced the proposals as advocating a "return to feudal privileges" (*TPM*, April, June 2005).

More than anything else, the spirit of Taui represented a significant increase in freedom of expression, which had been limited in many ways by Flosse's authoritarian tendencies. One issue people now dared to speak about publicly was French nuclear testing and its consequences. On 17 May, the nuclear test victims association Moruroa e Tatou (MeT) presented several classified military documents showing that the island of Mangareva was severely contaminated as a result of aboveground testing in the 1960s, yet the French military had not taken any security measures to protect the population. MeT chairman Roland Oldham said there is now sufficient proof to sue the French government for compensation. On 27 May, Gaston Flosse, himself a native Mangarevan, but thus far a staunch supporter of nuclear testing, surprisingly demanded the formation of a fact-finding commission on radiation on his home island. Many observers wondered about his intentions, as during his presidency Flosse had always refused to even talk to MeT (*To'ere*, 28 May 2005; *TPM*, June 2005; *TP*, 17 May, 27 May 2005).

The UPLD's return to power also meant a continuation of a Pacific-focused foreign policy. While regular trips to Paris are a necessary part of government business, Temaru is far more enthusiastic about traveling to and maintaining relations with the neighboring Pacific Islands. He has

traveled frequently to New Zealand, and made trips to Hawai'i and Sāmoa in May and June (*TP*, 14 May 2005; *PIR*, 2 June 2005). As he said at a press conference in Honolulu, "The French don't want us to have a link with the other Pacific countries. They want us to fly from Tahiti to Paris—and that's all. So we have to work on our relations with our brothers all over the Pacific" (*Haleakalā Times*, 8 June 2005).

Reorienting the political system also means replacing the technocratic French administrative style with the simplicity of the "Pacific Way." While the common Tahitian people are likely to benefit from this reform, Flosse and other members of the old elite constantly criticize and ridicule it as "political amateurism" by "incompetents" (*TPM*, Nov 2004). Given the amounts of French aid money available, it is also hard to resist temptation. While Temaru as well as many of his collaborators are working hard to realize their political program, many less noble individuals within the new administration have only their own benefit in mind. As *Tahiti Pacifique* editor Alex Du Prel noted with disapproval, this has led to constant power struggles within the UPLD and to the cases of corruption that had become common under Flosse (*TPM*, June 2005).

Economically, the new government is sending a mixed message, encouraging investment, notably in the tourism industry, while at the same time stressing the need for all development to be sustainable and beneficial to the local community (*TP*, 19 April 2005). While it is too early to evaluate the Tau'i's long-term impact on the econ-

omy, the Tahoeraa opposition continues to promulgate a sinister scenario of economic downfall, accusing Temaru of preparing "the cubanisation of our country" (*L'Hebdo*, 2 June 2005).

In spite of such criticism, the population seems to be favorably inclined toward the new leadership. In May 2005, an opinion poll showed that more than half of the population supported the new government, and that Oscar Temaru was the most popular politician (*TP*, 27 May 2005).

Concerning the long-term political status of the country, there is still much confusion about where to go, even within UPLD. Temaru personally favors independence but is aware of the fact that the majority of the population presently supports continued political dependency on France. He has suggested a process like that provided by the Nouméa Accord in New Caledonia, granting increased autonomy and leading to a referendum on independence after one or two decades, when the country will be economically fit to stand on its own. Once again, Tahoeraa has severely criticized this proposal (24 June 2005).

Behind all this talk about political statutes, however, the main problem remains of how to wean the country away from the annual French subsidies of 130 billion Pacific francs (more than US\$1 billion), which pay for almost everything (*TPM*, June 2005). One can only hope that the new political leadership will have more courage to overcome this dependency than previous governments have had.

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## HAWAIIAN ISSUES

The year 2005 marked the fifth anniversary of the introduction to the United States Congress of legislation known as the Akaka Bill, after its primary benefactor and one of Hawai'i's senators, Daniel Akaka. The bill was prompted by litigation in the US Supreme Court challenging the Hawaiians-only voting policies for the state government's Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA). In 1997, Harold "Freddy" Rice, a non-Hawai-

ian rancher, sued the State of Hawai'i to challenge its Hawaiians-only policy for OHA elections. The case, *Rice v Cayetano* (Benjamin Cayetano was then governor of Hawai'i), argued that the election policy was racist and unconstitutional, citing the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Rice appealed his case up the judicial hierarchy and finally won a hearing at the US Supreme Court in early 2000. The justices sided with Rice, annulled the state's policy, and allowed non-Hawaiians to vote for OHA trustees.

In its original conception, the Akaka Bill was seen as a way of neutralizing the detrimental ruling in *Rice v Cayetano* by recognizing Native Hawaiians as indigenous people of the United States, thus placing them in the same category as Native Americans. However, Hawai'i's congressional delegation was unable to push the controversial bill through Congress in time to preempt the Supreme Court's decision in favor of Rice. Since 2000, non-Hawaiians have been able to participate in the election of OHA trustees.

Undeterred, Senator Akaka has revised and resubmitted the bill every year since 2000. Meanwhile, other court cases have appeared, challenging the existence of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, and all programs, agencies, and federal grants designed to assist Native Hawaiians. Five years after its inception, supporters of the Akaka Bill continue their fight and hope for success before other lawsuits eliminate these support agencies.

Since the 1898 US annexation of Hawai'i, a political and legal rela-