

WESTERN SAMOA

The year 1992–93 was one for trade missions and establishing sister city relationships. One such relationship was initiated between Maclean Shire in New South Wales, Australia, and Apia. Population was predicted to double to 313,981 by the year 2021. There were setbacks. The Washington embassy, opened with fanfare in 1990, and blighted by financial mismanagement, was closed during the year and its functions resumed by the New York office.

Current and former lands and survey ministers exchanged abuse in Parliament over whose wife had what store in the new market. Parliamentary Speaker Afamasaga Fatu Vaili stepped in and separated the two. Later, he blew the whistle on Ulualofaiga Talamai Nika for upsetting standing orders as the latter tried fielding a question on the 1992–93 budget. Nine months later, Afamasaga clashed with Prime Minister Tofilau. With Parliament in disarray, he adjourned April's session weeping. The prime minister battled on. His ruling Human Right Protection (HRPP) government had pushed through constitutional changes in 1991, increasing parliament's term from three to five years, and cabinet by four ministers. Factionalism struck with members of Parliament threatening to withdraw support if passed over for the cabinet. For the fifth or sixth time, Tofilau announced his resignation and the herd laughed and regrouped.

The churches had more than religious instruction in their minds. The Baha'i got together women from the

two Samoas for a three-day national conference. Coordinator Foisaga Eteuati-Shon discussed grass-root women and the economy, while the University of the South Pacific's Tuala Tiresa Malietoa stressed women, culture, and environment. Methodists discussed ways of aligning monetary policies with modern economic practices at their annual conference in July.

Tiava'asue Falefatu Sapolu, a lawyer in private practice, was chosen as chief justice in July 1992. No stranger in judicial circles, he had served as acting Chief Justice, and two terms as attorney general, in 1983–85 and 1988–90. In 1990, he held both positions and still managed to find time for his private practice. Blood ties in small Island communities run deep, particularly in high places. Tiava'asue succeeded his brother-in-law and acting Chief Justice Richard B. Lussick, married to Katalina Sapolu. His blood and professional ties further increased the backlog of cases because of conflicts of interest. In some cases, he was involved at different times as defense counsel, government prosecutor, and judge.

Western Samoa Trust Estates Corporation, once the country's largest primary producer, continued to struggle with its bills. It was left with a six-thousand-acre plantation in Mulifanua, another twenty-five acres at Nu'u, a soap factory and abattoir at Vailele (*Samoa Times*, 18 Sept 1992). Revenue from lease of land now reverts to the Samoa Land Corporation, formed in 1990, which may soon demand rent from the Trust Estates Corporation. With cocoa production down since 1990, and full coconut production still months away, a no-sale policy was

imposed on livestock to build up the herd.

Import substitution, expansion, and diversification remained catchwords. For 1991, combined export earnings were WS\$16.54 million. Tourism earned WS\$34 million, double that of all other exports. On the debit side, imports of industrial supplies cost WS\$78.1 million. Tourism was boosted with an inaugural Teuila Festival, complete with a New Zealand-inspired flea market and a ten-year development plan. Samoa's distinctive culture is on sale, with plans to improve access to some 320 remote villages.

Greater access to customary lands for investment purposes, especially in promoting public infrastructure for tourism, was planned. The idea was that government would lease land from customary landowners, to be subleased to investors for commercial development. Investors would deal with one central authority, thus protecting landowner's interests and speeding up negotiations (*Samoa Observer*, 4 June 1993).

Two New Zealand-generated trust funds dominated the headlines in March and April 1993. The first involved funds for victims of Cyclone Val collected by Samoans in New Zealand, and matched dollar-for-dollar by the New Zealand government. Having raised WS\$1.8m from a telethon, the community leaders decided to bypass the Apia government and go straight to the districts. But things went sour. While the country picked up with New Zealand assistance, the committee embarked on a course of self-destruction (*Savali*, 22 April 1993).

In April, the second scandal sur-

facled. Attorney-General Le'aupepe Sanerive Muli'aumaseali'i resigned when found guilty on four charges of professional misconduct. The charges related to trust accounts totalling more than US\$61,000 at his Auckland law practice, which he ran from 1982-1991. He was a ranking *matai*, and most of his clients were Samoans.

Tupa'i Se Apa succeeded Le'aupepe as attorney general. He was public trustee for five years before setting up a law partnership with Tuala Karanita Enari, the country's first local and highly respected secretary to government in the early 1970s.

With New Zealand assistance, two electronic beams landed in Apia during May; a set of traffic lights and a television station. Television Western Samoa was launched on 29 May replete with *lotu* and *lauga* from leaders of the two Samoas. On 'Upolu, transmission extends east to Lufilufi and west to Falelatai and the eastern coastline of Savai'i. Nestled in between, Manono and Apolima are within easy range.

The thirty-first independence celebration inaugurated an honors list with four categories: Malietoa Tanumafili II Service Order for outstanding acts of bravery or heroism (made posthumously to three *tama'aiga* associated with decolonization); the Western Samoa Order of Tiafau for long and outstanding service (six awards); the Western Samoa Order of Merit for outstanding achievement in any field of endeavor (nine awards); and the Western Samoa Certificate of Excellence for exceptionally high achievement in any field of endeavor (nine awards). In addition, three honorary awards were made.

The University of the South Pacific's (USP) silver jubilee was also remembered in Apia. Prime Minister Tofilau Eti opened USP's biannual council at the School of Agriculture on the Alafua campus. He expressed surprise at the small numbers of students of agriculture, and urged better coordination in agricultural research. Pro-Chancellor and Forum Secretariat chief executive Jeremia Tabai replied that Western Samoa had given USP Alafua its first regional Vice-Chancellor (*USP Bulletin*, 4 June 1993).

In June, Parliament was presented with the 1993-94 budget, which projected ws\$168.37 million in expenditures and ws\$169.61 million in revenues. Finance Minister Tuilaepa restated the debilitating effects of successive cyclones and consequent decline in GDP since 1990. The poor performance of the agricultural sector in 1992 was mitigated to some extent by that of Yazaki, automobile wiring assembler and the country's largest export industry. Estimated real GDP

declined by 4.6 percent in 1992, compared to a decline of 7.5 percent in 1990. Import payments increased to an all-time high of ws\$271 million, while export earnings dropped to ws\$14 million, resulting in a balance of payments deficit of ws\$20 million for 1992, the first since 1981. Family remittances declined by 50 percent during the same period. During the first quarter of 1993, net foreign assets dropped by ws\$7.5 million, reducing import cover from eight to six months.

On a brighter note, Tuilaepa promised more privatization and a decline in inflation from its April 1993 rate of 6.2 percent. Government investment in social and economic infrastructure had led to a corresponding increase in investment as a ratio of GDP, from 26 percent in 1989 to 42 percent in 1992. Tuilaepa predicted that, as the agricultural sector recovered, and if the import bill was contained, the economy would grow by 4 percent in 1993.

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