defined and interpreted by the forthcoming organic law.

Contrary to the wishes of President Flosse, French Polynesia did not accede to its new status at the same time as New Caledonia, which had its organic law passed on 23 March 1999. By the end of the year under review, and in contrast to their exclusion from negotiations on the constitutional amendment, an opposition delegation including Vernaudon and Temaru was invited to meet with Queyranne and other officials in Paris to discuss the content of the organic law.

The rationale behind the Tahoeraa government’s determination to remain part of France (and one shared by a sizable portion of the population) is the knowledge that independence would certainly entail a sharp reduction in the transfer of funds from Paris. Despite the closure of the nuclear test program, state funding has continued at high levels as the following figures demonstrate: France injected a total of $1.5 billion (152.5 billion FCFP) into the territory of only 224,000 inhabitants during 1998, of which $300 million were tax exemptions and $1.2 billion were direct transfers (PINA nius online, 7 June 1999).

Direct transfers from Paris can be broken down as expenditure in the following areas: state controlled sections of the civil service and emergency relief (16.65 billion FCFP), education and research (40.55 billion FCFP), national defense (35 billion FCFP), pensions (12.5 billion FCFP), municipal government (6.66 billion FCFP), and a grant to the territorial budget (9.9 billion FCFP or 12.66 percent of the budget). The extent of this dependence on the state is reinforced by the latest trade figures, which, though showing a steady growth in exports, still exhibit a gaping deficit, with exports covering only 23.9 percent of the cost of imports (DT, 6 May 1999, 20). To add to its economic woes, the territory is struggling to recover from another natural disaster, as floods in Tahiti on 19 December left hundreds homeless and caused damages of up to 5 billion FCFP (TP, Jan 1999, 53).

Emile Vernaudon and Boris Lontieff, among others, have argued that the territorial government ought to be doing more to promote sustainable economic development and social justice, and spend less money, time, and energy on never-ending piecemeal reforms to the statute of autonomy.

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Maori Issues
Politically the second half of 1998 was very disappointing for Maoridom. In 1996 New Zealand First had captured all five Maori seats in Parliament and formed a coalition government with the National party. The cabinet included three Maori ministers, all from New Zealand First, with
the leader of New Zealand First as deputy prime minister. However, disputes within the New Zealand First leadership severely weakened their position in the government. National had survived a leadership coup earlier in 1998, but the replacement of Prime Minister Jim Bolger with Jenny Shipley signaled much less commitment to the coalition, and by August it had dissolved.

The sacking in July of the deputy leader of New Zealand First, who is also the minister of Maori Affairs, led fairly rapidly to a split in the New Zealand First caucus. Once the coalition government dissolved, leaving National as a minority government, the split was formalized and the New Zealand First caucus lost seven of its members of Parliament, including four of the five who held Maori seats. Two of the Maori members remained in cabinet initially as independents. By October, Minister of Maori Affairs Tau Henare had set up a new Mauri Pacific party, with five of the defecting New Zealand First members.

National’s previous two ministers of Maori Affairs had shown little understanding of Maoridom, with the most recent, John Luxton, being openly antagonistic toward Maori, and derisive and dismissive of Maori aspirations for their own future. Tau Henare was a welcome change, not only because he is Maori, but also because he understands and empathizes with the constant struggle Maori have against their European colonizers. As a result he has not been afraid to point out the anomalies that permeate New Zealand society in its unequal treatment of Maori and Pakeha, and the racism against Maori that is deeply embedded in the structures of almost all government and public institutions throughout the country. He has fought with only moderate success to capture a disproportionately small part of the 1999 budget for Maori, but has ensured that funding has been allocated to areas of immediate practical concern to Maori such as the (re)building of their marae, the restoration and enhancement of the Maori language, and the development of Maori education, housing, and health. He has also publicly supported debate taking place on the issue of constitutional change, whereas the National party and in particular its minister of Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations have dismissed any consideration of the issue.

Henare’s outspoken support of Maoridom has continued to bring down on him the wrath of Parliament and the Pakeha media. Headlines flash his latest choice of colorful words used to illustrate a point, attacking him on his use of the English language rather than considering the issue he is raising. The constant attack and denigration has begun to take its toll and undermine Maori confidence in him. With a general election due in October 1999 he and his fledgling party face an uphill battle to remain in Parliament, let alone in government.

While Maori were losing ground on the government benches, the extent of Maori poverty throughout the country continued to grow. In September the Anglican Church, with support from other churches, trade unions, and Maori, organized a protest march named the Hikoi (walk) of Hope. Two groups set out simultaneously from the very far north and the
very far south of the country. During the month-long march more than thirty-eight thousand people joined the march, focusing the nation's attention on the massive cuts successive governments have made to social service agencies and tertiary student funding and the fact that New Zealand has the fastest growing gap between rich and poor of any OECD country. Burgeoning student debt is currently well over two billion dollars with the result that Maori enrollment in tertiary education has been declining over the past two years after having slowly but steadily increased over the past decade.

The two groups on the march converged on Parliament grounds on 1 October with five thousand marchers confronting parliamentarians. Attempts by some government ministers to deny the existence of poverty in New Zealand brought swift and angry reactions during the march. The government’s own report, issued in July, confirmed the existence of increasing gaps between Maori and non-Maori in terms of every social and economic indicator. The Hikoi of Hope delivered a strong message to the government that the key to addressing Maori poverty lay in changing the constitution so that Maori can have a fair share of power as full partners under the Treaty of Waitangi. While the prime minister attempted to dismiss the notion, many commentators, both Maori and non-Maori, publicly encouraged debate on the issue. One of the leaders of the hikoi and longtime Maori advocate, Professor Whatarangi Winiata, warned that unless changes were made some Maori would be too impatient to wait any longer and they’d be prepared to die for the cause.

Then in January 1999 three mainly Maori communities in the Far North, who are among the most impoverished and neglected communities in the country, watched helplessly as torrential rain brought down surrounding hillsides, and tonnes of mud, rock, and trees swept away their homes. For decades Maori have complained of the lack of services they receive from local government, not only in the form of roads, water, and power supply, but also as protection against natural disasters. As usual with such disasters, the local marae came to the rescue of the homeless and functioned as the disaster headquarters.

As local Maori were trying to move quickly to clean up and reconstruct the community, local and central government authorities bickered over who should do what, whether or not the army should be sent in to help, and who was going to pay. Politicians visited and left behind promises that were at best partially fulfilled. Help for the communities in the form of food, clothing, and household goods flooded in from around the country, while the politicians continued to argue. The government finally allocated NZ$135,000 for rehabilitation work, enough money to build just one house. The marae received an insulting NZ$10,000 grant to cover its costs for using all its meager resources to organize the disaster recovery. The local authority complained bitterly when the central government directed it to contribute toward rebuilding the community. Local Maori simply got on with rebuilding their community as best they could with what they
were given or could find. The handling of such disasters demonstrates how deeply entrenched racism is in New Zealand.

Efforts to restore the economic bases of Maori continued through the courts and the Waitangi Tribunal. In September, after the government refused to settle a long-running claim in the central North Island, the tribunal used its powers to order not only the return of land but also the amount of compensation to be paid. Although it has had this power since 1988, this was the first time it had been used. For several years, the government had been threatening to remove the tribunal’s powers to make orders if it ever used them. In the event, the government accepted the order, returned the land (to the wrong group), and paid the compensation.

The Waitangi Tribunal also issued two long-awaited reports relating to particular rivers in September 1998 and June 1999. Disputes over the ownership of the rivers, and their abuse, which has resulted in severe pollution and environmental degradation, had been drawn out for over a hundred years. Finally the tribunal found that Maori do own the rivers and recommended that the Crown recognize and protect Maori rights in respect of these rivers.

In June the tribunal issued a report damning the Crown for continuing to deny Maori rights to radio waves and not consulting with Maori on the allocation of the radio spectrum. The government had planned to sell parts of the radio spectrum to major international telecommunications and broadcasting companies. The tribunal said that the Crown had failed to respond to repeated warnings from Maori, the courts, and the Privy Council that denying Maori access to a significant role in radio, television, and communications would be extremely damaging to the Maori language. The Crown is obliged under the Treaty of Waitangi and its own legislation to protect the Maori language.

Maori continued to have to take the government to the High Court to prevent it from selling off assets over which they have claims. In March Tainui successfully sought an injunction preventing the Crown from splitting up the assets of the nation’s largest electricity producer, the state enterprise Electricity Corporation of New Zealand, and putting its assets into several new state-owned enterprises. The Tainui Trust Board, which has outstanding claims on the Waikato River, sought firm legal assurances from the Crown that those claims would not be affected by the split. When those were not forthcoming to their satisfaction, Tainui sought to restrain the Crown until it had made the undertakings. Within hours of the injunction being granted, the Crown agreed to give the assurances Tainui had sought.

However, the allocation of fisheries assets resulting from the now infamous Sealords deal has become bogged down in litigation as Maori fight Maori in the courts. In July 1998 the High Court ruled in favor of the Treaty of Waitangi Fisheries Commission in its decision to allocate the proceeds of the settlement to traditional iwi bodies and not to the modern city-based corporate bodies set up to assist dislocated Maori living in the cities. The urban Maori corporations
and other groups not recognized as iwi appealed this decision and then successfully sought an injunction against the Treaty of Waitangi Fisheries Commission when it attempted to make its long-awaited recommendations on allocation to the minister of fisheries. Many Maori who were angry with the Sealords deal from the outset have observed that a large portion of the benefits of the so-called settlement have gone to lawyers and consultants, and that many iwi are still not in the business of fishing even though that was the primary aim of the settlement.

Meantime the Crown sits back and observes the legal carnage with a great deal of satisfaction. For, although it quite consciously caused the current strife in Maoridom by rushing through legislation to divest itself of the responsibility of having to sort out how Maori were to be compensated in practical terms through the settlement, it cannot now be held legally accountable for it unless Maori are prepared to move to overturn the original Sealords deal.

MARGARET MUTU

NIUE

The 1999 general elections on Niue saw the end of the government of Frank Lui, who had served as the island’s premier for six years. On 19 March, however, not only was Premier Lui unable to win another term at the head of Niue’s government, but he was also defeated in the contest for his seat in the Niue Assembly. He lost the Alofi North district to Mrs Va’ainga Tukuitonga (a retired schoolteacher) by a vote of 63 to 51. Such is the nature of politics on this small island, still losing population (now down to approximately 1,750 people). Had only seven people voted differently, Premier Lui would have gained another three-year term in the twenty-member assembly.

Lui’s loss of power appears to have resulted from a number of factors. Until the end he remained an opponent of “party politics,” leaving the Niue People’s Party (NPP) the only political party on the island. After campaigning for several years the party at last began to make headway in 1999, although it remains far from dominant (its leader, Sani Lakatani, only came third in the “common roll” seats). Nevertheless its much greater visibility and activity in the villages left it with an advantage over the government (which, without a formal political party organization, remained a group of “independents”). Under some pressure, Lui sought to assist the campaigns of some of those supporting his government, but the result was a neglect of his own constituency race as well as a general failure to communicate effectively either in the villages or through the media.

By contrast Lui’s opponent, Mrs Tukuitonga, staged an effective door-to-door campaign in Alofi North. Lui’s failure to campaign well even in his own constituency reflected a degree of complacency and also perhaps some fatigue. After twenty-five years in politics he may have lost touch with the voters and some of his enthusiasm for the job. This seems to have been reflected in an apparent lack of concern over population losses.