

Another interesting development in this general election is the number of former members of parliament who switched parties. Of the former HRPP members who contested the seats of their constituencies this time around as SNDP candidates, one was successful and one unsuccessful. The successful one, A'e'au Peniamina Leavai, was the Speaker of the House in the 1988–1991 parliament. Another two former HRPP members successfully contested the seats of their constituencies as independents. On the other hand, two former SNDP candidates are now cabinet ministers in the HRPP government, although they were first elected to parliament as HRPP members when they won by-elections in their respective constituencies. One won following the death of the late prime minister, Tofilau Eti Alesana. The second won following the sentence to life imprisonment of one of the two HRPP members who instigated the assassination of Luagalau Leva'ula Kamu, the late minister of Public Works, Electric Power Corporation, and Water Authority. The switching between political parties points to the persisting personality-driven nature of Samoan political parties.

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TONGA

Following the appointment of the king's youngest son, HRH Lavaka Ata 'Ulukālala, as prime minister at the beginning of 1999, several more changes have occurred in the cabinet lineup as the old guard makes way for the new. At the end of 2000, Dr Langi Hu'akavameiliku retired for reasons of health. The first Tongan to gain a doctorate, he had been appointed

minister of education in 1966 by the present king. At the time of his retirement, Langi Kavaliku was also minister of civil aviation and deputy prime minister. Taking over Tonga's education system, perhaps now the most impressive in the region, is the Honorable K T Fakafanua, heir to a noble title, who was previously minister of finance. The new minister of finance is Sosuia 'Utoikamanu, previously governor of the Reserve Bank of Tonga. The deputy prime minister is now the Honorable Tevita Tupou, attorney general and minister of justice. He and Fakafanua (who was appointed a scant ten years ago at the age of twenty-nine) and the minister of police, the Honorable Clive Edwards (appointed more recently), now find themselves in descending order the three most senior members of cabinet.

Other changes saw the Honorable Fialakepa move from the governorship of Ha'apai to replace noble Tu'i'afitu as minister of lands. The new governor of Ha'apai is the noble Malupō. The young noble Fialakepa holds degrees in law and on the advice of Crown Prince Tupouto'a has also been appointed lord chamberlain to help run the affairs of the royal household. In further moves, marine and ports has moved to the Ministry of Works, and civil aviation has gone to the prime minister, who already looks after agriculture, forestry, fisheries, foreign affairs, and defense.

The new minister of finance presented his budget statement to parliament in June. It reported a sluggish economy in which the growth of gross domestic product had dropped slightly from 4.4 percent to 3.2 percent, while inflation remained at 8 percent, its

highest level since the early 1990s. The minister predicted that the gross foreign reserve would remain low, enough for only 2.1 months of imports, at \$23.3 million, and suggested that the slowdown in the global economy put at risk the continuance of previous high levels of remittances from families living overseas. The government's financial position is likely to be difficult also due to high expenditure commitments estimated at \$128.6 million, an increase of 32.6 percent from last year's figure. Three new units—a Department of Communications, a Department of the Environment, and a Commissioner of Public Relations—have been established, and, in addition, expenditure has risen for all existing departments, especially those of education, health, and foreign affairs.

The long-term outlook, however, is not expected to be so bleak because of improvements in telecommunications, fisheries, and tourism. A multi-million-dollar project will shortly begin to renovate and expand Nuku'alofa's International Dateline Hotel to three-star and four-star level, with two new restaurants and a beachfront. Under new company ownership (People's Republic of China, 51 percent; Tonga, 49 percent), the hotel will have a Chinese managing director. Fishing is now the second highest export earner next to pumpkin squash, which last year did not do as well as in previous record years. Tuna accounts for about half of the fisheries exports. Manufacturing industries continue to contribute less than 5 percent of gross domestic product to the economy.

The most exciting news is the growth expected in telecommunica-

tions. The government has established the Tonga Communications Corporation, in place of the previous companies (Cable and Wireless and Tonga Telecom), to run both international and domestic telephone services. The new corporation's immediate plans are to establish a 2.5G GSM cellular telephone service with email and telephone capacity, and to increase Internet accessibility. The government has also issued a license to a second telecommunications carrier, Tonfōn, a fully owned subsidiary of Shoreline Communications, a company headed by the Crown Prince that already produces most of the power for Tonga's electricity supply which is then distributed by the Tonga Electricity Power Board. Through Tonfōn, the prince aims to introduce wireless technology whereby, "the customer should be able to buy a computer, plug it in, pull out an aerial and make a phone call . . . swipe a card on the computer, establish an account, and switch to his favorite TV channel while he is on the phone" (*Matangi Tonga*, June 2001, 16).

The Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement, which replaced the former Pro-democracy Movement, maintains a low profile and has announced that it will not formally mount candidates in the elections scheduled for 2002. It recently hosted a workshop to educate the general public, particularly youth, regarding human rights, good governance, and citizens' rights. A second human rights movement, the Tonga Kotoa Movement, formed in May 2001. Its five main objectives are to uphold the divine rights of man, support His Majesty who has been appointed by God, preserve the

Tongan culture, support the rights of all Tongans, and protect the independence of the kingdom. These moves, together with the introduction of a high-speed wireless service and fiber-optic cable to link the central business area of Nuku'alofa—which, the Crown Prince avers, will liberate the common man more than the automobile—demonstrate again the frequently startling juxtaposition of complementary ideas that characterize Tonga. At the very least, they promise interesting future developments on several fronts.

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WALLIS AND FUTUNA

The main subject of political discussion remains the special agreement, yet to be signed, between the French Overseas Territory of Wallis and Futuna and the French Overseas Country of New Caledonia. The Wallis and Futuna representatives, aware that Caledonian representatives want all possible measures taken to decrease Polynesian immigration, are asking the French state for accompanying measures to facilitate local development. At the same time, they are pushing young people to emigrate to metropolitan France. The president of the territorial assembly, Soane Uhila, declared on 4 August 2000: "Training must be made a priority and our Wallisians and Futunians heading elsewhere must be told the truth. If they have the opportunity to find a way of making a home for themselves somewhere else, I advise them to go ahead." In October 2000, during the anticipated visit of a three-member