Reviews of American Sāmoa, Māori Issues, Niue, Sāmoa, Tokelau, Tonga, and Tuvalu are not included in this issue.

**Cook Islands**

The period July 2004 to June 2005 can be described as a year of many political twisters and natural cyclones that continue to impact economic, political, and social programs in the Cook Islands. The country faced a series of cyclones, one drawn-out general election, several closely fought elections for parliamentary seats, court petitions, relatively regular changes in cabinet ministers and portfolios, two prime ministers, and three governments. The party that won the election resurfaced as the opposition and the prime minister came from one of the smallest constituencies in the country.

June 2004 began on a positive note with a three-day workshop conducted by the Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Pacific Islands Forum, involving government agencies, nongovernmental agencies, and private-sector companies. The training reflected the spirit of the June 2000 Cotonou Agreement, which marked the start of a new economic and political relationship between the European Union and its African Caribbean Pacific group for the next twenty years. Minister of Finance Tapi Taio described the Economic Partnerships Agreements as important in integrating country development with region-wide economic development and in ensuring that the sustainable development of the Cook Islands actually benefits the people (*CIN*, 3 June 2004, 6). As part of this developmental process, the Cook Islands government signed an agreement with the governments of Australia and New Zealand. This Cook Islands initiative, the first of its kind in the Pacific Islands, requires the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) to pay its financial contribution and a management service fee to the New Zealand Agency for International Development, which “will act as trustee of the funds to be put into projects of the single co-funded program” (*CIN*, 3 Sep 2004, 1). Loan reserves, projected to reach NZ$20.1 million by 30 June 2006, are also provided so that existing Asian Development Bank loans can be serviced as they come due (*CIH*, 25 June, 2005, 7).

Planning meetings alone did not ensure financial responsibility, however, and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development reiterated its warning about overspending and spiraling personnel costs (*CIN*, 30 June 2004, 1; 17 Jan 2005). Even the Chamber of Commerce warned of economic decline if government continued its overspending (*CIN*, 9 Mar 2005, 1). Given this general apprehension, the NZ$2.4 million capital expenditure budget set for 2005–06 was already receiving much criticism.
from the public at the end of the review period (CIH, 20 June 2005, 2). Director of Audit Paul Allsworth noted that regular departmental overexpenditures were primarily caused by poor planning and political interference (CIN, 17 June 2004, 1).

Ordinarily this problem could be solved through the Public Expenditure Review Committee, which is generally seen as an important part of government’s public transparency. But the committee has had much of its budget cut and has no powers to prosecute or expose wrongdoing discovered by its audits (CIN, 29 June 2005, 1).

Economic development remained a major focus for the country, although certain promising enterprises received little public support. Tony Napa unsuccessfully defended his proposal to establish the island’s first helicopter service, using a Raven 44 II Clipper helicopter for tourism, commerce, government, and emergency services (CIN, 3 June 2004, 1). Other enterprises carried more public support, including the Captain Bligh resort hotel in Aitutaki being built by the Tepaki group, and Virgin Blue’s sister airline, Pacific Blue, flying from Australia via Christchurch to Rarotonga. Meanwhile Aloha Airlines announces it was ceasing its flights into Rarotonga, ending the direct connection to Hawai’i. A bill allowing the issuance of titles to anyone owning a portion of a building without being a lessee (similar to time-sharing) awaits more discussion. Although ownership of tourist accommodations is reserved for Cook Islanders, foreigners can access the industry by purchasing existing businesses that fail to find local buyers.

Overall, the important tourism industry has brought mixed results for the Cook Islands. Increased Air New Zealand flights have led to more tourists, but also shorter lengths of stay. Lack of leadership and vision in government’s management of tourism development is sometimes cited as a major concern (CIN, 14 May 2005, 1). The drawn-out recruitment of a chief executive and the impact of several cyclones have also had a negative impact on the industry. In June 2005, the board of the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation reappointed Chris Wong as its chief executive for a further three years, launching a major post-cyclone recovery program. Media teams from the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia were brought in to see that the cyclones had not damaged the islands’ tourism infrastructure.

The fisheries sector had some successes during the year. Cook Islands Fish Exports signed a multi-million-dollar deal with a Chinese firm, Shanghai Deep Sea Fisheries. The deal came only a few months after Sealords withdrew from the Cook Islands to concentrate on their New Zealand operations. The Cook Islands Ministry of Marine Resources also issued more longline fishing licenses, to reach the current total of forty-four, but noted that the maximum of sixty licenses had yet to be reached (CIN, 19 July 2004, 1). Five Taiwanese boats arrived in Rarotonga to begin fishing in Cook Islands waters under a tripartite agreement between Taiwan’s Gilontas Fishing Company, Cook Islands Fish Exports Ltd, and the Cook Islands government. The twenty-four-meter-long
fishing boats have twenty-ton storage capacities, and each carries a crew of twelve (CIN, 15 Oct 2004, 1).

During the review period, three Cook Islands registered ships were turned away from US ports for lack of compliance with the United Nations International Ship and Port Facility Security Code, which had come into effect a week earlier. The code “demands international ships have a signed certificate from their flag country that says that they comply with the new standards aimed at foiling terrorists” (CIN, 6 July 2004, 1). The Picton Castle was on her way to a tall ships festival in Rhode Island, and sailed instead to Nova Scotia in Canada. Cargo boat Kwai was expelled from Martha’s Vineyard in Massachusetts, and cargo vessel Equuleus was denied entry at Providence, Rhode Island.

Also during the 2004–2005 year, two leading telecommunication companies (Eircom and Esat BT) announced that they would be closing all direct dialing calls to the Cook Islands in an effort to crack down on Internet fraudsters targeting Irish consumers (CIN, 22 Sep 2004, 1). Another important industry, offshore banking, received a positive impetus when the Financial Action Task Force took the Cook Islands off its blacklist of uncooperative countries, leaving only Burma and Nigeria on the list (CIN, 12 Feb 2005, 1).

The agriculture ministry renewed concerns about the potential damage to the islands’ coconut trees after discovering a rhinoceros beetle on an Air New Zealand flight from Los Angeles and Tahiti. The coconut rhinoceros beetle (Oryctes rhinoceros) found was a black female measuring 4.5 centimeters long (CIN, 20 Jan 2005, 1). Other than that, the agriculture sector has been relatively quiet, with much focus on nono or noni (Morinda citrifolia), vegetable gardening, and piggeries. In May 2005, Rarotonga hosted a successful two-day regional meeting of the steering committee for the development of sustainable agriculture in the Pacific (CIN, 31 May 2005, 1).

Environmental issues were underscored by a series of cyclones in February and March. Although the main force of Cyclone Meena missed Rarotonga, it caused serious damage to Mangaia Island harbor and airport (CIN, 9 Feb 2005, 1). A week later, Cyclone Nancy inflicted some major wind and surf damage on Rarotonga (CIN, 16 Feb 2005, 1). Super Cyclone Olaf proved even worse than Nancy in terms of damage to Rarotonga (CIN, 18 Feb 2005, 1), while Cyclone Percy badly damaged Pukapuka and Nassau (CIN, 2 Mar 2005, 1). Cyclone Rae caused serious damage on Palmerston and Pukapuka and prompted suggestions for the evacuation of women and children from Pukapuka and Nassau to Aitutaki (CIN, 23 Mar 2005, 1). The sixth cyclone, Sheila (tracked 20–23 April 2005), did not seem to receive the same attention as the others. The United Nations and the governments of Australia, New Zealand, and France offered help to storm-damaged Cook Islands, and workers of Cook Islands descent from New Zealand arrived in Rarotonga to assist with repairs to damaged houses. New Zealand cyclone aid amounted to nearly NZ$2 million even before
super Cyclone Percy bore down on the islands (CIN, 2 Mar 2005, 1). The government declared a state of emergency, and problems with loiterers forced officials to issue warnings (CIN, 3 Mar 2005, 1).

Other environmental related issues that arose during the year included lagoon pollution and fish poisoning. Ongoing problems of irritation to swimmers in the Titikaveka area were finally linked to bacteria associated with household sewage and piggery waste leaking into the lagoon (CIN, 14 Oct 2004, 1). In 2003 there were 227 cases of fish poisoning reported in the Cook Islands, of which 169 cases (74 percent) occurred on Rarotonga. Forty of the Rarotonga victims were hospitalized. The number of patients with ciguatera poisoning increased from 19 in 1992 to 40 in 2003 (CIN, 29 June 2005, 1).

During the year, traditional leaders again expressed concern at the use of Cook Islands cultural images, such as chants, music, and drumbeats, without consent or proper acknowledgment (CIN, 26 June 2004, 9). Lily Henderson challenged her sister Marie for the traditional chiefly title of Pa Ariki, but the court ruled in favor of Pa Marie Ariki. Members of the Taka’i family also placed a claim for the Pa Ariki title. Their claim was also dismissed. Meanwhile, a report on corruption became a topic of conversation. The writers of the report, Dr Takiora Ingram and Mathilda Urhle, claimed, “Traditional respect for elders and leaders is a leading cause of corruption in the Cook Islands. . . . This respect stops people from asking questions about what is going on.” They also asserted, “Old habits, family ties, culture and tradition” set the scene for corrupt practices (CIN, 21 July 2004, 1).

In July 2004, New Zealand Education Minister Trevor Mallard, noting that Cook Islanders were the second-largest Pacific ethnic group in New Zealand, announced the addition of the Cook Islands Māori language as part of New Zealand’s educational curriculum. He described the Cook Islands Māori language as “a precious gift from the Cook Islands community to New Zealanders” (CIN, 28 July 2004, 1).

Between July 2004 and June 2005, politics dominated the news. One of the most controversial and memorable political figures in Cook Islands history, the first premier, the late Albert Royale Henry, hit the headlines again when Parliament passed a motion granting full pardon for all convictions against him. Albert Henry had lost his leadership position and later his knighthood after an infamous 1979 bribery case. The forgiveness extended to Henry by fellow politicians was not generally shared by the country’s citizens, who have developed a general apathy toward politicians. This indifference was reflected in a local press article accusing Prime Minister Dr Robert Woonton of corruption and improprieties. Local media owner George Pitt subsequently faced possible prosecution for publishing a letter by Woonton to the premier of the Republic of China following the prime minister’s state visit there. The allegations of political corruption and sexual impropriety were singled out as libelous (CIN, 8 June 2004, 1).
The general elections were hotly contested by Cook Islands Party (CIP), Democratic Party, and a few independent candidates, with the two main parties portraying an image of unity within their ranks. In the absence of the queen’s representative, who would normally act on such matters, the chief justice dissolved Parliament on the advice of the prime minister, and the general elections were set for 7 September 2004. During the campaigning, both major political parties declared their abhorrence for coalition government, with the Democratic Party leadership particularly adamant on this point (CIN, 17 June 2004, 1). While the Democratic Party focused on individual commitments to organizational goals, the Cook Islands Party signed agreements with individual candidates stating that they would not leave the party after being elected. The Cook Islands Party benefited from the open infighting among Democratic Party members. One of the victims of this infighting was Norman George, whose newly formed Tumu Enua Party failed to win any seats. In the end the Democratic Party won 14 seats and the Cook Islands Party won 9, with 1 seat going to an independent member (CIN, 6 Sep 2004, 6). The September elections also included a general referendum, and Cook Islanders voted to reduce parliamentary terms from five years to four (CIN, 16 Sep 2004, 1).

While the results of the referendum were clear, a squabble over the Democratic Party leadership added an element of uncertainty to election results already complicated by challenges to Prime Minister Woonton’s seat. After the election, incumbent Woonton announced the formation of a new political party, made up of Health Minister Peri Vaevae Pare, Education Minister Jim Marurai, as well as Teenui Mapumai, Poko Simpson, and the independent member for Rakahanga, Piho Rua (CIN, 1 Dec 2004, 1). This group joined with the Cook Islands Party, giving them the parliamentary majority needed to form a new government, with CIP leader Sir Geoffrey Henry as deputy prime minister. Not surprisingly, the Democratic Party severed its ties with the four members of Parliament who had switched allegiance after winning their seats under the Democratic Party banner (CIN, 3 Dec 2004, 1).

The Cook Islands Party further increased their numbers in Parliament after a court appeal awarded the Titikaveka seat to Tiki Matapo by a narrow, two-vote margin over Robert Wigmore. Court intervention also raised questions about the results of the Manihiki electorate, and placed Robert Woonton’s seat in jeopardy. When the court ordered a by-election, Woonton was unable to continue as prime minister and Queen’s Representative Sir Frederick Goodwin assumed executive powers pending a meeting of Parliament (CIN, 13 Dec 2004, 1). The new coalition government elected former Atiu MP Norman George as Speaker of Parliament. They also elected MP Jim Marurai as the new prime minister for two years in a shared agreement that will see Sir Geoffrey Henry take over leadership for the second half of the four-year term (CIN, 15 Dec 2004, 1). The new prime minister promised political stability, transparency in government, and growing prosperity. His govern-
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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References


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, “Taui” (“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 Taui also proved its vitality among institutions outside the political spectrum, when in mid-