

tions are inadequate, and may be being exploited for criminal purposes, are likely to lead to some steps being taken to close remaining loopholes. On the other hand, it is possible that by doing so it will remove some incentives for depositors to lodge their funds in Niue in the first place. There are six offshore banks registered on Niue—none of them physically present on the island—as well as 4,800 international business companies registered for tax-haven benefits.

The premier's problems, perhaps more imminent, stem from the likely immediate effects of a failure for them to be solved. His personal financial position has led to the commencement of bankruptcy proceedings over his business dealings with a New Zealand-based company. The service of bankruptcy papers arises out of Lakatani's failure to repay a NZ\$30,000 debt to an Auckland businessman. Once stamped and formally approved by the court, service of the papers would give the premier just fourteen days to have judgment set aside or to make a counter-claim.

There are serious political implications if the bankruptcy proceedings succeed. Lakatani—ironically Niue's minister of finance as well as its premier—faces disqualification from parliamentary office, and consequently loss of his assembly seat and cabinet position, if he is declared bankrupt. This would be a novel contribution by Niue to comparative political science, adding “bankruptcy” and “non-payment of debt” to the category of instruments—coups, no-confidence votes, election defeats, impeachments, and assassinations—available for replacing a head of government.

STEPHEN LEVINE

SĀMOA

The issue that made the most headlines in S moa in the period from July 1999 to June 2000 was the murder of the minister of Public Works, the S moa Water Authority, and the Electric Power Corporation. Other important issues included by-elections, the electoral reform commission, the Olympic sports dispute, and the nurses' strike.

Events of the night of Friday 16 July 1999 shocked the tiny Samoan nation and the world. A ceremony to mark the twentieth anniversary celebration of the Human Rights Protection party (HRPP) was being held at St Joseph's College hall at Alafua, about 10 minutes drive inland from Apia. Minister Luagalau Leva'ula Kamu and Tuala Sale Tagalao, Minister of Land, Survey and Environment, were co-masters-of-ceremony. Luagalau was shot at close range, a few minutes after introducing the prime minister, as he walked to the back of the stage to answer a cellular phone call from a relative. He was fatally wounded by a single shot from a .223 calibre rifle. At about eight o'clock, he was taken to the national hospital, where he died thirty minutes later (SO, 18 Jul 1999). Luagalau's body was laid to rest at his home in 'Ululoloa on 22 July. Among the dignitaries who attended the funeral were the New Zealand members of parliament Murray McCully and Tau Henare, accompanied by the Samoan members of the New Zealand parliament Arthur Anae of the National party and Phillip Field of the Labour party.

S moa tried to come to terms with its first political assassination in modern times. Well known as a peaceful people who pride themselves in their

culture, which they believed could solve their differences through the exercise of oratorical skills and wit, Samoans found it difficult to believe that the assassination of Luagalau had taken place in their homeland. As one Samoan wrote, “What is happening to our country? What is happening to the heart of Polynesia, the place that we’ve been promoting as one of the safest countries in the world? . . . I grieve for Samoa” (SO, 21 Jul 1999).

Luagalau was educated in Samoa before entering the University of Hawai‘i where he graduated with a master’s degree in political science. He returned to Samoa and worked in the foreign affairs section of the Prime Minister’s Department before winning a government scholarship to study for a law degree at Auckland University in New Zealand. He returned to Samoa and established his own law firm with his wife, who had graduated with Master of Laws from the same university. After a long involvement in various committees of the Human Rights Protection party (HRPP), Luagalau won one of the two seats of S lea constituency on Savai‘i Island in the 1996 general elections. He was appointed to the cabinet by the late prime minister Tofilau Eti Alesana and given the portfolios that he held at the time of his death.

In the next few weeks, events leading to Luagalau’s violent death unfolded, and on 27 July, thirty-four-year-old ‘Alatise was arrested and charged with his murder (SO, 28 Jul 1999). ‘Alatise is a son of Le‘afa Vitale, then incumbent minister of women’s affairs. On 3 August, the HRPP caucus dismissed Toi and Le‘afa from the party (SO, 5 Aug 1999). Earlier the same day, Le‘afa’s appointment

as minister of women’s affairs was terminated. On 4 August, sixty-seven-year-old Toi Aukuso Cain, former minister of Post Office and Telecommunication in the HRPP government, was charged in connection with Luagalau’s murder, and on 5 August, fifty-six-year-old Le‘afa was also charged. (SO, 6 Aug 1999).

Effective from the same day, a security system was instituted at the main government building, which housed most government departments. On 6 August, ‘Alatise admitted to the shooting of Luagalau in the supreme court and was given a mandatory death sentence. Toi and Le‘afa’s four-month trial started on 17 January, and on 12 April, they were convicted of the same crime and also received mandatory death sentences. As the attorney general explained in court “if other parties were involved in aiding, abetting, counseling, inciting to murder, they too are equally responsible for the crime” (quoted in SO, 18 Jan 2000). On 10 May the head of state commuted all three sentences to life imprisonment (SO, 13, 14 Apr 2000; 12 May 2000).

Evidence presented in court revealed that Toi and Le‘afa had conspired to shoot Luagalau between 1 April and 16 July 1999 (SO, 18 Jan 2000). They ordered ‘Alatise to kill Luagalau (SO, 23 Feb 2000) after Ene-liko Visiesio—Toi’s employee, whom they had hired to do the deed—withdraw. Toi and Le‘afa had also wanted to murder other high-ranking government officials. Le‘afa believed that the prime minister, the minister of land, survey and environment, and Luagalau wanted to take land away from him—a block of land behind the HRPP headquarters at Mulinu‘u

peninsula on which he had built a nightclub and bar (SO, 18 Jan; 23 Feb 2000). He was also angry that his ministerial portfolios had changed from Public Works, Electric Power Corporation, and S moa Water Authority to Post Office and Telecommunication, then changed again to Women's Affairs—a perceived demotion from powerful portfolios to less influential ones. Toi was unhappy that his tree-felling contract with Le'afa had been terminated by Luagalau. Both men were angry that the same three ministers wanted to take all their power away, among other grievances (SO, 24 Feb 2000). The chief justice was also on their list because Le'afa was unhappy at losing a land and titles court hearing relating to titles in his village, Malie, and blamed the chief justice for it (SO, 18 Jan 2000; see also So'o 2000, 241).

The murder trial drew strong public reaction. One Catholic priest blamed the assassination squarely on the political party system, writing, “[the] wisdom of the political party system has now revealed its evil side by the slaying of such a prominent *faipule* [member of parliament] for the sake of party power. . . . [T]his foreign party politics is totally un-Samoan. Where has party politics led S moa? By the look of events, straight to hell” (SO, 31 Aug 1999).

The leader of the opposition S moa National Development party (SNDP) stated that the death of Luagalau was an indication of serious corruption in government departments. In his opinion, S moa should follow South African President Nelson Mandela's model of a truth and reconciliation commission with wide-ranging powers to call witnesses and gather documents. Only

then would it be possible to establish the extent of corruption in S moa. He also referred to the sacked chief auditor's 1994 report, in which references were made to corruption in high places (SO, 17 Aug 1999). Toi testified that the reason for the competition among members of parliament to hold the Public Works portfolio is “because that is where the money is. That is where you get the money under the table” (SO, 26 Mar 2000). One writer commented that the “naked greed of selfish men went unchecked for too long under this government and now the country must bare its festering wounds for all to see” (SO, 17 Aug 1999).

Because of the “naked greed of selfish men,” the same writer called for the government to resign and advised fellow Samoans to take responsibility for their actions: “We vote with our stomachs and not our consciences. We vote on the basis of how well politicians provide for us, not on the basis of good policies, even less good character” (SO, 17 Aug 1999). The same sentiment was echoed in parliament by a senior member of the opposition party. Fuimaono Mimio reasoned that because there had been a murder during the term of office of the present administration, parliament should be dissolved and new elections called. Minister of Education Fiam N omi responded that there was no law requiring the government to resign (SO, 22 Aug 1999). On the issue of corruption, Prime Minister Tuila'epa Sa'ilele said that allegations that his government was riddled with corruption came from opposition troublemakers desperate to get their hands on power. “There are a lot of Opposition-inspired allegations about corruption

etc, and the Opposition are doing their own work to try and rubbish what the Government is doing,” he told an Auckland news reporter. “When we took Government again in 1996 we had in our own manifesto a strong undertaking to proceed with the principles of good government, specifically relating to transparency and accountability regarding Government tenders. [Luagalau] was one of those who was very strong on transparency and tried to ensure that the same transparency applied to his own department” (SO, 12 Aug 1999). Tuila’epa vowed to continue with the anti-corruption drive that cost Luagalau his life (SO, 12 Aug 1999).

The public had mixed reactions when the head of state visited Le’afa and Toi in prison on 29 April 2000, three weeks after they had been convicted. One eyewitness reported that the visit “so touched the hearts of prisoners that they wept when [the head of state] arrived at Tafa’igata prison for an unexpected visit” (SO, 4 May 2000). If some prisoners appreciated the visit, some members of the public questioned its appropriateness. Was it because the two men are former ministers? If so, why should they be any different from other prisoners? As one prisoner said, “In my whole time I have spent in prison, nearly my whole adult life, I haven’t seen or heard of His Highness visiting prisoners” (SO, 4 May 2000). Did the head of state’s visit mean that he sympathized with the two former cabinet ministers? More questions were asked when after only two months in prison, Le’afa and Toi were allowed to spend a weekend with their respective families. They must have been allowed to leave the prison without proper per-

mission, because they were with their families for only two hours before being taken back—at an order from the prime minister. The police commissioner knew nothing about it, and at the time of writing police were investigating the release of the two men (SO, 6 July 2000).

Luagalau’s parliamentary seat was contested by two HRPP candidates, two SNDP candidates and one independent. Independent candidate To’omata Alapati Po’ese won the by-election on 19 September 1999 by 514 votes. The two HRPP candidates, Loli Ioane and Tuis lega S leni Farani, received 415 and 180 votes respectively. SNDP candidates Tapua’ Kelima and Alos moa Iosefa obtained 377 and 147 votes respectively.

Despite having their membership in the Human Rights Protection party terminated on 3 August 1999, Le’afa and Toi retained their parliamentary seats until their conviction on 12 April 2000. Matatauali’itia ‘Afa Les and Leituala Tone Tu’uaga were sworn in to cabinet on 13 August 1999 to replace the portfolios of Luagalau and Le’afa respectively (SO, 15 Aug 1999). Both are in their first parliamentary terms. By-elections were held in Le’afa and Toi’s former constituencies on 23 June 2000. In Le’afa’s constituency, Sagaga-le-Usoga, of the two HRPP candidates, Muagututagata Peter Ah Him won with 631 votes to Fata Pemila’s 574. Independent candidate Fa’amausili Faig gained 77 votes. The other independent candidate Ti lino P naia II came last. In Faleata West, HRPP candidate ‘Ulu V om I ‘Ulu Kini won Toi’s former seat with 571 votes; La’ulu Dan Stanley (HRPP) 402; Leatiogie It ‘au ‘Ale (a member of the new S moa National party,

founded on 27 April 2000) 340; Ma'ilo Sio (independent) 16; and Oge Mareko (independent) 55 (SO, 25 June 2000). In the constituency of 1 taua West's second by-election after the general elections of 1996, on 17 December 1999, another HRPP candidate, Ali'imalemanu Fa'al , was reelected, giving the party a 36-seat majority in parliament. The other 13 seats of parliament are occupied by 4 independents and 9 members of the S moa National Development party. In 1 taua West, a petition lodged by SNDP candidate Nonum lo Faig led to the disqualification by the court of both his own candidacy and that of Tua'i'aufa'i Tafua'upolu (SO, 16 Dec 1999).

With the 2001 general elections only a few months away, the cabinet appointed an Electoral Review Committee to look at the existing electoral provisions and recommend changes; it reported to parliament in the week of 10 April 2000 (SO, 13 Apr 2000). A further government commission to examine ways to improve the electoral system tabled its report on 26 June 2000. Based on recommendations in both reports, the government drafted amendments to the Electoral Act of 1963. The Electoral Amendment bill 2000 passed on 28 June. Some of its proposed changes follow.

First, those intending to contest parliamentary seats must reside in S moa for at least three years instead of the existing one. (Those appointed to international posts and their spouses are exempt.) The government's view is that the administration, control, and monitoring of Samoan affairs should fall on Samoan citizens living in S moa. The one-year residential requirement does not permit accu-

rate assessment of the internal situation in the village, the constituency, or the country (SO, 13 Apr 2000). Samoans residing overseas criticized the new residential provision, arguing that their contribution to S moa's economy through remittances was sufficient justification to maintain the status quo. Increasing the residential requirement to three years makes it difficult for them to contest parliamentary seats (SO, 14 May 2000).

Second, the candidate nomination fee increased from ST100 to ST300.

Third, the clerk of the legislative assembly will no longer be the registrar of electors and voters, or the returning officer. The existing situation, where one person holds all three positions, has received strong criticism. Perhaps because the clerk of the legislative assembly is a constitutional appointment of the government, the leader of the S moa National Democratic party stated, "The Registrar is blatantly partisan. The control of elections and registration of voters should come under an independent and non-partisan commission" (SO, 2 Feb 2000). The electoral reform commission agreed that the current "situation has a negative impact on public perception and assessment of probity in the operation of the electoral registration system" (SO, 29 Jun 2000). The commission also noted the legal anomaly in making the clerk—who is not a member of the public service—responsible to the Public Service Commission, and recommended that the position of registrar of electors and voters be placed in the Justice Department under the direction of the secretary for justice (SO, 29 Jun 2000).

Fourth, to have the right to challenge election results, unsuccessful

candidates need to win only a minimum of 25 percent of the votes won by the successful candidate, instead of the current 50 percent. The government believes that the right to protest against corrupt electoral practice is important. As it stands the provision can be read to encourage corruption on a scale sufficiently large to eliminate the possibility of achieving the 50 percent threshold. Moreover, it defeats the purpose of justice in that alleged transgression and violations of the law may be condoned by sheer weight of numbers (SO, 29 Jun 2000).

Finally, the number of judges of the supreme court to hear an election petition is increased from one to two.

The sports dispute made headlines for about ten months, following allegations of bribery of members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), with which S moa's representative, Seiuli, was reportedly involved. On 6 July 1999, shortly after the IOC announcement that S moa's membership was terminated, IOC Director-General Francis Gerrard notified Seiuli that he could no longer be a member of S moa's National Olympic Committee (SNOC; SO, 12 December 1999). Nor should he represent S moa in the Oceania National Olympic Committee meeting in Lausanne in October 1999 (SO, 21 Oct 1999).

Seiuli, president of both the S moa National Olympic Committee and the S moa Sports Federation (SSF), did not step down from the presidency. He wanted to stay on for another year because of his role in organizing the S moa International Games in May 2000 (SO, 22 Oct 1999). It was revealed later that he also wanted to stay on until an SSF audit was completed so that he could defend himself

if he had to (SO, 16 Dec 1999). As an alternative, the executive board proposed to split the organization in two: The S moa National Olympic Committee would be responsible for Olympic sports while the Sports Federation (SF) would handle non-Olympic sports. Both bodies were to report to the S moa Sports Federation (SO, 12 Dec 1999). The meeting to split the organization took place on 19 October 1999. It was intended that the split would allow Seiuli to remain involved in sports without being tied to the S moa National Olympic Committee (SO, 22 Oct 1999), thus avoiding the IOC threat. What worried sports administrators was that with Seiuli still at the helm, the International Olympic Committee would not only refuse S moa's entry to the Sydney Olympic games in September 2000, but it might suspend annual funding of about ST500,000 to SNOC-SSF (SO, 22 Oct 1999). According to Leao Akeripa, newly elected SNOC president, the push by the executive board to split the mother organization was the "basic cause" of the rift between the two rival bodies. And it was Seiuli who instigated the split (SO, 12 Dec 1999).

Other sports administrators did not believe that splitting into two sports bodies would remove the IOC threat. As long as Seiuli was involved in the S moa International Games 2000, he was also involved in Olympic sports. Three of the main sports in the S moa games are Olympic sports. Two attempts were made to move a vote of no confidence in Seiuli and the executive board (SO, 22 Oct 1999), for reasons that included the questionable financial status of SNOC-SSF, the future uncertainty of sports given the IOC

threat, the push by the board to split the organization, and Seiuli's leadership style (SO, 1 Dec 1999). Both attempts failed. Seiuli in the chair would not put the motion (SO, 3 Dec 1999). His supporters argued that there was nothing in the constitution that allowed such a motion. In the SSF meeting on 30 November 1999, Leao Akeripa was suspended, along with two others who had by then been elected as SNOC board members.

Seiuli eventually resigned from the SSF presidency on 2 December 1999, and Tuala Misi was elected to the position. According to one SSF board member, Seiuli had tendered his resignation in late September 1999, but the board had asked him to stay on until the "heat" between Samoa National Olympic Committee and the Sports Federation had died down (SO, 3 Dec 1999). At about the same time, Tole'āfoa Tautulu Roebeck, a SNOC board member who was also the vice president and a board member of Samoa Sports Federation, tendered his resignation to Leao. According to Tole'āfoa, he could not see the two bodies working together. Ten Olympic sports bodies indicated that they were also defecting back to the Samoa Sports Federation. They were joined by three athletes who had already qualified to compete in the Sydney Olympics (SO, 3 Dec 1999).

In a move the public welcomed, the government stepped in when the dispute worsened (SO, 27 Apr 2000). An editorial in the *S moa Observer* suggested that "the government should step in, dissolve the organisation and save public resources from being wasted" (SO, 3 Dec 1999). Consequently, Leota Lu II, minister of Youth,

Sports and Culture, stopped funding from the Australian-based lottery agency Tattslotto to the Samoa Sports Federation (SO, 19 Dec 1999). The lawyer Le'aupepe Sanerivi became the government-appointed mediator whose task was to resolve the dispute. After several unsuccessful attempts, a meeting of the two rival bodies on 4 April came to a compromise. Tuala Misi stepped down from the presidency of the Sports Federation before he and Leao Akeripa, president of Samoa National Olympic Committee, were reappointed president and vice president respectively of the Interim Committee under which the unified sports organization called SNOC-SF is administered. No vote was taken, as the compromise between the two presidents had been reached two days before. The meeting of all sports bodies simply endorsed their decision (SO, 5 Apr 2000). Afterward, the minister of sports facilitated the release of funds from Tattslotto to SNOC-SF (SO, 13 Apr 2000).

On 18 April, the minister of sports announced in a meeting with presidents of local sports bodies that the cabinet had unanimously called off the Samoa games. The decision had support in some sectors of the community (SO, 20 Apr; 2 May 2000). As the editor of the *S moa Observer* wrote, the "Prime Minister and his cabinet did the right thing when they cancelled the Samoa Games planned for next month. . . . For that, they deserve everyone's congratulations, and respect" (SO, 20 Apr 2000). The cabinet's decision reflected the lack of general support in the Interim Committee. The government was probably also uncertain about the ability of a

SNOC-SF to fund the S moa games, which were to take place a few weeks later (SO, 19 Apr 2000), and there was no time to prepare for the games as considerable time had been eaten away by the dispute. The prospect of negative implications for Samoan sports, and more particularly administrators, did not reverse the cabinet's decision.

The dispute worsened. The rival organizations SNOC and SNOC-SF not only went their separate ways but accused each other of causing the deteriorating situation. Leao reportedly tried to establish a new SNOC-SSF as the mother sports organization (SO, 24 May 2000). In turn, Tuala Misi accused SNOC of pretending to be the old SNOC-SSF (SO, 28 May 2000). Tuala also said that the establishment of two bodies in the first place was never approved by S moa Sports Federation. Instead only SNOC was to be established and was to come under the S moa Sports Federation (SO, 16 Dec 1999). As the rift deteriorated, the government stepped in to provide leadership direction. In May, the secretary of the Youths, Sports and Culture Department took over the administration of all sports (SO, 22 June 2000). Some sections of the community doubted the sincerity of the government's motive in taking over. Leao explained that standard IOC policy is that it only recognizes S moa National Olympic Committee and not the government (SO, 28 May 2000). Some thought that the government was supporting the Sports Federation to the disadvantage of the S moa National Olympic Committee. Sports Federation's presidential candidate in the election, to be chaired by the prime

minister on 6 July, to choose new officers for a new unified organization was the prime minister's brother-in-law (SO, 25 June 2000). It became clear that the public had lost confidence in the Interim Committee. Chaired by the prime minister, the meeting of all sports bodies on 6 July 2000 elected Leao president of SNOC-SF along with new office holders and committee members. The ten-month dispute had finally ended, although there are still murmurings of disapproval among some sports bodies, including some SF members and their presidential candidate, who boycotted the elections (SO, 7 July 2000).

The S moa Nurses Association (SNA) has a reputation for bending the will of the government to their favor through industrial action. Their strikes in the 1980s resulted in major changes in the nursing and health administrations. On 12 April 2000, they again considered taking industrial action. For four years, their representatives had been negotiating a salary package with government officials and had proposed a starting salary of ST12,000 for nurses with a Diploma of Nursing (SO, 21 Apr 2000). The proposed figure was first dropped to ST10,000. Later the Public Service Commission agreed to the reduced figure of ST9,000 (SO, 2 May 2000). However, on 12 April 2000 the cabinet settled for the figure of ST7,395 and decided that their 5 percent pay increase would be effective on 1 January 2001. When the news was conveyed to the association, its president, Mrs Fa'amanatu Nielsen, was outspoken about her unhappiness. Despite the dissatisfaction expressed at the meeting attended by 150 nurses, members of

the executive board were able to talk them out of immediate industrial action.

Increasing the starting salary of nurses who hold a Diploma of Nursing is one way to encourage qualified nurses to remain in the service. Annual wages for enrolled nurses ranged from ST2,000 to ST4,000 and for registered nurses from ST6,000 to ST8,000. Some retired nurses still receive ST6,000 to ST7,000. One result of the present financial troubles is an acute shortage of nurses. Whereas the international ratio of nurses per patient is one to three, in S moa it is one to twenty. According to Mrs Nielsen, four hundred nurses are needed for the service, but it could only employ three hundred. Most of those who have left for training and better opportunities overseas were the young ones. According to a lecturer in the Faculty of Nursing of the National University of S moa, "You could only do so much nowadays with a focus on your livelihood. Nursing [must] be marketed in a way [that those in the service can] be proud of" (quoted in SO, 21 Apr 2000).

When nothing came of attempts to have the government reconsider its decision of 12 April 2000, the S moa Nurses Association resolved to strike on 1 May 2000. All routine services would cease except essential services for obstetrics, the operating theatre, the high dependency unit, and the accident and emergency unit. Only a skeleton staff would be provided for emergency services. The strike was intended to last for seven days pending a cabinet decision (SO, 23 April 2000). Negotiations continued until Saturday 29 April, when a resolution

was reached. However, time was needed to implement the agreement. The association also wanted it confirmed in writing. For these reasons, amid much anger among the nurses that their demands were not met in time, the SNA executive persuaded its members to postpone the strike until Friday, 5 May. On that day, the strike was called off. Although their demands were not met in full, the nurses were content with the compromise. Diploma graduates would still get a starting salary of ST7,395. However, their pay increase was backdated to 1 January 2000, not a year later as in the original cabinet decision (SO, 5 May 2000).

The planned nurses' strike had the support of the Public Service Association (PSA) and the S moa Trade Union Congress (STUC), the umbrella of trade unions in S moa. On learning about the planned strike, Su'a Viliamu Sio, STUC secretary general, not only assured the nurses of his organization's support, but immediately called on other affiliated and friendly organizations to determine the best way for all workers in S moa to support them (SO, 28 Apr 2000). Despite PSA support of the proposed SNA strike, it was being criticized in some sectors of the community. People asked why the Public Service Association was not pushing for better wages and salaries for its members. One unhappy PSA member wrote, "Why is the PSA not fighting the government for better wages and improved working conditions, for all? Is it because the government has allegedly given preferential allocation of corporations board seats to the PSA? I think that for the betterment of the PSA, all board seats should be given back to government

and the PSA should decide on what are its CORE FUNCTIONS and core activities” (SO, 2 May 2000).

There was a call for the public to support the nurses’ association. An editorial in the *S moa Observer* urged that “If the strike goes on this Friday [5 May], the nursing fraternity should not be frowned upon as they have a valid argument” (SO, 3 May 2000). Commenting on the averted strike, Minister of Health Misa Telefoni said, “I defend any person’s right to strike. It is a basic human right. The nurses did what they felt they had to do in the best interests of their members” (SO, 7 May 2000). Misa’s comments showed him as a man of principles, except that they came after the strike had been averted. The Public Service Association, the S moa Trade Union Congress, Misa, and the public probably did not need to support the proposed strike after all. With the general elections early next year looming large in the mind of the government, it is almost certain that whatever settlement it came up with would have been agreeable to the nurses. As one of the more experienced unions in the country, the S moa Nurses Association knew when to make their wishes known to the government.

ASOFOU SO‘O

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TOKELAU

A Green Paper titled *Tokelau Public Service: To Preserve by Changing* (SSC 1999), presented to the General Fono in June 1999, proposed several models for changes in the public service. Its major outcome was the promotion of the Modern House of Tokelau project (MHT). The Modern House of Tokelau concept dates back to 1997 and 1998, when the Tokelau elected leadership expressed a wish to “return to the villages” as the main centers of governance and administration. The localization of all human and physical resources would be included, as well as management and administrative structures. Promoted as “the reconstructed house of Tokelau,” the project is envisaged to encompass all institutions and agencies, including those previously considered “independent,” making them accountable to the Tokelau leadership.

Leading on from the “posts” identified in 1998, the year 2000 saw commitment and efforts by Tokelau’s leadership to continue with the building of this modern house. The New Zealand government representatives in these deliberations also expressed their nation’s commitment to providing additional resources specifically for this project. These assurances renewed Tokelau’s focus on the project and the drive toward achieving its objectives. The project became the subject of a number of discussions between Tokelau Public Service Commissioner Aleki Silao, and members of the Council of Faipule—consisting of three elected government officials representing three villages—which is the executive arm of government.