

Polynesia in Review: Issues and Events,
1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998

Reviews of American Sāmoa, Hawai'i, Sāmoa, Tuvalu, and Wallis and Futuna are not included in this issue.

COOK ISLANDS

In this review I focus mainly on the twenty-five members of Parliament, because public debates on national political issues revolve around their decisions. The current economic crisis has increased public awareness of their actions and subjected them to more criticisms for their perceived failings.

Less than a year before the next general election, these are frightening days to be a member of Parliament. Cook Islanders have not forgotten the pain of measures implemented by the government to revive their country's economy, which by 1996 was on the brink of bankruptcy. Alarmed creditors threatened to halt future transactions with the Cook Islands, which was unable to service its international debts. Even aid donors refused to give cash directly to the government. To cut costs, the government reorganized the public service, laid off more than two thousand public servants, and reduced the salaries of those remaining by fifty percent. Government assets were sold to private interests. Streams of people flowed out of the country to New Zealand and Australia, taking with them their much-needed consumer dollars.

The government was severely criticized for these events, accused of incompetence, extravagant spending, and manipulating the system for self-

gain. Opposition members also incurred the public's wrath for being weak and contributing to the country's problems. The sense of dissatisfaction with politicians in general was increased when New Zealand intervened in an effort to steer the Cook Islands back onto the road to economic recovery. The arrival of New Zealand consultants, in what some saw as nothing less than a process of recolonization, led to a perception that *Maori* Cook Islanders did not have the ability to handle their own political affairs. Newspapers and television have played an important role in disseminating information and opinion about the crisis, and the public have made their views known on a very popular talk-back radio show and in letters to the editor.

Cook Islands Party (CIP) politicians have been at the front line and bearing the full wrath of public censure. They have governed the country since 1989, when they won their first five-year term of government. From about late 1995, a year after the last general elections, CIP leader and Prime Minister Sir Geoffrey Henry has been preoccupied with defending his political integrity and that of his fellow caucus and cabinet colleagues.

In July 1997, plans by the government to ax close to eighty workers in the Ministry of Works, Environment and Physical Planning (MOWEPP) brought to the fore a growing disagreement between the prime minister and MOWEPP Minister Tom Masters.

Masters is the Cook Islands Party's national secretary and is seen by many as a likely successor to Henry as prime minister. Despite being powerful in the party rank and file, his part in an aborted coup to remove Sir Henry several years ago made him look weak to some people as well as leaving him at odds with Sir Henry.

At the end of 1997, and after the cabinet temporarily suspended MOWEPP operations, Masters resigned his ministerial post but vowed to stay in the Cook Islands Party. He blamed Henry for failing to keep a promise of providing additional funds to his ministry, which is one of the biggest in the Cook Islands. The government countered by saying that Masters and his chief executive officer, Tuingariki Short, had mismanaged and overspent their budget. Short was suspended on full pay, and an investigation into his role in the demise of the ministry was conducted by the Public Service Commission.

Short had also deployed staff to renovate the beleaguered Rarotongan Hotel, a government asset, mortgaged to the Nauruan government, that had failed to generate profit. After the MOWEPP renovations, which cost NZ\$2 million, ownership of the hotel passed to Cook Islands business entrepreneur Tata Crocombe for a sale price of NZ\$3.5 million, to be paid in increments over an extended period. The deal was settled despite a cash offer of NZ\$5 million by a foreign buyer. Critics, particularly within the Chamber of Commerce, charged that the deal ran against government efforts to boost its cash balance. In the end, the Public Expenditure Review

Committee and Audit (PERCA) was compelled to investigate the deal.

The Twenty-Eighth South Pacific Forum was held in Rarotonga in September 1997, and sixteen regional leaders attended the week-long meeting. The government was criticized for hosting the meeting while the country was going through financial difficulties. But worse was to come, particularly for Prime Minister Sir Geoffrey Henry, who was upstaged by the Tahitian pro-independence leader Oscar Temaru and other members of his Te Hui Ra'atira political party. Temaru grabbed media attention with emotional pleas to Henry as forum chairman to put the independence issue on the agenda. Henry refused to table the issue and did not grant an audience to Temaru. He came under severe criticism from those who felt he had succumbed to pressure from French Polynesia President Gaston Flosse, who had donated a number of vehicles to the Cook Islands to help it run the forum.

On 16 October, the then leader of the opposition, Norman George, laid a complaint of theft to police against Prime Minister Henry regarding one of three cars donated by the Chinese government for use during the forum. The car had been registered under the name of the prime minister instead of the Cook Islands Government. Police investigated the matter, could not find any charges to lay, and sought the opinion of the Crown Law Office. The solicitor-general, head of Crown Law, sought the opinion of a queen's counsel in Auckland. The counsel reasoned that the prime minister had been careless, but there was insuffi-

cient evidence for a charge of theft to be laid.

In mid-1998, Sir Geoffrey finally confirmed that he had bought the \$27,000 car for his own use and paid off the remaining balance of NZ\$15,000. Henry's chief executive officer also dispensed about \$20,000 of public funds to replace the prime minister's official car. This brought an angry response from members of the public who felt that this was an unnecessary purchase amid efforts to cut down government expenditure.

The car matter was something of a rerun of the problems of Cabinet Minister Tepure Tapaitau, a lawyer and the country's attorney. In September 1997 he was cleared of theft charges after Norman George accused him of appropriating government materials to build a house in Tongareva (Penrhyn), his constituency. As with the Henry situation, the Tapaitau matter generated lots of bitter personal exchanges in the media.

In early 1998, the prime minister insisted on 10 percent savings across the board for all twenty-four government ministries and departments. However, financial matters continued to haunt him when a Treasury audit showed that a total of NZ\$2.5 million of housing loan repayments were not accounted for. Head of the Cook Islands Housing Corporation Nga Pierre, a staunch CIP supporter, was slammed by official reports released in mid-1998. The PERCA probe into the way the corporation was run revealed poor bookkeeping practices and alleged that Pierre "instituted a system of paying himself [a salary of

NZ\$65,000 per annum], not as a salary or allowances subject to PAYE taxation deductions, but as advances against a loan account that he created in the books of the Corporation" (Parliament 1998, 8). Pierre's alleged shortcomings had already been brought to the attention of the government, but it chose to do nothing. Instead it shifted him through various departments, including that of the prime minister. Critics said that the bottom line with Pierre was that he was a loyal party supporter, and the government was protecting him.

In the face of constant criticism in 1998 the prime minister reshuffled his cabinet, already reduced by the resignation of Minister Masters, even giving away his prized finance portfolio. However, relinquishing major responsibilities was perhaps a strategic move by Sir Geoffrey to consolidate his stranglehold on the CIP leadership and indeed on Cook Islands politics.

In the 1997-98 budget, the Prime Minister's Office received NZ\$1.53 million compared to NZ\$1.43 million in the last budget. The extra NZ\$110,000 was to fund additional tasks assumed by the office, such as the duties of the commissioner of Commerce and Banking Services and the Offshore Banking Output. The presumption is that the Prime Minister's Office is being set up as the government's central operational arm, both to insist on the implementation of the government's economic vision and to defend its track record.

Early in 1998, editor of the weekly *Cook Islands Press* Jason Brown was banned by the prime minister from his press conferences for being biased

against Henry in his reports. Furthermore, toward the end of May, Sir Geoffrey refused to contribute his regular column in the paper until Brown replaced a photo at the top of the column space that depicted the prime minister as cross-eyed. Brown had run the photo in retaliation for statements released to the media by the prime minister regarding Brown's personal life, including the breakup of his marriage. In the end Brown dispensed with the prime minister's column but retained those of the Democratic Alliance Party (DAP) and the New Alliance Party (NAP). A new columnist, traditional leader Pa Marie Upokotini Ariki, the president of the House of Ariki (Chiefs), has been a very strong critic of the government.

Brown was also the subject of complaint by Minister Tupou Faireka and his family. In November 1997 the island of Manihiki was devastated by Cyclone Martin, and Minister Faireka's father and niece were among the people who lost their lives. Faireka flew to Manihiki on one of the flights chartered by the government to assess the extent of the damage. In a newspaper article Brown argued that Faireka was an unnecessary addition to the disaster management team using the ten-seater plane. The minister and his family expressed their dismay at Brown's insensitivity in their time of loss.

Although it has not been a rosy run for the government in the last twelve months, the Cook Islands Party seems confident of winning the next general election. In several surveys run by the *Cook Islands News* and *Cook Islands Press*, Sir Geoffrey Henry is still the

preferred prime minister, although the DAP opposition leader Dr Terepai Maoate has gained ground. There is no doubt that Sir Geoffrey is the most charismatic politician in the Cook Islands, with superb oratory skills.

In light of public remonstrations with the government, one would think that the opposition parties in the Cook Islands would have had a clean home run. They did not have such luck. Politicians in the two opposition parties, the Democratic Alliance Party (formed by a merger between the Democratic Coalition Party and the Alliance Party after the 1994 elections) and the New Alliance Party (formed by Norman George after he split from the Democratic Alliance Party in 1997) also faced the firing squad of public opinion. The DAP politicians were dismissed as clones of their counterparts in government, poised to resume political corruption, nepotism, cronyism, and, of course, financial mismanagement.

The New Alliance Party is not considered a serious contender in the next general election. Its leader, Norman George, never far from controversy, apparently owes close to \$180,000 in taxes. His recent split from the Democratic Alliance Party also worked against him, giving the impression that he is overly ambitious and manipulative. This was the second time he had broken away from a political party when members chose another person to be leader. In addition, some women look unfavorably on George, a lawyer, because of his success at defending men charged with sex crimes. Other critics, including those who have lost money, note his involve-

ment in a number of failed business ventures.

While George is seen as a dynamic but overly aggressive politician, his nemesis, Dr Terepai Maoate, has been trying hard to shake off an image of being dull and weak. A successful businessman, the mild-mannered doctor is a gentleman in all respects, with lots of leadership experience. He led the Democratic Coalition Party into the last election and was deputy prime minister when the party was in government. When that party merged with the Alliance to form the Democratic Alliance Party, Maoate was George's deputy.

Since winning the NAP leadership from George, Maoate has been courting the traditional leaders, particularly in the House of Ariki. Maoate himself holds the traditional title of Maoate Mataiapo (subchief) in his electorate, Ngatangila, within the Vaka Takitumu (district) on Rarotonga. For a while Maoate enjoyed a series of victories. As well as ousting Norman George from the NAP leadership, his faction won the court case over who was the legitimate user of the name Democratic Alliance Party. His endurance of that bitter fight earned him a reputation as a man of steel. However, in June 1998 the prime minister released figures on travel allowance abuses that showed Maoate had received about NZ\$160,000, the most of any member of Parliament, indicating that his honeymoon with the voters may be over (*CIN*, 27 June 1998).

The member with the most down-to-earth style is Ngamau Munokoa, popularly known as "Aunty Mau,"

who represents the Rarotonga electorate of Nikao-Panama. The only woman in Parliament, Aunty Mau is the epitome of a community representative, often seen with work gangs paid out of her official salary cleaning the roads in her electorate. She is a successful store owner and planter, and recently added a petrol station to her assets. She was the first DAP member to win a seat, and her 1996 by-election victory started what some say is the start of a massive swing against the government. In November 1997 DAP candidate Jim Marurai won the electorate of Ivirua on the southern island of Mangaia, another CIP stronghold. However, "Gentleman Jim" became a double-crosser in the eyes of the Democratic Alliance Party when he sided with Norman George during the DAP split. His election was also dismissed by pro political reform advocates as a waste of public money because there were fewer than two hundred voters in the electorate.

By the time Jim Marurai was sworn in, political reform had become a buzzword in the Cook Islands. Indeed, it was a political reform that caused Norman George to split from his party, lashing out at Pa Ariki on the issue in October 1997. George claimed that Pa Ariki had overstepped her authority as a traditional leader when she advocated reducing the number of members of Parliament, adding in what was termed "colorful language" that she must be able to take the knocks, including a "black eye," if she steps into the political ring (*CIN*, 21 Oct 1997). That exchange became the catalyst for an anti-George campaign that culminated in the opposition caucus

voting in Dr Terepai Maoate as leader by a 4–2 vote.

George successfully fought an application for a High Court injunction by the Maoate faction to prevent him from holding a DAP conference. The conference went ahead, with George confirmed as leader. The conference appointed a new executive, leaving the old executive who stayed with the Maoate faction to claim that they still constituted the legitimate Democratic Alliance Party. After several months of tit for tat in the newspapers and the courts, Chief Justice Quilliam found in favor of the Maoate faction on 3 April. Almost immediately, Norman George launched the New Alliance Party, and the Democratic Alliance Party proceeded to hold its “proper” conference.

The opposition remains dogged by fragmentation. The Democratic Alliance Party claims the support of the majority of successful candidates in local council and mayoral elections in May 1998. However, the government hopes that its devolution program, which gives local authorities considerable autonomy, will sway the outer-island vote during the next general election.

In recent years, all politicians regardless of party affiliation have been called on to prove their worth. The crisis has made voters more critical and demanding and more willing to get involved. Economic reform has led to increased talk of sweeping political reforms. So far, six different models have been proposed by members of the public (including myself). Most advocate a reduction in the number of members of Parliament to fourteen,

with one proposing as few as seven. My model called for the northern group islands to be independent from the rest of the Cooks (*CIN*, 4 July 1998). The government has set aside NZ\$100,000 for a commission of inquiry into political reform. Fearing that the commission might take a decade to complete its work, Director of the Rarotonga campus of the University of the South Pacific John Herrmann, the main protagonist of political reform, has called for a referendum on the issue before the next general election.

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FRENCH POLYNESIA

In the year under review, sparring between the territorial president, Gaston Flosse, and the socialist government in Paris continued over such issues as territorial autonomy, regional diplomacy, and relations with Europe. Economic trends were largely positive, which worked to the advantage of the territorial government, yet some policies, such as those on tax and waste disposal, were not well received by the

public. The government retained most, but not all, of its seats in the electorates that were recontested because of irregularities in the 1996 poll. A number of important reports were published on the legacy of nuclear testing. While present and future radiation risks to the territory appear to be minimal, the issues of past exposure of Islanders to the atmospheric tests and their right to compensation remain unresolved. This review concludes with a tribute to the scholar Bengt Danielsson, who died during the year.

New French Secretary of State for Overseas Territories Jean-Jack Queyranne paid a visit to Tahiti in August 1997. During the visit, President Flosse held forth on the merits of an expansion in the territorial government's political autonomy, and played on an old theme, "We are waiting for the State . . . to help us pursue the development of our autonomy because it is the sole bulwark against independence" (*TP*, Sept 1997, 9). Queyranne responded negatively to these suggestions, emphasizing instead that the state would exercise tight control over the expenditure of national funds, and adding that oversight had been lacking in recent years. A new convention signed on 14 July 1997 established clearly defined processes and a committee to oversee the expenditure of state funds. Flosse has expressed concern that this new enthusiasm for state control might act as a brake on development or provide a pretext for undue interference in territorial affairs.

Relations between Paris and the Tahitian president cooled considerably due to differences over the composition of the French delegation to the

dialogue session following the annual South Pacific Forum held in Rarotonga in September. Gaston Flosse has had considerable latitude to pursue regional diplomacy on behalf of both the territory and the French republic, first when Jacques Chirac was prime minister in the late 1980s, and later when Chirac's presidency coincided with the rule of a conservative government in Paris from 1995 to 1997. Since its victory in the 1997 national elections the new left-wing coalition has made it clear that Flosse's diplomatic initiatives in the name of France are no longer considered appropriate or welcome. Flosse was not invited to join the French delegation to Rarotonga in 1997 but, undeterred, made his own arrangements.

If Flosse could not represent France in Rarotonga, then he would represent French Polynesia. This he did in the capacity of observer at the meeting of Small Island States held before the forum proper. In a pointed nationalistic gesture, he bestowed a gift of \$30,000 to the Small Islands fund in the name of Tahiti Nui (not France), the Tahitian flag alone flew at the opening ceremony, and Flosse made his speech in Tahitian. In a further attempt to impress, Flosse made six luxury cars available to transport regional heads of government around the tiny capital of the Cook Islands. Flosse could not participate in the forum's deliberations. Nevertheless, he and pro-independence leader Oscar Temaru were both invited by host Sir Geoffrey Henry to attend the opening ceremony.

French Minister for Cooperation Charles Josselin, who led the French

delegation, noted that Gaston Flosse could represent the territory in restricted areas such as regional fisheries, and transport and communications, but that he had no authority to represent France at the forum. His sentiments were in accordance with 1996 amendments to the territory's statute of autonomy, which stipulate that the territory can engage in regional negotiations on broader issues, but only with the agreement of the French state. Evidently this line of logic was not well received in the Tahitian corridors of power, so when Josselin passed through Pape'ete on his way back to France not a single member of the territorial government was present to greet him (*TP*, Oct 1997, 7-10).

Concerns about the territory's vulnerability to unchecked immigration by metropolitan French and other Europeans continued to be expressed in no uncertain terms. The territory had requested that France seek an appropriate modification of the Treaty of Rome and, failing that, is considering the option of having French Polynesia removed from the list of Europe's overseas territories altogether, although this would mean losing some economic benefits. The treaty's dispositions relating to associated territories will be reviewed and finalized in the year 2000 (*TP*, Aug 1997, 36).

In response to questions from territorial Senator Daniel Millaud, Secretary of State for Overseas Territories Jack Queyranne explained that France had been condemned by the European Court of Justice in 1990 for failing to ensure that the principle allowing

Europeans to freely reside or work anywhere in the European Union was applied in French Polynesia. In 1995, EU authorities issued a further warning to France that its territories must comply. Queyranne felt it was presumptuous of Gaston Flosse to ask that this principle be "frozen" in relation to Tahiti while the territory sought to continue receiving European development assistance funds. Queyranne concluded that until such a time as the Treaty of Rome was revised, European laws would continue to apply in Tahiti. Moreover, he felt that the threat of a European "invasion" of the territory did not appear very great (*TP*, Jan 1998, 16).

The "immigration" debate took another twist after an in-depth report on the subject was published by the Economic, Social and Cultural Committee (CESC) in February. The most controversial recommendation, made unanimously by the forty participants in the committee's inquiry, was that not only should immigration from Europe be strictly controlled, but the same controls should be applied to the influx of metropolitan French. According to the 1996 census, citizens from metropolitan France or from other French overseas possessions accounted for 26,619 people or 12 percent of the population in French Polynesia. During the past decade the number of metropolitan French residing in the territory has not increased greatly, but their composition has changed in important ways.

In the past a large proportion of metropolitan French residents were with the military and made a substantial contribution to the local economy

as consumers. Now, the military component has been replaced by people competing for work with locals. The situation has been exacerbated by the current government's adoption of a statute for the territorial public service that fails to include an affirmative action clause in favor of employing Tahitians. As a consequence, more and more metropolitan French are taking over the plum positions in the public service. Even less-qualified French people are making inroads into local employment in the tourism industry, largely as personnel in hotels and restaurants.

The Economic, Social and Cultural Committee was very concerned that the practice of allowing uncontrolled access to work and residence by metropolitan French, and to a lesser extent other Europeans, was undermining the culture and social fabric of the territory. The authors of the report contrasted the territory's population of 220,000 with that of the European Union's 350 million and argued that "Polynesia is . . . a micro-society based on a very fragile equilibrium that must be protected against movements which . . . could have devastating effects in the territory" (*TP*, March 1998, 15-20). The committee proposed that the constitution of the French republic be amended to grant the territory control over immigration from both France and the European Union; that bona fide residents of the territory be given priority access to employment; that immigration be largely restricted to investors and retirees who will make a contribution to the economy; and that the territory acquire judicial means to ensure that

land remains in the hands of the territory's permanent residents.

Although the committee's report doubtless reflected a legitimate and widespread public concern, it provoked heated responses from official quarters. Gaston Flosse supports the idea of restricting European immigration, but he believes that metropolitan French have every right to make themselves at home in Tahiti, just as French Polynesians have the right (in theory) to reside and work in mainland France. New French high commissioner to the territory, Jean Aribaud, condemned the report, pronouncing himself "shocked" by its mercenary and discriminatory tone. Jean-Jack Queyranne dismissed its principal recommendation as "nonsense" on the grounds that French Polynesia is part of the republic and therefore metropolitan French cannot be categorized as immigrants (*TP*, March 1998, 15-20). Queyranne's hard line on this issue is evidently not being applied uniformly to the French overseas territories, as two months later he authorized New Caledonia to control French and European immigration in order to protect local employment.

Relations with metropolitan France may not have been harmonious, but the flow of funds from Paris nevertheless continued. Indeed, an injection of extraordinary funds facilitated an economic revival in Tahiti. Financial transfers from the state to the territory totaled 150 billion Pacific francs (F8.25 billion) in 1996. The increase of 40 billion Pacific francs compared to the previous year could partly be attributed to the extraordinary grant (18 billion Pacific francs) made by

President Chirac to compensate for the closure of the nuclear test center and partly to projects subsidized under the French Pons legislation (15 billion Pacific francs), which was designed to assist development in the overseas territories (*TP*, Sept 1997, 7).

For the most part the territory's leaders and inhabitants appear oblivious to the various forms of economic turmoil buffeting the rest of the world, and the government's response to the east Asian economic crisis was no different in this respect. Their muted reaction stems from the assumption that the primary source of income, that is, financial transfers from Paris, will continue regardless of external developments. Nevertheless, the collapse of financial markets, currency devaluations, and the general economic downturn in Asia does have serious repercussions for the limited export oriented sectors of Tahiti's economy. In recent years the tourist industry has relied increasingly on visitors from Australia, New Zealand, and east Asia, especially Korea and Japan. Dependence on markets in South Korea, Malaysia, and Hong Kong is also evident in the black pearl industry. Finally, the new Air Tahiti Nui company had identified the Seoul-Tokyo route as a key element in its first foray into the international flight scene.

Notwithstanding fears over the ramifications of the Asian crisis and a decrease in the volume of its exports, the territory's black pearl industry managed to hold its own. Improvements in the quality of the product, its rising popularity, and a slight increase in price per gram produced a 3 percent increase in the value of black pearl

exports (up to 14.462 billion Pacific francs) in 1997. The slump in demand from Asia (especially Japan) had also in part been counterbalanced by growing interest from buyers in North America and Europe.

The number of tourists visiting the territory reached a historic peak of 172,129 in 1995. This figure dropped to 163,774 in 1996 as a result of negative publicity worldwide associated with the nuclear test series concluded in January that year, and the destructive riots of September 1995, when Tahiti's international airport was torched by mobs. Despite the recent downturn in the tourism industry's fortunes, the government is pressing ahead with plans to increase the number of hotel rooms from three thousand to six thousand by the year 2003 with the help of metropolitan subsidies for investments in infrastructure (*TP*, Jan 1998, 25).

The territory is proceeding with plans for a national airline to service international routes. However, there have been revisions to the timing of its inaugural flight and other aspects of its operations. Air Tahiti Nui's first flight on the Los Angeles-Pape'ete-Japan route has been postponed to November 1998. Moreover, the airline will no longer be purchasing a new plane to launch its operations, as the state has declined to subsidize such a purchase. Rather it will hire a secondhand Airbus A340 from Air France. Its main routes are to be between Pape'ete and Pacific rim destinations including the United States, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Australia.

Controversy continued to plague attempts by the territory to resolve the

long-standing dilemma over how to dispose of the capital's rubbish. Recently the government purchased land at Taravao for a new waste dump. However, trucks will have to make a 140 kilometer round-trip from Pape'ete, and the dump threatens the integrity of a nearby bay classified as a nature reserve. In February more than a thousand people demonstrated at Taravao against the proposed waste dump.

After the third version of a territorial value added tax (VAT) was finally approved by the national senate in October, the tax entered into force on 1 January 1998. Despite a 20 million Pacific francs advertising campaign by the territorial government to promote its merits, the new tax received a decidedly mixed reception from the public. The government asserted that it would replace existing taxes, would not lead to an across-the-board increase in prices, nor undermine the purchasing power of poorer families. These claims were all met with considerable skepticism. The Evangelical Church wrote a public letter to the president denouncing the value added tax because the risk was great that disadvantaged people would be marginalized even more.

In February, the principal pro-independence party, Tavini, spear-headed a public demonstration in Pape'ete that attracted at least twenty-five hundred protesters against several key policies of the Tahoeraa government. The targets for dissent included the recently introduced value added tax, the proposed waste dump at Taravao, and the legalization of casinos. The participants also gathered

to express a general sense of dissatisfaction with increasing levels of social inequality.

In an anticipated decision, on 18 February the French Council of State annulled the outcome of territorial elections held in the Leeward Islands and the Marquesas in May 1996 because of the use by political candidates of public goods and services to influence voters (see Strokirch 1998). In particular, the council drew attention to the dubious behavior of the government and others in granting public housing to twenty-five families in Huahine just prior to the territorial election. As a result, eleven territorial councillors were obliged to recontest their seats in by-elections held on 24 May. The conservative government majority dominated by Tahoeraa won 8 seats (6 in the Leewards and 2 in the Marquesas), the pro-independence party Tavini won 2 seats in the Leewards, and 1 seat went to the independent Lucien Kimitete in the Marquesas.

If court appeals fail, there may soon be another territorial by-election to contest. Alexandre Léontieff, formerly territorial president and national deputy and currently a territorial councillor, was convicted in two corruption cases he has been fighting for several years. One case concerns the Cardella Clinic in Pape'ete, which was ordered to pay a massive overdue tax bill in 1989. Léontieff, in his capacity as minister of finance, agreed to waive 50 percent of this tax. In return the clinic paid a "commission" of 20 million Pacific francs, but the money disappeared without a trace (*TP*, Nov 1997, 9). For this case Léontieff was sen-

tenced to a three-year prison term of which he must serve eighteen months. Léontieff and another prominent territorial politician, Jean Juventin, were also convicted for taking bribes of \$250,000 each from a Japanese developer in return for approving construction of the Opunohu hotel and golf course complex in Moorea. The Opunohu project was never built following its outright rejection in a local referendum. In this instance Léontieff received a three-year prison sentence, of which two years must be served, while Juventin was required to serve only eighteen months of his sentence. Both men are appealing the verdicts (*TP*, June 1998).

Recent reports on the human and environmental impact of the French nuclear-testing program in the Pacific have provided a mixed picture of its legacy. *Moruroa and Us* surveys the impact the test program had on the lives and health of Maohi people and is based on one thousand interviews (de Vries and Seur 1997). A number of issues for concern emerged. One was that 10 percent of the Maohi test-site workers were under the age of eighteen, which rendered them very susceptible to the effects of radiation exposure. Many Maohi also worked at the test sites over a period of twenty years, which was hazardous given the increased risks of radiation exposure over time.

Maohi workers were usually responsible for the more dangerous tasks, such as drilling for samples from bomb shafts immediately after a test, and cleaning up contaminated areas. Yet, those who signed up to work at the test sites were generally unaware of

the risks involved, including the long-term consequences of exposure to radiation. Although the workers were constantly reassured by French officials that safety regulations prevented radiation exposure, at the same time they were warned not to eat the fish and coconuts, or drink the water, and advised that clothes they wore in contaminated areas had to be destroyed. Despite these warnings, many workers admitted that they still ate local fish and became ill as a result (de Vries and Seur 1997).

In terms of medical procedures, the study provided more cause for alarm. Only half of the workers received medical check-ups at the end of their contracts on site. The French authorities had no long-term research program to monitor the health of site workers after they finished with the test program. Medical records of site workers were kept secret until the tests ended in 1996, when they were made available to former site workers or their families on request.

Another report, resulting from a French Senate inquiry, called for greater transparency on the part of the military over their management of high-level nuclear waste. In particular, the authors considered that the French test sites should be subjected to the same degree of monitoring and regulation as civilian nuclear facilities in France. Although there was no immediate risk of radioactivity leaking from the sites, the report called for the precautionary principle to be applied. The sites should therefore be monitored indefinitely and closed in perpetuity to any form of human habitation. The report also echoed the call by non-

government organizations for a complete epidemiological study into the impact of nuclear testing on the health of former site workers and people living in the vicinity of the test sites. In conclusion, it noted, "The closure and dismantling of the Pacific Test Center does not exonerate France from its responsibilities. Whatever the evolution of our relations with the territory of French Polynesia, we will remain accountable for the eventual consequences of the tests" (Bataille 1997).

In contrast to the French Senate inquiry's cautious recommendations, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) gave the French test sites a relatively clean bill of health. An International Advisory Committee was established by the agency to assess the present and expected future radiological conditions at the two nuclear test sites in French Polynesia (see Strokirch 1998). The team of international scientists undertook in-depth studies of soil, plant, animal, and water samples taken from the sites after the final test was held in January 1996. They also drew on scientific data provided by French authorities.

The International Advisory Committee's report acknowledged that limited amounts of radioactive materials, including tritium, plutonium, and caesium 137, remained in the "accessible" environment of the atolls. They also found that migration of radionuclides from underground test cavities into the lagoon and ocean would continue. Nevertheless, the resultant levels of radioactivity were considered by them to be negligible and therefore would not pose a threat to human health now or in the future. They con-

cluded that no remedial action was justified on radiological protection grounds, nor was there any need for further monitoring at the atolls, although a monitoring program could reassure the public (IAEA 1998a, 1998b).

The International Advisory Committee's findings essentially vindicated France's repeated assertions that the long-term radiological effects of the test program would be relatively innocuous. Yet the report does not attempt to make a comprehensive assessment of past radiation levels or the degree to which people were exposed to radiation caused by nuclear tests. In this respect, new information has come to light. Declassified archival material from the French nuclear authority DIRCEN revealed that French nuclear tests in 1966 had exposed inhabitants of Reao, Tureia, Pukarua, and Mangareva to significant doses of radiation comparable to levels around Chernobyl after the reactor meltdown. The military's own radiological security service had recommended that the Islander populations at risk be evacuated on the eve of the tests, but this was not done, nor were decontamination measures undertaken (Jauvert 1998).

Since the material on the extent of test fallout was publicized, DIRCEN has closed further access to the archives. The French defense minister has admitted that, due to unpredictable weather patterns, the Gambier Islands and Tahiti were subject to nuclear fallout from the early tests. Yet he denied that such fallout was of a level that would adversely affect the inhabitants. Under pressure from Tahitian Senator Daniel

Millaud to open the archives spanning the period of atmospheric tests from 1966 to 1976, the minister replied that such access could not be permitted before the year 2026 (*TP*, May 1998, 23–25).

Continuing secrecy on the part of the French military would have come as no surprise to seasoned antinuclear campaigner Bengt Danielsson, had he lived to see it. Bengt died in Sweden, on 9 July 1997, at the age of seventy-six. In his fifty-year love affair with Tahiti, he made a lasting contribution to the territory as a promoter of indigenous culture, an environmental activist, and a writer of both scholarly and popular works in the disciplines of ethnology, history, and politics.

Bengt first achieved fame when he embarked with Thor Heyerdahl on the *Kon Tiki* raft expedition, which brought him to Tahiti in 1947. Bengt was awarded his doctorate from Uppsala University in 1955 for a thesis based on research undertaken in Raroia, French Polynesia. In 1965, he set up the Polynesian Center, which later became the Museum of Tahiti and Its Islands. Bengt published prolifically on a wide range of subjects, with more notable works including *Memorial Polynésien*, a classic text on Tahitian history and culture, *Gauguin in the South Seas*, and various editions of *Moruroa Mon Amour*, his polemical work on the history of French nuclear colonialism in the territory (*TP*, Aug 1997, 33).

Bengt and his wife Marie-Thérèse were passionate opponents of the French nuclear-testing program in the Pacific from its outset in the early 1960s until its closure in 1996. They

devoted much of their energies to campaigning against the tests because of the potential dangers posed to the health of the Maohi people and their environment. The Danielssons were also at pains to highlight the profound and negative impact of the French colonial presence on the territory's society and economy. They were thus fervent advocates of indigenous self-determination in the form of expanded autonomy and, ultimately, independence. As a result they were often persecuted by the French authorities and paid a high personal cost for their political activism. Marie-Thérèse continues to work tirelessly for worthy causes. The Danielssons' efforts on behalf of the Maohi people will not be forgotten.

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MĀORI ISSUES

The second half of 1997 was a time of great sadness for Maoridom as some of its finest leaders died. Sir Hepi Te Heuheu of the central North Island Tuwharetoa people was one of a rapidly dwindling number of traditional paramount chiefs. Although he was a conservative within the Pākehā political spectrum, he commanded great respect within Maoridom, having the mana and ability to draw everyone together. In the last few years of his life he convened several national *hui* to discuss government policies that were to negatively affect Māori. At these *hui* Māori self-determination and sovereignty were debated at length, and a large number of proposals about how constitutional change could take place were considered. Despite his conservatism, Sir Hepi carried Maoridom's uncompromising message to the government and withstood the prime minister's criticism with calm dignity. His funeral ceremonies in August brought thousands from all parts of Maoridom. Non-Māori government representatives also attended.

At the opposite end of the political spectrum was Tuaiwa (Eva) Rickard, who died in December. Eva had campaigned fearlessly against the confiscation of lands from Māori and led many public protests against different gov-

ernments and their anti-Māori policies. Her effectiveness was demonstrated with the return of her own *hapū's* lands at Raglan after a ten-year battle. She was a strong supporter of Māori women and younger Māori and spent much time in her later years actively encouraging and mentoring a large number of potential leaders.

Eva was also a forthright critic of those Māori, and particularly Māori men, whom she considered had sold out to the government on various issues. She was highly critical of those who negotiated the national settlement of all Māori fisheries claims with the now infamous Sealords Deal. The negotiators included past Minister of Māori Affairs Matiu Rata, who died tragically in July as a result of injuries sustained in a car accident. He had been responsible for introducing the legislation that set up the Waitangi Tribunal in 1975. Although the tribunal was slow getting started, since 1982 it has been unsurpassed in its ability to ensure that Māori receive at least some measure of justice for their ill-treatment at the hands of successive governments since 1840.

In his later years, Matiu Rata led one of the larger claims to the tribunal, which resulted in the Sealords Deal. Although this brought him into bitter conflict with his own and several other *iwi*, he never lost hope that the deal would eventually bring benefits to all Māori. Yet the final settlement and distribution of the proceeds of the deal has now been tied up in the courts for more than five years. Māori have little confidence in the courts being able to resolve the multiplicity of issues the deal has spawned, given that the judges are invariably non-Māori.

There is also mounting criticism about the amount of money being spent on litigation and the fact that lawyers rather than Māori are benefitting from the settlement.

In the most recent action, which was heard in March, the High Court was asked to determine the meaning of the word *iwi*. Māori academics and other experts from around the country were brought in to give evidence. The dispute has arisen because of the massive dislocation of Māori from their traditional territories to the cities, with many no longer actively participating in their traditional social structures. The proceeds of the Sealords Deal are to be distributed to *iwi*, which can mean either a traditional tribal structure where descent from one particular ancestor determines membership, or people in general. Some urban nontraditional groupings filed court proceedings after a decision was made to allocate only to traditional *iwi*. The judge's decision had not been released by the end of June.

The Sealords Deal was the first major settlement of Māori claims. It laid the groundwork for the conservative national government's "fiscal envelope" policy for settling claims. Despite Māori unanimously rejecting that policy in 1995, the government continued to pursue the settlement of major claims in terms of the policy. One agreement, which had been negotiated by the East Coast Whakatohea *iwi* with somewhat indecent haste before the 1996 general elections, fell through because the *iwi* rejected it. The much larger Ngai Tahu claim in turn reached agreement stage in September 1997, although opposition

to the agreement has slowed progress toward ratifying and finalizing it.

The Ngai Tahu negotiators agreed to settle the *iwi*'s multibillion dollar claims against the Crown for \$170 million in cash plus the return of various parcels of land, several islands, lake beds, greenstone deposits, and statutory recognition of the *iwi* in conservation, food gathering, and areas of cultural, historic, and spiritual significance. It is the longest-running claim against the Crown, with Ngai Tahu having first lodged a petition in 1849. In announcing the agreement the *iwi*'s chief negotiator, Sir Tipene O'Regan, noted that the offer could not deliver justice for their grievances, but rather, "we will no longer be a deeply disadvantaged people who have lost their land, their assets and culture." A poll of registered *iwi* members showed strong support for the proposed settlement even though the largest *hapū* strongly opposed it.

Settlement of the long-running customary fisheries disputes did not fare as well. For three years negotiators appointed by Māori had been trying to reach agreement with the government on regulations for Māori customary fishing. In December the negotiators resigned, citing frustration at the government's refusal to abide by its own legislation in drawing up the regulations, and obstructive tactics being used by officials. The minister of fisheries seized the opportunity to attack Māori customary fishing rights and attempted to bring in draconian regulations essentially curtailing all Māori fishing rights. He was supported in his attack by several right-wing amateur fishing enthusiasts. Individual Māori were targeted by the Ministry of Fish-

eries wanting to make examples of Māori customary fishers.

Māori reaction was predictably swift and angry. The minister was warned that any attempt to curtail Māori customary fishing rights would simply lead to large-scale civil disobedience by Māori. They were already very angry that the Sealords Deal had removed their commercial fishing rights and reduced the remaining non-commercial rights to regulations. Any further reduction in their rights simply would not be tolerated.

For the first time, the presence of three Māori in cabinet had a significant effect on the outcome. As a result, the minister of fisheries was unable to introduce his preferred regulations and was restricted to only minor amendments to current legislation. A national *hui* of representatives of all tribes was convened. It clearly instructed the minister that Māori would determine what Māori customary fishing regulations would be, and any regulations that did not have Māori support would not be accepted. The prime minister instructed the minister to sort the mess out properly and bring in regulations that had Māori support.

Refusing to accept the position the Māori negotiators had developed after their own extensive consultation with *iwi*, the minister then embarked on his own consultation round with Māori throughout the country. The overwhelming response in *hui* was to simply confirm what the Māori negotiators had already told him. However, he also consulted widely with non-Māori in an attempt bring pressure on Māori to give up their rights. Although he was instructed to complete the job

by April, the results of the consultation round had still not been announced by late June.

In the meantime the media have carried various reports of coastal *hapū* and *iwi* around the North Island in particular, imposing their own traditional management methods over their sea territories by banning commercial fishing until the stocks are sufficiently recovered. Every ban has been imposed because of severe depletion of the *hapū* or *iwi*'s traditional fish stocks. Compliance with the bans has been difficult to monitor, and it is not known how effective they have been. Apart from the minister of fisheries saying that these *rahui* have no legal standing (because they are not mentioned in any legislation) but conceding that they are not illegal, there has been remarkably little public opposition to them. Some *iwi* have reported considerable support, particularly among local communities. Various letters to editors have praised Māori for taking charge where government ministers, under pressure from the fishing industry, have been unable to restrict commercial fishing activities and hence prevent continued depletion.

MARGARET MUTU

NIUE

With a new general election approaching in 1999, the government of Premier Frank Lui is in a far healthier position than at a comparable point during its previous three-year term. In 1995, the Niue Assembly was deadlocked, the government was unable to pass legislation, the opposition Niue People's Party (NPP) unable to topple it

from office. In 1998, however, the party—still Niue's only political party—has a much weaker presence in the assembly, and the most serious challenges to the government have come from within its own ranks.

In October 1997 Premier Lui reorganized his cabinet, removing Terry Coe as minister of finance. Coe, the top polling candidate in 1996 in the islandwide common-roll seats, was given other portfolios. Coe and Lui had differed over a number of policy issues, and the premier replaced him with Aokuso Pavihi, already responsible for the portfolios of Justice, Lands, Economic Affairs, and Private Sector Development. Two months later the premier's own preferences were given little weight by the assembly, when it voted to increase the annual salary of cabinet ministers from NZ\$29,000 to NZ\$48,000, a raise of 60 percent. The move was opposed by Premier Lui, who argued that it was ill timed given Niue's economic problems, hardships faced by many of the island's people, and the government's own requests for further external aid from New Zealand and other sources. Over his objections, the premier's own housing and entertainment allowance was also increased by the assembly. Although the attorney-general rejected claims that the pay raise violated the Niue Constitution, and a subsequent legal challenge from three NPP members of the assembly was adjourned indefinitely, the legislation needed to be passed again, in February, when the initial procedural error was conceded.

A more serious error of judgment occurred in April when a member of the assembly, Umuti Makani, aged

fifty-six, was involved in a fatal hit-and-run accident at Makefu village. Makani, who was found to have been drunk at the time, killed a motorcyclist, John Ben Aholima, aged twenty-seven, who was left to die on a bush-covered rocky outcrop several meters from the roadside. He had been a youth member of the Tuapa Village Council. Makani, who failed to stop following the accident, was sentenced by the chief justice to eighteen months' imprisonment for "drunken driving causing death," as well as six months' imprisonment for failing to stop after an accident, the sentences to be served concurrently. He was also fined \$1000, with half the sum paid to the victim's family. First elected to the Tamakoutoga village seat in 1996, Makani was a deacon and lay preacher in the village church and a member of the Niue public service for thirty years. At the time of the incident he was an associate cabinet minister in the Lui government. On his conviction, the chief electoral officer declared the village seat vacant. In the subsequent by-election, the seat was won by Pita Funaki in a three-way contest.

Another drunk-driving case also involved an assembly member, but fortunately with less serious consequences. Opili Talafasi, member for Hikutavake village, was disqualified from driving after he pleaded guilty to a drunk-driving charge. At the time of his sentencing, the chief justice took the opportunity to criticize Niue's leaders for enacting measures aimed at preventing such offenses while ignoring them themselves. Road safety issues, particularly involving drunk driving, have been given greater

emphasis in recent years, and the crackdown has resulted in some jail sentences. Another Niuean man received a lifetime disqualification after appearing for the third time for driving while intoxicated. There has also been a rise in the reporting of offenses involving violence and sexual assault. By June Niue's once-empty prison beside the island's golf course was full (six of seven cells occupied by full-time residents, and the seventh by a part-timer sentenced to weekend custody).

As ever, the government's principal concern has been with the island's economic prospects, with a range of ideas advanced as solutions for the island's needs. Included among them is a proposal to reestablish Niue's honey industry, which was begun in 1967 and at one time produced 75 tons annually from 1,250 hives. Production has dropped significantly since the industry was fully privatized in 1991, and investment and effort will be needed to restore it to health.

The forestry program is another possibility: a national forestry policy plan for Niue was completed in March. It was compiled by a policy-making committee whose membership included environmental officers, a sawmiller, village officials, and private-sector representatives. Financial support for the planning exercise was provided by the German Forestry Development Project, an overseas aid group that focuses on forestry conservation and development in the Pacific region. The plan outlines conservation practices needed to preserve Niue's fragile environment. If enacted, it

would also establish a code of practice for logging, providing for a greater emphasis on the planting of indigenous trees. Meanwhile, the international quarantine station at Vaiea continues to thrive: the next shipment of alpaca is scheduled to arrive in July. Whereas previously the animals were being held for Australia, this time they are being quarantined for Canadian farmers.

More exotic economic development ideas have focused on the evolving telecommunications sector. Niueans have only begun to access the Internet; free email services are provided to government departments, and a number of private users have also been accommodated by Niue's Internet Users' Society. Niue's limited experience with the "information superhighway" has not deterred the government from exploring it as a route to economic salvation. In March it announced progress in discussions with a Canadian company seeking to set up Internet gambling, which was regarded by the premier as a potentially effective way of generating essential revenue. The Internet gambling scheme was intended to make use of a computer server site in Auckland, established in the Niue consular office there. When the proposal encountered opposition from the New Zealand government, the Canadian company withdrew from the project. However, the government has expressed the hope that another computer server might be available in another Pacific Island country. While some assessments project significant revenues for Niue, others are less optimistic. Concerns have been expressed from those

opposed to gambling, and there have also been warnings about a possible international ban on Internet gambling.

Niue's decision to lease its international telephone code has also led to some controversy and embarrassment after it was learned that the code was being used for "phone sex" calls. Niue's involvement in this activity has continued, however, with claims that 17,500 calls are being lodged weekly through the island's telecom system. The arrangement brings the government about NZ\$2 million a year in fees.

Niue's residents have also benefitted from improvements to Niue's telephone system. In March Niue Telecom announced a plan to install public telephones capable of accepting phone cards in villages around the island. The company has also installed a free phone at the public market in Alofi, the capital, allowing growers to make calls to vendors and giving customers the option of calling stallholders to order produce.

The government has been able to receive funds from a number of sources in addition to the international phone access venture. These include the sale of fishing licenses, the introduction of a more efficient income-tax collection system, and the imposition of rental fees from the alpaca quarantine station and fees for the registration of international businesses. The results have begun to fuel grand expectations. The possibility of an end to income tax has been raised, although this seems somewhat unrealistic given the inability of the government to produce a balanced budget (there was a

deficit of NZ\$1.6 million for the financial year).

What is gradually disappearing, however, is New Zealand financial aid. Its contribution to the government's budget continues to fall by NZ\$250,000 each year. By mid-1998 it had been reduced to NZ\$4 million, with NZ\$2.5 million for special projects (compared to NZ\$3 million the previous year). New Zealand support seems to be further jeopardized by the ongoing migration of Niueans to New Zealand. The August 1997 census put the island's population at 2,080, a drop of 300 since the previous tally. The population has continued to decline, and it is now estimated at about 1,900 people. The figures indicate the negligible effect of programs and policies designed both to keep Niueans on the island and to encourage some of those who have left to return.

The readiness of Niueans to emigrate to New Zealand confounds planners and complicates some economic policies. There are concerns, for instance, about the number of abandoned homes on the island, as they can provide breeding grounds for rats and mosquitoes. Public health concerns are not the only consequences of emigration. Vacant properties and questions over untitled customary land also raise problems for economic development and environmental protection. In another example a proposed "baby bonus"—NZ\$500 to be paid to each mother on the birth of a child—did not proceed after suggestions were made that the program might encourage some young girls to have babies in order to purchase air fares to New

Zealand, where income support from the New Zealand government would be available. On the other hand, the amount of financial support being sent back by Niueans in New Zealand to relatives still living on Niue has apparently increased substantially. Overseas remittances are funding the purchase of consumer goods, including Japanese-imported vehicles. The increase in funds being sent back (generally in cash) reflects economic difficulties for families on the island, including the high price of food, import duties, and the lack of regular incomes.

The "baby bonus" proposal was made to advance population growth. Another proposal, to double the existing child welfare allowance to NZ\$240, was designed to keep Niueans on the island. The increase would have added about NZ\$100,000 to the NZ\$680,000 spent on welfare and pensions. The 1998 budget provided for a more modest increase in the child benefit, which rose by \$20 to NZ\$150.

With the 1999 election in mind, the mid-1998 budget included a tax cut that was substantial in the context of the Niuean economy. Most of Niue's 420 public servants received a back-dated tax rebate, averaging an extra \$10 per week. The tax cut (effectively the first pay increase for public servants for many years) will deprive the government of about \$200,000 in revenue. As noted, this comes at a time when New Zealand aid to Niue continues to fall. The government has begun to explore the possibility of establishing a trust fund for Niue, similar to the successful Tuvalu fund. While earnings would allow the government to meet its spending require-

ments, it is difficult to see how it will attract the international financial support needed to get the fund into operation.

Much less is now heard about tourism serving as the ultimate source of prosperity. The island's most modern (and expensive) hotel, the Matavai Resort, opened with much fanfare, has been forced to lay off staff as a result of low tourism levels. At the same time, the state-owned Niue Hotel has experienced significant losses and has been put up for sale by the government. Not surprisingly, given its low occupancy rate, there has been difficulty finding a buyer. The government has been advised to sell its 51 percent shareholding in the Matavai Resort. At present Niue is attracting too few tourists to fill both of these hotels, as well as a number of other premises run by the private sector.

The costs of a thus-far-unsuccessful tourism industry have been considerable. The tourism sector has absorbed in the past year NZ\$450,000 in aid from New Zealand; NZ\$213,000 from the Niue government; and a further NZ\$210,000 in subsidies paid to Royal Tongan Airlines (Niue's national carrier) to compensate it for empty seats on its weekly round-trip flights from Tonga.

Efforts to diversify Niue's foreign aid donors have been of limited success. However, the United Nations Development Program has agreed to provide Niue with NZ\$3 million for national development purposes over a five-year period. The funding is expected to be used to conduct and analyze surveys designed to improve tourism revenue through possible

expansion of whale and dolphin watching activities and upgraded ocean diving areas. A household income and expenditure survey is to be carried out, in part to attempt to discover more about the estimated NZ\$4 million (much of it in the form of cash remittances) that apparently circulates through the Niuean economy but is untraceable.

United States assistance has come from several sources. A team of United States Navy Seabees arrived on Niue in June to start wharf extensions at Alofi. The project, expected to take three months to complete, will allow more ships to tie up alongside and to load and unload their cargoes more quickly. The Seabees are being housed at a youth center (whose premises they have upgraded and furnished). There are five Peace Corps volunteers on Niue, working in agriculture, development banking, finance, and education, and a former volunteer is employed on the island with a contract to run the government's computer services.

Niue's twenty-third annual constitution celebrations in 1997 were low-key because of financial constraints. There were no visiting delegations of Niueans from New Zealand, and two ministers—half the cabinet—traveled to New Zealand to attend celebrations in Auckland. However, a new meteorology office was opened during Constitution Weekend in a special complex built for it near the airport. The New Zealand Meteorological Office is funding the service at least until 2005 and has responsibility for maintenance of the hi-tech equipment at the site. Cyclone and storm tracking data will be available to Niue via a satellite link

that forms part of the region's early warning system for tropical storms. In addition, a Japanese seismologist has installed earthquake-monitoring equipment as part of a joint United States–Japan program to monitor seismological activity in the South Pacific.

Despite its small population, Niue's greenhouse gas emissions are among the worst in the world—on a per capita basis. There are 591 privately owned motorcars, 197 motorcycles, and 100 government vehicles. To their emissions are added those from domestic refrigerators in almost every home and a number of large commercial freezers. A United Nations–funded climate-change study has begun, with NZ\$400,000 spent on preliminary investigations. Niue's aspirations for membership in international organizations has shifted from United Nations specialized agencies, however, to international sport—specifically, the International Olympic Committee. Niue's application follows Nauru's admission (after a four-year consideration).

With elections approaching, the government has proposed establishment of an electoral commission to supervise elections and the registration of electors. The legislation would also set an age limit for members of the assembly (seventy), reduce polling hours (from 8 AM–6 PM to 9 AM–4 PM), and allow an absentee ballot for Niue residents overseas on training courses or government business. The electoral commission would also be authorized to conduct an election runoff in the case of a tie, thus putting an end to recent experiences when the toss of a coin or the selection of a name from a hat determined the

winner of a seat in the assembly. Another initiative came to nothing, however, when the sole recommendation of the constitution review committee was rejected by the assembly. Ironically, the proposal was designed to make it easier to amend the constitution.

Preparations for the next election include a change of leadership for the Niue People's Party. The party's president is Young Vivian, while Sani Lakatani has become parliamentary leader (replacing Robert Rex, Junior, now treasurer). A more significant influence on Niue's elections may be its decline in population and economic resilience. The possibility of a reduction in the size of the Niue Assembly from twenty—already small for a legislative body—has been raised. If negative trends are not reversed, a restructuring of the political institutions of the world's smallest self-governing mini-state may not be too long in coming.

STEPHEN LEVINE

TOKELAU

The political scene in Tokelau has been reviewed for this journal by Professor Stephen Levine for the past decade. His analyses were based on the official view from Wellington and, in particular, the yearly reports presented to the New Zealand Parliament by the New Zealand-based administrator of Tokelau, an official in the Ministry of Foreign Relations and Trade. Professor Levine should be commended for his thorough and insightful analyses of the political situation in Tokelau from afar. I have found them very valuable. However, my perspective will necessarily

be quite different. It is a view from Tokelau, based primarily on observations and discussions there during the past year (1997–98) that I first place in recent historical context.

Political development in Tokelau is part of a wider "development" initiative in operation in Tokelau since the 1970s, relating to the "Question of Tokelau." The "question" refers to the "special relationship" between Tokelau and New Zealand, the future of that relationship, and Tokelau's future status. The "blueprint" for such development was set in motion when Foreign Affairs took over the administration of Tokelau from the former Māori and Island Affairs Department in 1975. From then onward, New Zealand was committed to putting Tokelau on a path toward self-government because, as a former administrator of Tokelau reasoned, New Zealand was committed to the United Nations Charter and the principle of self-determination (Corner 1984). This reasoning has been repeatedly quoted by subsequent administrators as evidenced by the 1996 Administrator's Report: "New Zealand, as the state responsible for the administration of Tokelau, has an obligation, by virtue of New Zealand's membership of the United Nations, to develop self-government in Tokelau" (1996, 5). Tokelau's response from the start has consistently been the same: that both Tokelau and New Zealand take a slower approach. New Zealand officials continued to assure Tokelau that New Zealand would always respect the wishes of the people of Tokelau. Former New Zealand Prime Minister David Lange echoed this respect by

visiting Tokelau and declared that it was not New Zealand's role to run Tokelau society and that the future, the pace, and the direction of political development would be decided in Tokelau by the people of Tokelau (Lange 1985, 3).

Since the 1970s, Foreign Affairs officials' aim has been to transform Tokelau's three semi-autonomous traditional village polities to "modernity"—to a national government. In 1979, these officials reasoned that to achieve such a goal they needed to resolve three interrelated problems. First, men spoke like children who needed New Zealand as their father to provide for them; therefore, there was a need to create political self-confidence. Second, Tokelau people needed to gain experience of a Tokelau-wide government as Tokelau has always been "atoll-centric" throughout history. Finally, it was considered important to remove the elders' suspicion of Tokelau public servants, whose authority was considered a threat to traditional authority (Corner 1984). The main way to resolve these problems for the Foreign Affairs officials was for the General Fono to become increasingly involved in the budget process. This led to the formation of a Budgetary Advisory Committee, hailed by a former official secretary as a transformation in which a group of "miscellaneous representatives making ill-defined requests to the administrator" would become a "broadly based selection of representatives debating Tokelau's central issues" (Corner 1984).

By 1982, the then official secretary thought that the stage was set for

another initiative, the conferring of legislative powers on the General Fono. However, the administrator of the time deferred this action as he was promoting the idea of an executive council. So, in 1993, it was reported: "The General Fono asked the Faipule of Atafu, Fakaofu and Nukunonu to form a Council of Faipule and Ulu o Tokelau (Head of Tokelau) on a rotating basis" (Office for Tokelau Affairs 1993, 4). This development was aimed at creating a new Tokelau in which the General Fono, with the future status of a federal parliament, would bridge modern and traditional life. From this, other rhetorical ideas ensued and were repeatedly quoted in national statements and official reports. First, the "newness" idea was expressed in the *Voice of Tokelau*: "Tokelau's Voice New Wind, New Waters, New Sail—The Emerging State of Tokelau." Second, the "oneness" idea dated from 1983, when the then official secretary commented on "the continued reluctance of delegates to think in terms of Tokelau as a nation" (Browne 1983, 7), and was reiterated ten years later when the administrator wondered whether the new arrangements "would build Tokelau's destiny," including the capacity to "think one" instead of "thinking three" (General Fono 1993, 3). Third, the phrase "Tokelau's unique solution" referred to the "rotating Ulu of Tokelau" and a "rotating capital" where the office of Head of Tokelau alternates among the three atolls annually and is a "coral up" approach, reputed to have been homegrown, not based on any external model, nor borrowing sets of constitutional clothing (Administrator of Tokelau 1995,

1996). This rhetoric can be summarized by the administrator's encouragement to the three councils of each atoll that they were in a unique position to become "founding fathers" of Tokelau (Levine 1996).

Levine (1996, 1998) made references to the *Voice of Tokelau*, a statement presented to the world via the United Nations Committee of Twenty-Four in 1994, expressing Tokelau's "dreams and hopes" for the future as it progresses toward an act of self-determination. There were "qualitative aspects" of Tokelau's future that it wished to resolve "before any act of self-determination" (*Voice of Tokelau* 1994). These aspects included the establishment of an infrastructure, particularly in the areas of transport and communication. This requirement was reported to have been taking "further strides" with the inauguration of a modern telephone system, the acquisition of a freighter, and the introduction of photovoltaic energy.

In addition, nation-building was reported as progressing with the drafting of the constitution in the Tokelau language (Levine 1998). The General Fono declared 1995 as the "Year of the Constitution." True, in 1996 there were numerous constitutional workshops organized by subcommittees in each village. However, by 1997, all constitution-related activities had been discontinued. In informal talks with constitutional committee members, village officials, and the general public, I received mixed messages. Many committee members commented on the usefulness of these workshops in clarifying the various constitution-related issues when they were first ini-

tiated. One person summed this up: "The subcommittee used to run workshops to help the *taupulega* (village council) and the whole community but now it's not happening any more." There were setbacks as well. One committee member complained about the subcommittee on one atoll not supporting the proposals put forward by his atoll's subcommittee. The proposals referred to included the use of old Tokelau words as equivalents of those used for officials in the proposed government setup.

One *faipule* (village leader) gave three reasons for putting constitution-related activity on hold: the lack of funds, activities should be redirected to improve the welfare of the people, and the constitution was simply not the highest priority. The "lack of funds" rationale was supported by a senior public servant: "This issue [halting all constitution work] should send a message to New Zealand. How can Tokelau continue to work on the constitution when there is a decrease in budgetary aid?"

The constitution is indeed widely regarded as "not a priority" and "improving the welfare of the people" first underpins all aspects of development under the impetus for "village empowerment and development." This theme was evident in the welcoming speech to the New Zealand governor general when he visited Tokelau in 1997. The Nukunonu *pulenuku* (literally, village authority, but officially translated as village mayor) informed the governor general that constitutional work has disregarded the elders, who are seen as "the most important sectors of the Tokelau identity" and

the “pillars” on which new governmental structures must be based. He stressed that village institutions needed to be reinforced, and therefore Tokelau would take a slower approach to the constitutional issue.

Some views of the Nukunonu *pulenuku* may be debatable, but there is wide support for the “return to the village” strategy, which was conveyed to the Committee of Twenty-Four, meeting on 21 May 1997 in Antigua, by Tokelau’s special representative. In theory, it calls for a return to the center of Tokelau culture—the village—and for strengthening village institutions (Kalolo 1997). This idea is not new; it can be traced back to the 1980s and the concept of “*Atiakega o na Nuku*” (developing the villages). These are umbrella concepts under which all village development projects are incorporated, whether political, social, economic, or infrastructural. These projects were referred to by one *faipule* as the priorities that would improve the welfare of the people. The “village” in reality consists of three distinct autonomous entities, not a unit, nor “thinking one” to borrow the administrator of Tokelau’s term (General Fono 1993). Despite many similarities, each atoll is autonomous in terms of organization, regulation, and administration, including the setting of priorities.

Four ongoing village amenities projects have been considered priorities: a housing scheme, a flush-toilet scheme, a water-catchment scheme, and a sea-wall project. The housing scheme was first mooted in the early 1970s and has been in operation for more than twenty years. To date it is

still the top priority in all three atolls, and its completion is nowhere in sight according to those involved in the allocation and implementation phases. Under the scheme as originally proposed, more durable roofing iron would replace the local thatch roofs and would mean that the people would be able to collect and store more water. So important was this proposal that it was included in the remits discussed by the *Fono Fakamua* (Tokelau Parliament) and New Zealand officials while the United Nations Committee of Twenty-Four was present in 1976 (General Fono 1976). The aim was to build a home for each household from imported materials paid for by the New Zealand government. When the scheme was finally implemented, individual families were required to come up with 25 percent of the total costs of their houses, while the rest was subsidized by New Zealand aid money. This arrangement was changed when the General Fono in 1992 decided to put an end to the “housing loan” and underwrite the whole cost of materials. (Office for Tokelau Affairs 1993, 9).

The implementation of the scheme was not without problems—some common to all, and some specific to each atoll. From its early years of operation, families have complained about favoritism by giving precedence to certain families and bypassing others, and in the allocation of building materials. Some people have left their former households and set up new ones with the housing scheme in mind, and as a result some of those who remain in older houses continue to wait their turn. Some of the first houses built in the scheme have now deteriorated, and

their owners are reapplying for renewal, while those who missed out in the beginning are still awaiting their turn. Some houses have not been completed, but their allotted budgets have been exhausted, and this could cause delays as people apply for funds reserved for other projects. A persistent problem is the continual short supply of building materials because of inadequate shipping.

The improvement of water-catchment facilities has been ongoing throughout Tokelau's recent history. The current aid-sponsored water-catchment scheme was established to provide concrete water tanks built into the foundations of new houses. Following this important development, Tokelau decided to add another aid-paid-for project: the provision of flush toilets for each household. The decision was influenced by both the Health Department and the drive toward "modernization." Flush toilets may gradually phase out the sea latrines currently in use. Each atoll approaches each project differently, according to its own priorities. In 1997, for example, Nukunonu suspended construction of its sea wall to build a village pigsty funded from the Tokelau budget.

All the ongoing schemes described here are likely to continue into the future. It is difficult to predict a time frame for their completion, and they are only a few of the village amenities regarded as prerequisites to any act of self-determination. With the relocation of the Office for Tokelau Affairs, the *taupulega* were given new responsibilities when they were authorized to take over the management of some sectors

of the public service. As a result, public works are now the responsibility of the village workforce under the supervision of *taupulega*. Each atoll has adopted similar but distinct strategies in the operation of these services. In all the atolls the *taupulega* acts as the employer, making decisions about wages and other workforce-related issues. Leaders of each workforce are appointed and responsible to the *pulenuku* who in turn is responsible to the *taupulega*.

The *Voice of Tokelau* mentioned the need to have well-established infrastructural systems for Tokelau. This led to improvements in the telecommunication system. Levine referred to the inauguration of modern direct-dial telephone and fax systems in 1997 (1998). Several developments ensued: the creation of Teletok as a government-owned business, and the separation of the former Department of Transport and Communications into two separate entities. In this restructuring, the then director of transport and telecommunication was reappointed as Teletok manager, while a former director of health was given responsibility for management of transport. Communication between Tokelau and the outside world improved tremendously with the inauguration of the modern direct-dial system. People in the homeland are now able to converse easily with their relatives abroad. However, informal discussions indicate that the general public does so at a price; the phone bills testify to the expensive nature of such enterprises.

Transport to and from Tokelau has always been problematic, as the first colonial officials discovered to their

dissatisfaction. In the early 1910s, for example, it took more than a month for resident commissioners to travel to Tokelau from Kiribati. Present-day visitors have had similar experiences; the 1994 Committee of Twenty-Four abruptly departed from Tokelau to connect with outgoing international flights from Sāmoa, and visiting team members of the 1998 Ministry of External Relations and Trade consultancy were anxious about being stranded in Tokelau.

Levine reported that the government of New Zealand had “purchased” a freighter and named it *MV Forum Tokelau* (1998). This “purchase” may have been misunderstood in Tokelau. Some elders believed, or may have been led to believe, that the *Forum Tokelau* was “purchased” for Tokelau, rather than being a subsidized venture. The question of its ownership came up in many discussions when the handling of the cargo and acceptance of passengers, formerly a responsibility of the Tokelau Office in Apia, were handed over to the officers of the Pacific Forum Line. Tokelau travelers were dissatisfied and complained about the new arrangements. People slowly realized that the *Forum Tokelau*, in reality, did not belong to Tokelau as they earlier had thought. The *Forum Tokelau*, termed an “interim solution,” will continue to be a drain on Tokelau’s resources. The vessel is not capable of delivering the essential goods demanded by Tokelau. Its problematic operation has caused delays or cancellations of charters. It is no coincidence that at the time of writing this review, the *Forum Tokelau* has canceled its May charter owing to

engine trouble and returned to Auckland for further repair work.

The interisland ferry, *Tutolu*, is now seen by some as “too expensive,” a “drain,” and a “disaster” that should never have been considered in the first place. Plans are being made for the *Tutolu* to be dry-docked for major repair works, including a reduction of its existing double hull to a single one. The unreliability of the interisland ferry is demonstrated by just one example: When the 1997 curriculum review was held in Atafu, the teachers from Nukunonu did not arrive. On their way from Nukunonu to Atafu, the engine died, and they drifted toward Fakaofu. The captain managed to restart the engine, and they began their journey again, but again the engine broke down, so the workshop went on without the Nukunonu teachers. On arrival in Apia the following week, the captain bolted, leaving the *Tutolu* stranded there while Tokelau officials sought a replacement. In addition to funds allocated for repairs, general maintenance, and daily operation of the *Tutolu*, its captain is reputed to be the highest-paid person on Tokelau’s payroll. In 1997 the captain of the *Tutolu* was reported to have informed the New Zealand Maritime Safety Authority that the ferry was unsafe for further travels (General Fono 1997, 4).

Each atoll—Atafu, Fakaofu, and Nukunonu—has one *taupulega* and, although their functions and structures are similar in many respects, they are quite distinct from each other. The elected officials include the *pulenuku* and the *faipule*. These officials are elected every three years. The office of

pulenuku is restricted to *taupulega* members, but anyone, male or female of twenty-one years and above, is eligible for *faipule* candidacy.

The Atafu and Fakaofu *taupulega* each has a new meetinghouse with modern facilities: electric lights, electric fans, white-boards, and direct-dial telephone systems. Nukunonu is in the process of building its own. Each either owns a computer or has access to the modern telecommunication facilities of the local government departments. In the past, the elders were seated on floor mats in circular arrangement. Current representatives are seated on chairs at tables or desks in a U-shaped arrangement. In Atafu and Fakaofu, the "chair," consisting of the *pulenuku* and the *faipule*, is seated at the head, directly opposite the bottom of the U. The *failautuhi* (village clerk) in Atafu sits next to the *pulenuku*; in Fakaofu the *failautuhi* sits apart from the "chair." In these two settings the *pulenuku* chairs the meetings with the help of the *faipule*. Nukunonu differs from the other two atolls by electing a chairperson whose role is equivalent to that of a speaker. The chairperson alternates every meeting and is flanked by the *pulenuku* and the *faipule* during each session.

Within each *taupulega* is a group known locally as the *taumatua* (senior elders), *uluhina* (white haired), or *toeaina* (elders). Usually regarded as the most revered members of each *taupulega*, they make opening and closing speeches and in many respects are regarded as the "voice" of the village. In Atafu and Nukunonu, *taupulega* members are selected as family

representatives, among whom are senior members of the Public Service. Fakaofu differs from the other two atolls in that the *taupulega* is not composed of representatives of families but is a self-appointed group of elders. Atafu and Fakaofu *taupulega* are all-male institutions, but the Nukunonu *taupulega* has women representatives: one is the head of her family, and two are *fatupaepae* (women's association) observers.

The "modern" *taupulega* have acquired added responsibilities as a result of recent developments. The wide range of issues for discussion has led to another development, the formation of committees at the *taupulega* level, for example, the Working Committee that deals with the planning and implementation of village amenities, and a number of smaller subcommittees. In this respect, each *taupulega* acts as an "employer" in the sense that it controls the village budget, decides on the number and eligibility of men and women for inclusion in the village workforce, and their appropriate monetary rewards. These added responsibilities will continue into the next millennium. As one elder put it, "we (the elders) are undergoing a learning process" and part of that process is learning from repeated mistakes.

Within each village, there are a number of men's and women's organizations in the form of associations, clubs, and competing sides with overlapping membership. The women's organizations include the Women's Committee on each atoll, established in the 1920s to work closely with the local doctor, nurses, and *pulenuku*. Its main role was to promote hygiene in

the villages. This organization is gradually phasing out, probably because of the *fatupaepae*, a national association that has introduced commercial activities for women. Apart from these organizations, all women belong to various other groups, both secular and religious.

The *taulelea* (men's organizations) include the *aumaga* (group of men not in the *taupulega*), a Samoan derivation that exists only in Atafu and Fakaofu. In Nukunonu, all *taulelea* work under the elders under the supervision of the *pulenuku*. Subdivisions and subgroups are established for competition in sport, fishing, dancing, or roof-thatching. The *kau-talavou* (youth organization) has been introduced by the church and also featured in governmental discourses, but has not been fully developed.

Together with the children, the institutions described thus far constitute "the village"; their members are the main actors involved in the various activities of "developing the village." Those making up the work-gangs for the housing, flush toilet, and water-catchment schemes are mainly men. There is a *vaega fakapitoa* (special group) made up of *taupulega* members and senior *aumaga* men who deal with less-strenuous activities. A new group has been added, called *tino fakaalofa* (literally, pitied people), made up of women whose households have few or no male members and therefore do not receive as much money from wages as do the majority of households. This group works as cleaners. In Fakaofu and Nukunonu in 1997, it was compulsory for elders and *taulelea* to work in ongoing schemes. The wages,

number of hours, number of work-gang members, annual leaves, and statutory holidays have been authorized by the General Fono and implemented by the *taupulega*.

The creation of the *tino fakaalofa* reflects the equity principle embodied in the Tokelau way of sharing resources, the *malae* institution. The *malae* is the site for the redistribution of village resources: fish, plantation produce, or modern goods. In the discussions of salaries and wages at any political level, from the national General Fono to the local *taupulega* meeting, the term *totogi* (salary, wages, reward) is synonymous with the term *fakamanuiaga* (blessings, reward, achievement). One receives *fakamanuiaga* when one receives "things" (in abundance) from a sacred or secular source: children, food, rainy and sunny days, higher educational achievement, or employment to name a few. In reality therefore, the majority working on the development of the villages are being paid from New Zealand's annual grant and other aid. In *taupulega* deliberations on the allocation of salaries and wages, equity is a major determining factor and, hence, the use of *fakamanuiaga*.

The three *faipule* form the Council of Faipule, one of whom acts as the *Ulu-o-Tokelau* (Head of Tokelau) on a rotational basis. The Council of Faipule acts on matters of national interest when the General Fono is not in session. The legal authority currently exercised by the Council of Faipule has been derived from the New Zealand-based administrator of Tokelau, including their roles as ministers of government, equivalent to those in a

Westminster model of parliament. Ministers are responsible for government departments on a Tokelau-wide basis, covering the three atolls. This arrangement, according to the *faipule*, is inefficient as it is near impossible to “administer from a distance.”

Although it is not officially reported, the new thinking is that a minister must be responsible for the departments within each atoll. This line of thinking supports the “return to the village” approach. Returning to the village is a reversal of earlier thinking, particularly in the 1970s when the public service sector was perceived as “the state.” This approach alone can be an important factor in deciding the future direction of political development in Tokelau.

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KINGDOM OF TONGA

If the previous year was marked by the application of the law against commoner politicians, the year 1997-98 was notable for its attentions toward members of the nobility. Minister of Police the Honorable Clive Edwards, a commoner, imprisoned a noble fellow cabinet member, the Honorable Fakafanua, minister of lands, for, among other illegalities, bribery and extortion. Fakafanua was soon released, but the event caused considerable comment. Fakafanua resigned both his ministerial office and the post of governor of Ha'apai. The king, who has now turned eighty, quickly appointed nobles to take Fakafanua's place in the two senior government positions.

Another surprise move that is also likely to affect widespread attitudes to the nobility occurred in May 1998. The day after his fiftieth birthday, Crown Prince Tupouto'a renounced all ministerial duties in the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Defence in order to concentrate on his numerous and lucrative business interests. Among his pressing concerns must be his law suit against his sister, HRH

Princess Pilolevu, for part of the profits of Tongasat, the company that rents satellite orbit spots, which reportedly earned her over \$25 million last year. The Crown Prince also showed his hand with regard to Tongan custom in other announcements that, given the structure of the society, are likely to have possibly far-reaching political implications. In an interview granted to *Matangi Tonga* at the time of his resignation, he said he did not intend to marry. When asked about kava, the traditional drink that has strong symbolic resonance in cultural life and plays a part in chiefly ceremonies, the prince remarked, "Personally, I don't like it." With Russian kvass, he believes that kava constitutes one of "the only two [drinks] in the world which taste as disgusting as they look." He added that he last drank kava in 1970 at his *pongipongi*, the investiture of his noble title.

The Crown Prince rides around in a London taxi, cooks Japanese food, drinks European wines, likes all kinds of Western music from classical to rap, and confounds people's expectations in the matter of traditional dress. He said, "A lot of people set great store by dressing in the Tongan fashion, because they are afraid that people may criticize them for not wanting to be Tongan; that is a ridiculous attitude, really." He added, "There is a lot more to being Tongan than dressing." These and other of the prince's comments, together with the lack of traditional Tongan etiquette due to royalty maintained in his lavish "bachelor quarters," rather suggest that the elaborately constructed and maintained edifice of Tongan cultural tradition

may, like the Berlin wall, come down quite quickly at some point, if not in the present reign, then in the next ('*Eva* 1998 41:7, 8).

The impeachment of Minister of Justice and Attorney-General the Honorable Tevita Tupou, which had been resolved on 24 September 1996, was voided on 18 September 1997 by a 12-6 vote following his apology to the Legislative Assembly. Tupou told the *Tonga Chronicle* that the apology did not mean that he was admitting guilt regarding the charges made against him, namely, that he had embezzled monies by going to the Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996 on full pay but without first obtaining the permission of the Speaker of the House to be absent. His apology, he said, "was guided by the advice of HRH Crown Prince Tupouto'a" (*TC*, 2 Oct 1997, 5). The people's representatives, however, still wanted the minister to resign. People have long memories in Tonga, including the Crown Prince, who promptly accused Tupouniua, Number Two People's Representative for Tongatapu, of forgetting that he had been in the same boat when he was still a minister many years ago and the nobles had saved him (*TC*, 25 Sept 1997, 1).

Tupouniua and the others remained firm, however, and on 8 October 1997 two hundred concerned citizens, led by some of the people's representatives, marched from the Free Wesleyan Centenary Church to Parliament House to present a petition with hundreds of signatures that protested the pardon. The petition claimed also that justice had been prevented thereby from taking its course under section 75 of the consti-

tution, cited the lack of alternative measures, and expressed concern that ministers of the Crown, who are appointed not elected, sided with the nobles' representatives in approving the pardon. "We are also concerned . . . that . . . the present system holds no future for the people," it read. The petition called for the removal of nobles' representatives from the House, claiming that they do not represent the people, and sought to remove the T\$6,000 annual allowance to noble titleholders. It asked also that the House appoint its chairman and vice-chairman. The issue had received much publicity and been discussed widely throughout the kingdom. A high-ranking noble and nobles' representative in Parliament, the Honorable Kalaniuvalu, said that the petition was calculated to provoke war between the nobles and the people, and that the peace presently enjoyed by the country was made possible only by the nobles' role. The nobles immediately introduced a petition that favored voiding the impeachment of the minister. On 16 October, by a 12-4 vote, the consideration of both petitions was postponed until next year's session.

On 17 September, Tupouniua, with Uili Fukofuka, the Number Two and Number Three People's Representatives for Tongatapu respectively, chaired a public meeting to consider the viability of a political party. Later, Tupouniua announced that there was no doubt it was time to form the "Tonga National Party" in Parliament. The number of participants at the meeting was not large but represented a wide range of people, which suggested further support at a later time.

Tupouniua believes that without a multiparty system, the claim for democracy has no basis. At present, there is nothing to bind parliamentary members on certain issues, with the result that there are personality-based decisions and votes. His aim is to get the government, including the king and the Privy Council, "to consider sympathetically and favorably the need for some change in the political structure." While the 1875 Constitution put Tonga way ahead of its neighboring countries, he said, it was now behind in terms of political advancement.

In September 1997, Tonga leased 3,766 acres of freehold land in Hawai'i near the town of Hale'iwa on O'ahu's north shore at a reported cost of US\$333,333. The country also negotiated for a further 1,600 acres of land to be leased for agricultural purposes from the Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate. This was one of five projects discussed by the king in his address from the throne at the close of the 97th Legislative Assembly on 20 November. Negotiations with foreign firms are progressing for the construction of an oil storage tank to service local and regional markets. The king also mentioned new cash crops and developments in fisheries.

Several people's representatives disagreed over the significance of the session. Pohiva claimed that not one single improvement had resulted, and blamed ministers for absenteeism and for not replying to questions sent to them in writing. Paasi, by contrast, believed that the session achieved "great work and significant changes," including an amendment to the Land Act that was introduced by a people's

representative and passed in June by the House. Previously, all bills had been drafted and submitted by the government and tabled only for parliamentary discussion. The passage of the first People's Bill signaled an open door for all legislators and indicated that for the first time a balance of power in the House had been achieved. In addition, rules were changed to disallow daily allowances to ministers absent from the House because they were overseas. Had the changes been implemented last year, T\$134,643 would have been saved. It was the first time an impeachment motion against a minister had been passed. Although it was canceled following the apology, it showed that clause 75 could be used. In the past, several impeachment motions had been made but aborted during discussion. In short, Paasi believed that the year saw the most significant and historic achievements since 1875. The Speaker thought the assembly was significant in sorting out a budget that was too difficult to understand and asking that it be presented again. Fukofuka was pleased with the work of the Law Committee and the intention to further cut costs next year.

In April 1998, friction broke out in Parliament over the misuse of land by high-ranking members. Minister of Police Clive Edwards had apparently been moving material into Nuku'alofa's lagoon in order to extend the land area on which he was building a house. Parliament was advised of the illegality of this procedure by Pohiva, who looks to impugn the integrity of the minister of police, having been treated similarly by him and impris-

oned in recent years. The lagoon's mangroves are protected by the environmental act, so the minister of lands invoked the law against Edwards, who then retaliated in a surprise move that shocked the cabinet and Tongan society generally by having his fellow minister, the noble Fakafanua, arrested and detained in prison on charges of corruption and fraud. Also detained were other members of the Ministry of Lands, including the permanent secretary, the chief registrar, the estimator, a registrar officer, and the acting chief surveyor. The minister promptly retired after the king in Privy Council accepted his resignation, and was remanded on bail in connection with eight criminal charges of alleged fraudulent conversion, extortion, and acceptance of bribes.

The king in Privy Council soon made a number of new appointments to cover the positions of minister of lands and governor of Ha'apai left vacant by the withdrawal of the Honorable Fakafanua. The governor of Vava'u, the Honorable Tu'i'afitu, a man of mature years educated in Australia and New Zealand, was appointed as minister of Lands, Survey, and Natural Resources. The Honorable Fielakepa, who holds a law degree from the University of Auckland, a masters in law from the International Maritime Law Institute, and a certificate in diplomatic studies from Oxford, and was installed in noble office after the death of his father in 1997, was made governor of Ha'apai. The Honorable Captain Tuita, who is heir to a title and the husband of the king's only daughter, and who, during his diplomatic career, has served as a

consul in both London and San Francisco, was appointed governor of Vava'u.

If, as many believe, Edwards was appointed before the 1993 general election as minister of police because of his formal legal training, and not just to bring his rather prodemocratic electioneering promises onto the side of the establishment, then calculations would appear to have gone somewhat awry. His detention of a fellow minister and noble, one who is, moreover, closely connected to the king's family, being husband to the queen's sister, father-in-law to the king's niece, and father to the minister of finance, his heir, K T Fakafanua, has shocked and embarrassed people. Edwards' daughter works closely with K T Fakafanua, and his son, also a lawyer, works in the Crown Law Office. If, perhaps, the attack on the Honorable Fakafanua was made in an attempt to draw attention away from the loss of the libel case against Pohiva (who was recently acquitted for lack of evidence of the charge of having allegedly called the king a traitor in an interview with a journalist overseas, which was reported in the *Wall Street Journal*), the new accusations have had the opposite effect and instead drawn even more attention to Edwards' puzzling lack of legal acuity.

Charges of bribery and corruption are notoriously hard to prove, particularly in a system that allows government ministers to be treated informally in many ways as old-style chiefs to whom it is appropriate to offer lavish gifts. Who can say whether a large pig

worth T\$600, kava, fine mats worth much more, and actual sums of money, constitute bribes or mere gifts to respectfully facilitate the change of names in which land is held? Any such case promises to be complicated and expensive, and it is doubtful whether a lawyer or police officers in Tonga are capable of marshaling the evidence and arguments to make it stick.

Pohiva's case of alleged libel of the monarch reportedly cost the government more than one million pa'anga, because he was awarded costs when acquitted. The three men, Pohiva and two journalists, the editor and assistant editor of *Taimi o Tonga*, who were wrongfully imprisoned in the previous year, are now bringing suits of over three million pa'anga in damages against the authorities. The gestures of indignation and bravado made by the minister of police are proving costly to the Tongan government, not only in terms of money. His latest flourish of ministerial power in a kind of tit-for-tat invocation of the law as revenge for having it invoked against himself, turned so bluntly against a noble fellow minister, has yet to reveal fully its social and political implications.

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