

joined other island countries in a plea for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to larger countries that contribute most to global warming. Island nations have been described as “the conscience” on climate change (*CIN*, 21 Dec 2006, 5). The Cook Islands is already being impacted by climatic changes, particularly with regard to its tourism and pearl industries (*CIN*, 16 April 2007, 3).

As part of the government’s plan to reduce dependency on fossil oil, a wind energy farm project was proposed at Kiikii on the island of Rarotonga (*CIN*, 24 Jan 2007, 1). Preliminary testing for persistent organic pollutants (POPS) in Rarotonga lagoons indicated concentrations of chlorinated pesticide (DDT and methoxychlor), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) and phthalates (DEHP) above the detection limit. Environmentalist Imogen Ingram pointed out that the government needed to take positive action to remedy the environmental challenge because it was a signatory to the Stockholm Convention that agreed to a total eradication of POPS (*CIN*, 15 Nov 2006, 7).

Another problem that emerged during the year took the form of the glassy-winged “sharpshooter” bug. Discovered in Rarotonga, and suspected to have arrived on plants smuggled in from Tahiti, the insect feeds on more than three hundred host plants including trees, crops, and plants such as hibiscus, gardenia, and papaya. It is also known to transmit Pierce’s disease, which affects grapevines (*CIN*, 4 April 2007, 1, 7). In more positive environmental news, the year marked the return of the kura or lorikeet

bird, which was once plentiful on the island of Atiu. Before it became almost extinct, its feathers were used for the cloaks and headdresses of high chiefs. In a joint effort in April, naturalists and Atiuans brought in twenty-seven birds from Rimatara Island in French Polynesia (*CIN*, 28 April 2007, 1).

As part of its Unit Titles Bill initiative the Tepaki group purchased the twelve-unit Castaway property for NZ\$2.3 million, adding to their recent purchases of Manea Beach for NZ\$1.8 million, and Lagoon Lodges for NZ\$4 million, with expected settlements for the Aquarius and the Manuia Beach properties (*CIN*, 2 May 2007, 1). The Tepaki group also maintains a keen interest in building a high-rise apartment block on the Cook Islands High Commission office location in New Zealand. The New Zealand High Court had ruled against Tepaki’s so-called “diplomatic project,” which planned to turn the Cook Islands High Commission chancery in Wellington into a high-rise office and apartment complex. Originally approved by the Cook Islands government, the deal was canceled when certain conditions were not met and when the government changed (*CIN*, 18 Oct 2006, 1).

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FRENCH POLYNESIA

Political instability continued in French Polynesia during the year under review. The barely two-year-

old pro-independence government of Oscar Temaru lost power to a pro-French coalition when assembly members switched their allegiances. However, the new government stood on very unstable foundations from the beginning, and its internal divisions became more and more apparent toward the end of the review period.

July 2006 started with the highly publicized inauguration of a monument for the victims of nuclear testing by President Temaru on the fortieth anniversary of the first French nuclear test on Moruroa Atoll (*TPM*, July 2006; *TP*, 2 July 2006). While former territorial governments had supported the French policy of denying the issue of irradiation, Temaru's administration took sides with the test victims association, Moruroa e Tatou (Moruroa and Us), and supported their claims for transparency, independent inquiries, and medical follow-up for the former test workers and inhabitants of the islands closest to the testing base. French High Commissioner Anne Boquet, however, declared the inauguration to be an "unfriendly gesture" toward France (*TP*, 3 July 2006).

In late July, Florent de Vathaire, a radiation expert from the National Institute for Health and Medical Research (*INSERM*) of France, presented the results of a long-term study of thyroid cancer in French Polynesia. The study demonstrated a correlation between exposure to above-average radiation and the increase in cases of thyroid cancer, making him the first agent of a French government office to confirm the harmfulness of the tests (*TP*, 2 Aug 2007). He called for the immediate declassification of all medical files since the beginning of above-

ground testing and communicated the results of his study in an open letter to President Temaru, who read it in front of the Assembly of French Polynesia (*TP*, 4 Aug 2007).

On 4 August the French State Council removed Representative Nicole Bouteau from the assembly and declared her ineligible for one year. This was after the electoral audit office detected a procedural mistake during the election campaign in 2005, when Bouteau's party *No Oe E Te Nunaa* did not properly designate its financial delegate (*TP*, 4 Aug 2007). The harsh punishment of a young politician with no prior record of misdealings, for an accidental mistake, seemed at odds with the lenient treatment of other individuals previously charged with corruption. Although sentenced for embezzlement of public funds earlier in 2006, Emile Vernaudeau remained eligible, and on 13 July a court abbreviated Henri Flohr's five-year period of ineligibility for political corruption (*TP*, 17 July 2007; *TPM*, Sept 2007). Bouteau, one of the country's most popular and respected politicians, was replaced in the assembly by Thilda Fuller of the *Fetia Api* party, led by Philip Schyle. The *Fetia Api* party now had two representatives, and Bouteau's party was no longer represented.

In mid-October, another political crisis occurred when trade union members attempted to force the Temaru government to resign. After union leader Ronald Terorotua unsuccessfully called for a general strike, on 12 October members of his trade union *O Oe To Oe Rima* (You Are Your Own Hand) blocked the main road into downtown Papeete. They were joined by members of the former territorial

militia Groupement d'Intervention de la Polynésie (GIP, Polynesian Intervention Grouping) under its ex-commander Léonard Puputauki. The GIP had been dissolved by the Temaru government in January but continued to erect roadblocks throughout the following months. Members of a bus drivers' union reinforced the roadblocks with their buses. The protesters did not give clear reasons for their actions, expressing only a general sentiment of dissatisfaction, and the Temaru government refused to negotiate with them. Temaru then left the country to attend the Pacific Islands Forum in Fiji, where French Polynesia and New Caledonia were admitted as associate members (*TP*, 25 Oct 2007). After the president left, the protesters removed the roadblocks, but on 21 October they occupied the presidential palace, the vice president's office, and the assembly building. Temaru interpreted this as an attempted coup and, from Suva, requested that the French security forces intervene. During the night of 22–23 October, French paramilitary police squads, under orders from the high commission, intervened to liberate the occupied buildings. They used teargas to disperse the protesters in front of the assembly building after some of them turned violent (*TP*, 23 Oct 2007).

After the president's return, the strike leaders called a demonstration and demanded the resignation of High Commissioner Boquet, but only about two hundred people showed up for the march. The blockades were interpreted, not as expressions of public dissatisfaction, but rather as maneuvers manipulated by the political opposition (*TPM*, Nov 2006).

While the French intervention reinforced the position and credibility of the French state, it raised questions about the credibility of Temaru and his government, since he had vigorously denounced the French security forces in the past. While ordering them to intervene on his behalf, he made strong declarations criticizing France at the Pacific Islands Forum meeting (*TPM*, Nov 2006).

In a communiqué on 1 November, the presidency explained its strategy to pursue the reinscription of the country on the UN list of non-self-governing territories. This would guarantee an international process of decolonization, and allow the population to choose between various options, including independence (*TP*, 1 Nov 2006). Nevertheless, Temaru continued to be attacked by pro-French forces for his alleged support of independence. Throughout the second half of the year, controversial statements by the president, his cabinet, and assembly members continued to provoke heated debate. At the opening of the agricultural show in September, Temaru deplored the increasing inability of young Tahitians to farm and fish, and accused the French education system of producing only “idiots and unemployed” (*TP*, 4 Sept 2007; *TPM*, Sept 2007). During an assembly session in December, Union pour la Démocratie (UPLD) representative Ruben Teremate raised his concerns about the immigration of French settlers, referring to “‘ofe popa‘a” (foreign bamboo) displacing the “‘ofe ma‘ohi” (native bamboo) on the west coast of Tahiti. During the same session, Temaru welcomed the assembly members with the words “Greetings to

the ho‘o ‘āi‘a [sellouts] and to the here ‘āi‘a [patriots]” (*TP*, 10 Dec 2006). The French high commissioner and the pro-French opposition denounced these speeches as provocative, racist, and xenophobic.

On 10 November, Health Minister Pia Hiro resigned, accusing Temaru of giving inappropriate guidelines for health policy. While Hiro wished to maintain the present French standards in the local health system, Temaru had suggested keeping costs down by applying the standards of the independent Pacific Islands countries instead. Temaru appointed Tahitian physician Dr Charles Tetaria as the new minister for health (*TPM*, Dec 2006; *TP*, 12 Nov 2006).

Amid all these political troubles, the government sponsored the celebrations for the new local holiday *Matari‘i i Ni‘a* on 20 November. The rising of the Pleiades (*Matari‘i i ni‘a*) marked the beginning of the most fertile season in ancient Tahitian culture. The Temaru government had made this the new official local holiday, replacing 29 June, which marked the annexation of the Tahitian kingdom to France in 1880. Under the Flosse government 29 June had been celebrated as the “day of autonomy.” While the latter was politically controversial, 20 November was intended to be a purely cultural celebration of Polynesian identity and spirituality (*TP*, 30 Oct 2007). The 2006 celebrations became a large pan-Polynesian cultural festival, with groups from Aotearoa, Tonga, Sāmoa, Tokelau, Hawai‘i, and Rapa Nui participating. The festival was opened with a kava ceremony as well as traditional proceedings led by the religious revival group *Te Hivare-*

reata under the leadership of Tahu‘a (traditional priest) Sunny Moanaura Walker. The celebrations once more epitomized the new cultural policy of traditional revival and reintegration into the wider Polynesian community (*TP*, 19 and 21 Nov 2007).

While the government thus continued to pursue its policy of pan-Pacific cooperation and cultural renaissance, its political foundation in the assembly became more and more shaky. Months before, insurmountable tensions had developed within the bare majority UPLD coalition, and in April 2006, Temaru’s main coalition partner Emile Vernaudeau left the coalition and allied himself with the pro-French *Tahoeraa* opposition of former President Gaston Flosse. Temaru, however, had temporarily saved his assembly majority through a makeshift alliance with four opportunistic representatives from the Tuamotu and Marquesas islands, who were originally elected on a *Tahoeraa* list in 2004 but had frequently changed sides. Due to the unreliability of the four representatives, Temaru’s new majority proved to be very unstable. In October and November, threats of a new political switch were expressed by the four, subsequently known as “Islanders,” and by late November it was unclear who held the majority (*TP*, 22 Nov 2006; *TPM*, Dec 2006). However, after long debates and delays, the budget for 2007 was finally passed on 7 December with the votes of the UPLD, including the four “Islanders,” so that the government’s majority appeared to be once more secured (*TP*, 7 Dec 2006).

Only a few days later, the opposition filed a motion of censure. Surprisingly, the motion was passed on

13 December, with a bare majority of twenty-nine votes, making it clear that two of the “Islanders” had indeed changed sides again, while the two Fetia Api representatives had given up their neutrality and joined the opposition (TP, 13 Dec 2006). In the following two weeks, while Temaru’s government remained in office as a caretaker administration, a new majority coalition under the name of “Autonomist platform” was formed, comprising Flosse’s Tahoeraa, Vernaudon’s Ai’a Api, Jean-Christophe Bouissou’s Rautahi (which had split from Tahoeraa), and the four “Islanders.” As both Flosse and his son-in-law and designated successor Edouard Fritch were unacceptable to the smaller coalition partners, Bora Bora Mayor Gaston Tong Sang, who had been lands minister under Flosse, was designated as the new majority’s presidential candidate (PIR, 21 Dec 2007).

On 26 December, Tong Sang was elected to be the new president with a majority of 31 votes, against 26 for Temaru. Besides the members of the new coalition, the two representatives of Fetia Api had also voted for Tong Sang. In his inaugural speech, the new president promised to consolidate the country’s financial situation and cooperate more constructively with the French government (NT, 27 Dec 2006; DT, 27 Dec 2006; *l’Hebdo*, 28 Dec 2006). Temaru, on the other hand, denounced the change of government, which he attributed to a conspiracy directed from Paris designed to sabotage his administration (*Fenua Info*, 19 Dec 2006; NT, 27 Dec 2006; DT, 27 Dec 2006). Some UPLD members also maintained that behind the formal leadership of Tong Sang, it was

actually Gaston Flosse who pulled the strings (*To’ere*, 21 Dec 2006).

The new president, born to a Chinese-Polynesian family on Bora Bora, received an engineer’s diploma in France and headed the municipality of his home island since 1989. Within the Tahoeraa party he was considered to be a rational technocrat (DT, 27 Dec 2007).

Three days after his election, Tong Sang presented his cabinet of fifteen ministers. Temauri Foster, Mayor of Hao atoll and leader of the four “Islanders,” was appointed vice president and minister for Municipal Development. Seven ministers were from Tahoeraa, most of them former ministers under Flosse, including Teva Rohfritsch (Economy and Labor), Armelle Merceron (Finance), Tearii Alpha (Education), Jules Ienfa (Health), Madeleine Brémond (Social and Family Affairs and Housing), and Frédéric Riveta (Agriculture). Interesting to note was the absence of Gaston Flosse and most of his inner circle. Also striking was the overrepresentation of the “Islanders,” with four cabinet ministers—besides Vice President Foster, there were Moehau Teriitahi (Outer Island Development), Louis Frébault (Equipment), and Michel Yip (Postal Services, Telecommunications, and Pearl Farming)—and of the two small coalition parties with two ministers each: Maina Sage (Tourism and Environment) and Moana Blanchard (Transportation) for Rautahi; Natacha Taurua (Culture) and Clarenntz Vernaudon (Youth and Sports) for Ai’a Api. The “Islanders” had thus played the political power game very successfully. Beginning as Tahoeraa backbenchers, within two years they

rose to become the “kingmakers” in the assembly and received leading positions in the new cabinet (*DT*, 30 Dec 2007).

This pattern of opportunistic behavior by the “Islanders” led to strong criticism among the population. In more general terms, it was pointed out that the outer islands were over-represented in the new cabinet in comparison to Tahiti (where more than 70 percent of the population live). Besides that, within a few days of the appointment of the new cabinet, tensions developed within Tahoeraa, between the hard core of Flosse followers and the rest of the party. At the first assembly session of the New Year on 11 January, the new government lacked a majority because Flosse and two other Tahoeraa representatives were absent. The UPLD therefore immediately filed a motion of censure against Tong Sang, but it was eventually defeated (*TPM*, Feb 2007; *TP*, 18 Jan 2007).

The turning of the year thus marked, for the time being, the end of the barely two-year-long political experiment of “Tauti” (change) under Temaru’s leadership. This was regarded with mixed feelings. Most people seemed to be generally disappointed with politics and showed neither grief nor joy about the change of government. While there was a degree of discontent regarding the return of the Tahoeraa after the previous experience of almost twenty years of increasingly corrupt rule by Flosse, the initial euphoria for Temaru’s “Tauti” policy had also begun to fade away. Even though Temaru is indeed one of the few local politicians to have a true vision for the country’s future,

his government undertook only a few concrete steps to implement this vision. Further, despite the promise to break with the system of nepotism and corruption established under Flosse, many UPLD government officials had engaged in similar activities. In addition, Temaru’s plans to lead the country into independence were regularly attacked by the opposition, and many people were influenced by their pro-French propaganda. Unfortunately, most UPLD politicians failed to rigorously uphold their moral standards and implement their political visions.

After their initial attempt to oust the Tong Sang government proved unsuccessful, the now opposition UPLD announced that it would still continue to do whatever it could to get the new government, which they considered illegitimate, removed from office. For several consecutive weeks during late January and February, several hundred Temaru followers held weekly demonstrations against Tong Sang, demanding his resignation. The reason for the protests was an ongoing judicial inquiry against Tong Sang, who as Flosse’s minister of land affairs had been involved in a corruption affair in the early 2000s. At one of the protest events, Temaru argued that ethical standards require a politician to at least temporarily resign from office during a judicial inquiry (*TP*, 31 Jan, 7 Feb 2007). Temaru also expressed his hope that Socialist candidate Ségolène Royal might win the upcoming French presidential elections, and subsequently his party campaigned vigorously for her. This was something completely new, as Tavini Huiraatira used to boycott French presidential elections.

In early January, Tong Sang traveled to France to meet President Jacques Chirac and other French government officials in order to revive relations with Paris that had cooled down under Temaru (*TP*, 16 Jan 2007). That the new French Polynesian president was able to get an appointment with Chirac barely two weeks after his election, while Temaru had had to wait more than a year for such a meeting, clearly confirmed that Paris was politically biased toward Papeete. Tong Sang was also able to successfully lobby the French Parliament, and on 24 January the National Assembly voted to change the election system of French Polynesia by deleting the one-third-of-seats bonus. This provision had been inserted into the new organic law of French Polynesia in 2004 at the request of Flosse, but in effect it had helped Temaru win the 2004 and 2005 elections. The modification was confirmed by the French Senate and validated by the Constitutional Council in mid-February (*TPM*, Feb and March 2007).

In March 2007, the struggle over nuclear follow-up resumed. The French delegate for nuclear safety, Marcel Jurien de la Gravière, went to Tahiti to present an official report by the French Ministry of Defense on the radiological impact of nuclear testing (*TP*, 6 March 2007). The report admits some negative effects, but continues to downplay their significance. Moruroa e Tatou strongly criticized the report. The Tong Sang administration, however, had weakened the position of the test victim association by replacing anti-nuclear assembly members and Moruroa e Tatou members with bureaucrats in the government-

affiliated Orientation Council for the Follow-up on the Consequences of Nuclear Testing (COSCEN), established by the Temaru government (*TP*, 9 March 2007; *TPM*, April 2007).

While the new government proved to be an obedient puppet of Paris regarding the nuclear question, it remained very unstable. On 1 March the “Islanders” had founded their own party, called Te Niu Hau Manahune (the foundation of democracy). Together with the two other minor coalition parties, Rautahi and Ai’a Api, they created a third parliamentary group named “Polynésiens Ensemble” (Polynesians Together) in the assembly (*TP*, 1 March 2007). This proved to be another destabilizing factor for the majority. Several members of Tahoreaa broke away from their party and joined the new group, while Flosse clashed with some of the “Islanders” over budgetary issues (*TP*, 23 and 24 March 2007).

On 12 April, the deep rift within the ruling coalition became even more apparent when two pro-government candidates were presented for the yearly reelection of the assembly’s Speaker. While Edouard Fritch represented Tahoreaa, Hiro Tefaarere (an ex-UPLD representative who is now part of Ai’a Api) was the candidate of the Polynésiens Ensemble group. In the first round of the election, UPLD candidate Antony Geros received a majority of 26 votes, against 21 for Fritch, 8 for Tefaarere, and 2 abstentions (the two Fetia Api representatives). In a second round, Fritch received only 18 votes and Tefaarere 11, while Geros’s votes remained constant. In a final runoff, Fritch received a majority of only 28 votes against 27 for Geros and

2 abstentions. One of the government representatives had apparently voted for Geros rather than for Fritch (*TP*, 12 Apr 2007).

While the UPLD opposition stood strong and united, President Tong Sang's coalition government experienced a serious crisis only four months after his inauguration. Apparently, a power struggle was being fought between Gaston Flosse's Tahoeraa core group and a heterogeneous group of younger, more opportunistic politicians who stood behind Tong Sang. The latter group was on the winning side, at least it seemed so at first. While the Flosse faction had won some points by electing Fritch as the assembly speaker, more representatives defected to the other faction. Immediately after Fritch's election, three Tahoeraa representatives from the Leeward Islands, Tong Sang's home archipelago, entered the Polynésiens Ensemble group, and were subsequently threatened with exclusion from Tahoeraa. Rumors spread regarding the possible resignation or exclusion from the party of even President Tong Sang himself (*TPM*, May 2006; *TP*, 16 April 2007).

The next significant political event was the French presidential elections of 21 April and 5 May. Winning candidate Nicolas Sarkozy from Chirac's right-wing party, Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP), was also leading the votes in French Polynesia. In the first election round, he received 45.23 percent of the votes (31.18 percent in France), against 41.68 percent for Ségolène Royal (25.87 percent in France). The third place was claimed by the liberal François Bayrou with 7.15 percent (18.57 percent in France).

The nine other candidates received less than 2 percent of French Polynesia's votes each. In the runoff election, Sarkozy barely won with 51.89 percent (53.06 percent nationally) against 48.11 percent for Royal. At 69.12 percent at the first round and 74.81 percent at the runoff, the participation rates in the territory were unusually high for a French presidential election (French Ministry of Interior Web site; *TP*, 22 April and 6 May 2007).

While few local voters take an interest in metropolitan French politics, French presidential elections have been used by local politicians to measure their own influence by endorsing one of the candidates (*TPM*, Feb and March 2007). In this case, all the pro-French parties of the ruling coalition supported Sarkozy, as he was the candidate of Chirac's UMP party (*TP*, 18 April 2007). The UPLD firmly supported Royal, and led a march of 5,000 people in her favor before the election, hoping that her administration would adopt a more constructive attitude toward Tahiti than the strongly partisan Chirac administration (*TP*, 14 April 2007). The result of the two election rounds shows that the polarization of the political landscape into two almost equal camps had consolidated, while the parties of the "third way," Fetia Api and No Oe E Te Nunaa, which supported Bayrou, were in decline.

It was interesting to note that Sarkozy was not leading the runoff vote in all municipalities of Tahiti, and was leading in only a few of the outer islands. In the Windward Islands (Tahiti and Moorea), Royal had the lead not only in the municipality of Faaa (where Temaru is the mayor) but

also in Hitiaa O Te Ra, Papara, Paea, and Moorea. As for the outer islands, Royal led the vote in the Leeward, western Tuamotu, and Marquesas islands. Tahoeraa had won in all these archipelagos at the last territorial elections in 2004 that brought the UPLD to power. In the 2005 by-elections, which reinforced the UPLD majority, the outer islands did not participate. That the same islands now voted for the candidate supported by UPLD might be seen as an indication that the UPLD has now established itself on the outer islands as well. Interestingly, Royal led the vote even on Tong Sang's home island of Bora Bora (*TP*, 6 May 2007).

The Pro-French forces were victorious again when the two deputies of French Polynesia in the French National Assembly were elected on 2 and 16 June. In the Western constituency (western half of Tahiti island, Moorea, the Leeward and Austral islands), the Tahoeraa incumbent and Papeete Mayor Michel Buillard led the vote in the first round with 41.50 percent, slightly ahead of his UPLD challenger, ex-President Oscar Temaru (40.16 percent), the difference being only 700 votes. On Tahiti and Moorea islands as well as on some of the outer islands, Temaru led the vote. Jean-Christophe Bouissou (Rautahi) scored third with 8.21 percent, ahead of Nicole Bouteau (No Oe E Te Nunaa) with 7.24 percent. In the Eastern Constituency (eastern half of Tahiti, Tuamotu-Gambier, and Marquesas Islands), the Tahoeraa candidate and Papara Mayor Bruno Sandras led the vote with 36.98 percent, followed by UPLD candidate Pierre Frébault (former minister of labor under Temaru)

with 29.73 percent. Incumbent Béatrice Vernaudon, who had been elected in 2002 for Tahoeraa but had declared herself to stand above partisan divisions in 2004, received only the third position with 33.53 percent (*TP*, 2, 3 and 5 June 2007).

In the runoff election, Buillard won the western constituency with 54.07 percent against Temaru with 45.93 percent, and Sandras did likewise in the eastern constituency with 56.96 percent against Frébault with 43.04 percent. The participation rate was considerably lower than at the presidential elections, with only slightly over 50 percent in the first round, and slightly over 60 percent in the runoff. The strong increase in votes for the Tahoeraa candidates in the second round was due to the endorsement by Bouissou and other minority candidates. As a result, the victorious candidates led the vote nearly everywhere in the western constituency, except for Temaru's municipality of Faaa and the Austral islands of Raivavae and Rimatara. In the east, Frébault led the vote in two districts on Tahiti, and on some of the Tuamotu islands, but also in the Marquesas Archipelago (*TP*, 16 June 2007).

Unsurprisingly, the governing coalition saw the election results as a popular legitimization of the change of government in December. At the same time, however, the tensions between the two factions of Tahoeraa (Flosse versus Tong Sang) surfaced again very prominently, as Tong Sang refused to officially endorse Sandras (a Flosse protégé) in the eastern constituency (*TP*, 5 June 2007). Sandras's election victory was thus seen by Flosse as a confirmation of his leadership and

a rejection of Tong Sang. The UPLD was disappointed by the results, but Temaru remarked that it was clear that his party had a stable electorate of at least 40 percent, and that their defeat was only due to the cooperation of all local pro-French forces as well as the massive vote of French settlers for the Tahoeraa candidates (*DT*, 17 June 2007; *TPM*, July 2007).

Meanwhile, the crisis within Tong Sang's majority continued, when on 5 June, Minister of Pearl Farming, Postal Services, and Telecommunications Michel Yip resigned, denouncing irregularities and corruption among his fellow ministers from the outer islands. His portfolios were redistributed among President Tong Sang and Vice President Foster (*TP*, 6 June 2007; *TPM*, July 2007). Subsequently, the UPLD filed another motion of censure on 19 June (*PIR*, 20 June 2007), and while Yip added his vote to those of the UPLD, it was defeated in the assembly on 23 June.

Tong Sang's government seems to be in a permanent state of instability. Both the UPLD and Flosse's group apparently want to provoke the dissolution of the assembly and new elections. However on 22 June, new French Minister for Overseas Territories Christian Estrosi stated there will be no dissolution before the regular elections of 2009 (*TPM*, July 2007; *NT*, 27 June 2007).

The review period ended with the celebration of the controversial autonomy holiday of 29 June, which was reinstated by Tong Sang and celebrated at the presidential palace with great pomp. The Order of Tahiti Nui, created by Flosse but abolished under Temaru, was reactivated and

medals distributed. Tong Sang and his coalition partners gave speeches in which they praised the dependence of their country on France and expressed their gratitude to King Pomare V for signing the convention of annexation. The president then demonstrated his ignorance by claiming that, thanks to France, Tahiti had the only university in the Pacific, bluntly ignoring universities in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Sāmoa that were all founded well before the University of French Polynesia. In a press conference on the same day, Temaru and leading members of his party denounced the celebration and talked about the true history of colonization, and the background of the 1880 treaty (*TPM*, July 2007; *DT*, 30 June 2007). It was interesting to observe that Flosse and his Tahoeraa core group were absent from Tong Sang's celebration. Flosse had also stopped publicly denouncing Temaru for quite some time, which has been interpreted by observers as an indication that he might eventually break apart the majority and strike a deal with the UPLD.

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MĀORI ISSUES

While political tension increased for Māori during the year, there was also great sadness. Like our Tongan and Samoan relations we lost significant leaders. In August 2006 the Tainui confederation of tribes lost their arikinui (paramount chief) of forty years, Dame Te Atairangikāhu. As the hereditary leader of Tainui's Kingitanga movement, she was their queen. Tainui established the Kingitanga in the 1850s in an attempt to stop the confiscation of their territories by European immigrants. They are the only tribal confederation in New Zealand to have established a British-style monarchy, and although the Kingitanga does not include most iwi (tribal groupings), it nevertheless enjoys widespread support and respect within Maoridom. Thus despite the fact that Dame Te Ata held no constitutional position in New Zealand law, she was often referred to as "the Māori Queen." She was a strong figure in Māori politics and a staunch supporter of Māori sports and culture (Bennion 2006 [Aug], 1; [Oct], 1; *Mana*, Oct–Nov 2006).

In September 2006, Ngāti Whātua lost their paramount chief, Emeritus Professor Sir Hugh Kāwharu. He was the chair of the Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei Māori Trust Board for more

than twenty years and was the major force behind the Ngāti Whātua Treaty of Waitangi claims to the Auckland area. His determination to break through government mean-spiritedness and intransigence in order to settle the claims saw him taking on a hugely punishing workload after he retired as professor and head of the Department of Māori Studies at the University of Auckland in 1993. He signed an agreement in principle toward settlement of those claims shortly before his death (Bennion 2006 [Oct], 2).

In April 2007, veteran Māori actor and filmmaker Don Selwyn, one of New Zealand's most outstanding television and film producers and directors, passed away. He was Ngāti Kurī, Te Aupōuri, and Ngāti Kahu of the Far North. His greatest masterpiece was *Te Tangata Whai Rawa o Wēniti: The Māori Merchant of Venice*, the film version of Shakespeare's famous play, which had been translated into Māori by Pei Te Hurinui Jones in 1945 (Māori Party 2007a).

On the political scene over the past year, the racist attitudes toward Māori that continue to dominate the New Zealand Parliament resulted in ongoing and increasing tension between Māori and the government on many issues. Māori have once again had to resort to protest actions, as the government repeatedly denied us our legal rights. This time, however, coordinated protests across the country in response to refusals to return stolen lands resulted in the government's backing down and calling a temporary truce on that particular issue. For apart from strong judicial backing, particularly from the Waitangi Tribunal, and international condemnation from the United Nations (Stavenhagen