

colonial and post-colonial experience of the developing world”?

In 1971, when the MAB project began, the continued growth of the global economy seemed assured. The problem, in spite of the minority misgivings of those on the left, was how the undeveloped nations, among them Fiji, were to be enabled to catch up with the industrialized world. How dated that perception seems now. In spite of three decades of scholarship and advice, pilot projects, conferences, aid, research, and copious government reports and development plans, the poor are poorer and the rich are richer in both poor countries and rich, and the gap between poor and rich countries has grown.

The early successes in east Asia are unlikely to be repeated in Africa or the Pacific. The current buzzword that reflects that realization, *sustainable development*, will soon dissolve into its two inherently contradictory components, and the choice between the mirage of development, as we have understood that word in the past, and sustainability, which may yet be within our grasp, will become apparent.

The value of such studies as this will then be not what their ambivalent conclusions can teach planners and politicians about development, but what the research that went into them can teach us about sustainability. Richard Bedford et al (*The Small Islands and the Reefs* 1978, 33), quoting M. C. Howard, point out that the people of Kabara have cause to sympathize with those in the industrialized world, who have only one way of life to choose from. Kabarans “not only have yours, but our own as well,” a choice they

have wisely continued to exercise. As Bayliss-Smith observes, the people of the eastern islands have stubbornly resisted efforts to convert them to wholly cash-crop producers. They have retained control over their own means of subsistence “whilst selecting among the available alternatives for ways of earning money in a rational manner.” Tim McNaught’s conclusion that “in a world running out of easy answers, no one will be surprised if the entire nation looks to its Fijian heritage for some of the arts of living well on islands” (81) can also be extended, in the context of the 1990s, to the wider world. As industrialized society, both east and west, reaches the limits of ecological tolerance and abandons its claims to control of the global periphery, the kind of rational opportunism that this book documents so well may have lessons for the rest of us.

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*Towards a Pacific Island Community.* Report of the South Pacific Policy Review Group. Wellington: Government Printer, 1990. ISBN 0-477-01547-6, xv + 300 pp, map, tables, graphs, appendixes. NZ\$35.95.

In September 1989 the New Zealand Labour government, headed by Geoffrey Palmer, took a controversial decision to join Australia in a major and long-term naval-frigate construction project. Part of the rationale for this decision was that it would enhance New Zealand’s capacity to play a security role in the South Pacific. Since this

claim was greeted skeptically—especially within the Labour party—the government decided to conduct a full review of New Zealand's existing approach, standing, policies, and needs throughout the Pacific Islands. Given a wide brief and substantial support for travel (the consulting team visited sixteen countries), the review group led by Dr John Henderson, former head of the Prime Minister's Department serving David Lange, had ample scope to recommend.

The review group realized that because its genesis was politically colored their report would stand or fall by its demonstrated familiarity with Pacific Island conditions. Eliciting information from contrasting sources within the countries visited was emphasized—for example by consulting outside the capital centers. The conduct of the exercise itself was also seen as a means of developing closer mutual understandings. In the end, these procedures worked well; an investigating team comprising officials and business, church, and other interested nongovernmental representatives faithfully conveyed through their findings a sense of the firsthand. Concerns from the Pacific Islands expressed in this report ring true.

Of the report's recommendations, the most controversial within New Zealand has been the favoring of a restoration of full ministerial contact with Fiji. This pill is sugared by a claim that such a move would not imply approval of the means by which the Suva regime gained or holds power, although the report states, "the reality is that the absolute requirement to enshrine indigenous Fijian paramountcy, which gave

rise to the coups, will remain the unwavering objective of those who are in a position to shape events" (240–241). Of related interest are recommendations that the New Zealand government reaffirm the importance of maintaining the freedom of the news media in the region with measures that "promote media objectivity and sensitivity" (238). As well, the New Zealand government should "place on record, on *appropriate occasions*, its support for such fundamental issues as the democratic process, freedom of speech, rights of women, and the rights of disadvantaged groups" (239, italics added). But for the current regime in Suva, India take note, it is distinctly inappropriate to have such matters raised. On the question of Fiji, the report's pragmatism outweighs its principle, though it does maintain that military assistance from New Zealand to that regime should not be restored without a resumption of parliamentary democracy.

This handling of the Fiji question can be understood, if not necessarily accepted, given that Fiji's significance for regional cooperation is emphasized by the review group as a key focus for New Zealand's foreign policy. It is recommended that the existing South Pacific Forum be broadened to become the dominant regional body; that non-independent Pacific Island territories be given a new observer status within it; that consideration be accorded the development of a regional conflict-resolution and mediation centre; and that Forum countries should consider an "umbrella compact" that would draw together instruments of regional security now in place (eg, SPNFZ, SPREP, SPARTECA, the Driftnet Fishing Con-

vention). The last recommendation would provide a framework to add other regional agreements as they are reached, and give "the Forum the responsibility for facilitating a comprehensive approach to regional security concerns" (272).

Stronger advisory services are recommended to foster environmental management, conservation, and education; to provide legal and technical expertise in any negotiation for mining seabed minerals; and to enhance trade development services. Economic measures recommended include a liberalization of the current SPARTECA 50 percent rules of origin; consideration of the feasibility of a Pacific Free Trade Zone; and an insistence by New Zealand that Pacific Island concerns are not ignored in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation discussions currently in train.

New Zealand needs to do more to enhance its standing in the Pacific Islands by extending parliamentary and ministerial contacts, by establishing a diplomatic presence in Pape'ete and Honolulu, and by increasing its levels of overseas development assistance to 0.36 percent of GDP by 1996 while incorporating principles of sustainable development. According to the report, the radical surgery sustained by the Wellington bureaucracy in 1987 under so-called state sector reforms has done needless damage to the coordinated management of Pacific Islands policy.

A separate Maori unit within the Ministry of External Relations and Trade should be established, while greater efforts are needed in the field of cultural diplomacy. Foreign service by

New Zealand officials in the Pacific Islands deserves higher status and more attention to language training. Traditional immigration access patterns from the Pacific Islands to New Zealand should be maintained.

One novel recommendation in the report is the proposal to establish a regional Pacific "Greenhouse Gas Equilibrium Zone," presumably a means of giving added weight to the 1987 Montreal Protocol designed to curb CFC emissions. Found "interesting" by Prime Minister Palmer was the report's suggestion that funds from the 1989 *Rainbow Warrior* arbitration with France be used to establish the proposed diplomatic post in Pape'ete. The New Zealand Foreign Ministry was apparently unimpressed.

Aspects of the report will go before the South Pacific Forum for consideration following review by the New Zealand government. Comparable reports on the South Pacific by Australian parliamentary and United States congressional committees are relatively recent and germane. Claims that the Pacific is being analyzed to exhaustion have some validity, but do nothing to exempt governments, involved non-governmental agencies, and informed public and academic opinion from perusing these materials for what they have to offer. Although this particular report places the onus squarely on New Zealand to smarten up its act in the Pacific Islands, the island countries should also be asking what kind of relationship they want with their neighbor to the south.

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