

## Political Reviews

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*Micronesia in Review: Issues and Events, 1 July 2011  
to 30 June 2012*

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## WALLIS AND FUTUNA

The 2011 Territorial Day in Wallis and Futuna was very unusual. On the 29th of July, Wallisians and Futunans celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their becoming French citizens. Feasts and cultural exhibitions were performed on both islands on 28 and 29 July. Marie-Luce Penchard, who was the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) minister of Overseas France at that time, traveled to Wallis and Futuna to attend the celebrations. Other political personalities who took part in the event included Harold Martin, president of New Caledonia, and representatives of the Wallisian and Futunan diaspora in that country. As a reminder of the ancestral links between Wallis Island (East Uvea Island) and the island of Ouvéa (West Uvea Island) in the Loyalty Islands of New Caledonia, members of Chief Nekelo's clan also

made the trip, accompanied by Marie-Claude Tjibaou. Richard Marles, the Australian parliamentary secretary for Pacific Island affairs, was also among the guests.

In the field of digital telecommunications, the whole territory was to switch entirely to digital television service on 27 September 2011, a transition that was completed only in November due to defective technical equipment in a few households.

From 4 to 7 October, the main labor unions held demonstrations. The aim was to bring to the attention of the superior administrator the expensive cost of living. Both sides came to an agreement on 28 November with the creation of the Social and Economic Consultative Committee. This new office, in cooperation with the price-monitoring committee established in June 2009, has the responsibility of shaping propositions regarding economic and social issues in the territory.

In mid-October, the Royal Council and a few territorial assembly members sought to increase the territory's ownership in the *Entreprise d'eau et d'électricité de Wallis et Futuna* (EEWF, the islands' power company) to 52 percent, but the EEWF denied the request.

On 3 November, in the village of Vaitupu in Hihifo District, northern Uvea Island, an EEWF worker was attacked and wounded by members of the public. On the same day, as a mark of protest, colleagues of the injured worker decided to stop working. The Royal Council called on the head of EEWF to ensure that its workers would provide at least the minimum level of service. The next morning a meeting

was held at the Territorial Assembly with the prefect (the senior administrator of the territory, appointed by France), the assembly, and the Royal Council, but without any representatives of the company. The goal of the meeting was to resolve this awkward situation. On 5 November, the head of EEWF and representatives of the *Electricité et Eau de Calédonie* (EEC, EEWF's parent company) flew to New Caledonia. On the following Monday, Wallis Island experienced an island-wide cutoff of power and water. This uncomfortable situation led the assembly to call another meeting; this time two workers represented the EEWF, and the talks ended with an accord: The employees would resume their work, and the Royal Council would guarantee the safety of the workers. Things returned to normal on 8 November.

On 7 December, during the plenary assembly of the Territorial Council, the issue of the EEWF came back on the table. This time the Royal Council asked the company to rehire six workers who had been fired at the beginning of the conflict. The company refused.

In the New Year, one issue came up that dominated the rest of the review period: that of the elections. The election campaign was monitored by the French media authority (*Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel*, or CSA) and broadcast on radio and television by Wallis & Futuna 1ère, previously RFO (*Réseau France Outre-mer*), the sole local media source. Other national channels (France 2, France 3, France 4, France 5, France Ô, Arte, and France 24) are also available in the territory.

For the Territorial Assembly elections, which are conducted using a proportional representation system in multi-seat constituencies, thirty party lists contested to fill the twenty seats. Three topics dominated the debates during the campaign period. First was the high cost of living, including the high prices for electricity, gasoline, and basic commodities. Second was the issue of Wallis and Futuna's territorial status, which is set in French law dating back to 1961. This issue was first raised in 1980 when members of the Territorial Assembly asked the prefect to amend the 1961 status. This requested revision aimed to substitute a government council for the current Territorial Assembly, but the effort sank into oblivion. Finally, the overriding question of economic development occupied a large part of the debate. For instance, what structures must be created in order to keep young people from leaving the territory? Many interesting issues were discussed during the political rallies, but the actual voting remained clan-based. Wallisians and Futunans still make their political choices not according to policies or programs but following the familial vote.

In the northern district of Hihifo, there were 1,188 valid votes, and the two incumbents were reelected: Nivaleta Iloai (24.7 percent) from the *Union pour Wallis et Futuna* (UPWF, akin to the French Socialist Party) and Atoloto Kolokilagi (17.4 percent) from the UMP. Also elected was newcomer Sosefo Suve (30.10 percent), a secondary school teacher, who ran as an independent.

In the central district of Hahake, with a total of 2,158 valid votes,

David Vergé, a European shopkeeper married to a Wallisian woman, polled 30.3 percent, followed by Mikaele Kulimoetoke (25 percent), Patalione Kanimoa (17.5 percent), and Petelo Hanisi (15.7 percent). All these candidates are independent, apart from Kanimoa, who is the UMP economic and social counselor. There were noteworthy defeats in the district, including those of UMP candidate Victor Brial, the former deputy from 1997 to 2007, and centrist Pesamino Taputai.

In the district of Mu'a, out of 2,004 valid votes, Laufilitoga Mireille's party secured two seats (22.6 percent), allowing her to appoint the second candidate on the party's list, Emile Selui. They were followed by UMP Yannick Feleu (17.7 percent, reelected), Munipoese Muliakaaka (17.3 percent), Bernard Taufana (16.5 percent), and Eselone Ikai (9.7 percent). The outgoing president of the assembly, Socialist leader Siliako Lauhea, was defeated.

In the kingdom of Sigave on the island of Futuna, with a total of 880 valid votes, independent Petelo Falelavaki was elected (18.8 percent), beating independent Savelina Vea (16.8 percent) and the centrist Pasi-kale Niutoua (16.8 percent). In the kingdom of Alo, which had a total of 1,340 votes, all the candidates from the former assembly were reelected including the UMP's Toma Savea (22.2 percent), independents Sosefo Motuku (21.9 percent) and Alesio Katoa (20.4 percent), and the UPWF's Vetelino Nau (17.9 percent). From the 2007 assembly, only nine members were renewed. The remarkable electorate turnout (85.95 percent) showed the aspiration of Wallisians and Futunans to bring

about notable change. However, there was a huge loss of 2,259 registered voters between the 2007 (11,167) and 2012 (8,908) elections. Some of this may be due to deaths, but more of the decline is likely due to the emigration of Wallisians and Futunans.

On 2 April the Territorial Assembly convened with a new majority shaped by independents (mostly leaning Socialist, except for Suve and Vergé) and UPWF members. UPWF Vetelino Nau was elected assembly president over Sosefo Suve, with Mikaele Kulimoetoke elected as vice president. Petelo Hanisi was elected president of the permanent commission.

On 22 April 2012, 6,407 voters (71.67 percent) went to the polls for the French presidential elections. There were ten electoral rolls at the first round, with the following results: Eva Joly 100 votes (1.56 percent); Marine Le Pen 152 votes (2.37 percent); Nicolas Sarkozy 2,414 votes (37.68 percent); Jean-Luc Mélenchon 76 votes (1.19 percent); Philippe Poutou 42 votes (0.66 percent); Nathalie Artaud 48 votes (0.75 percent); Jacques Cheminade 29 votes (0.45 percent); François Bayrou 410 votes (6.40 percent); Nicolas Dupont-Aignan 43 votes (0.67 percent); François Hollande 3,093 votes (48.28 percent). The second round took place on 6 May 2012. At this time Wallisians and Futunans again showed their desire for change. Of the 6,769 valid votes cast, Socialist François Hollande gained 3,795 votes (56.06 percent) against 2,974 (43.95 percent) votes for outgoing President Nicolas Sarkozy. The archipelago swung to the left as people voted for an alternative after seventeen years of right-wing rule.

Wallis and Futuna was the national record holder among France's overseas territories in electoral turnout with 76.4 percent for both rounds.

Wallisians and Futunans went back to the ballot for the first round of legislative elections on 10 June 2012. Six candidates competed for the deputy's seat. There were 8,980 voters registered. Of the 6,934 valid votes cast, David Vergé (Divers Droite) got 1,997 votes (28.80 percent), followed by Mikaele Kulimoetoke (Divers Gauche) with 1,345 (19.40 percent); Albert Likuvalu (Radical de Gauche), the outgoing deputy, with 1,179 (17 percent); Epifano Tui (Socialist) with 913 (13.17 percent); Atonio Ilalio (Centre) with 858 (12.37 percent); and Simione Vanai (Socialist) with 642 (9.26 percent). The novel issue in this legislative election was the failure of four candidates from the left wing to support a single person. The second round brought a three-way election among David Vergé (supported by the local UMP but also by the former socialist supporters of his father-in-law Tialetagi Penisio, who had been a candidate to the deputy's position running against Victor Brial in 2002) and two socialist candidates, Mikaele Kulimoetoke and Albert Likuvalu. On 17 June 2012, the three-way race allowed David Vergé to be elected with 3,068 votes (41.61 percent) of the 7,374 valid votes, followed by Mikaele Kulimoetoke with 3,026 (41.04 percent) and Albert Likuvalu with 1,280 (17.36 percent). Once again, Wallis and Futuna had the highest electoral turnout with 78.08 percent.

Wallis and Futuna will host the 2013 South Pacific Minigames, in

which twenty-two countries will take part. The building of sporting facilities is currently underway, including the construction of the Kafika multipurpose structure, whose cost is projected to exceed US\$5 million. The committee is still working on the logistics of the games such as accommodations and dining facilities for the athletes.

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