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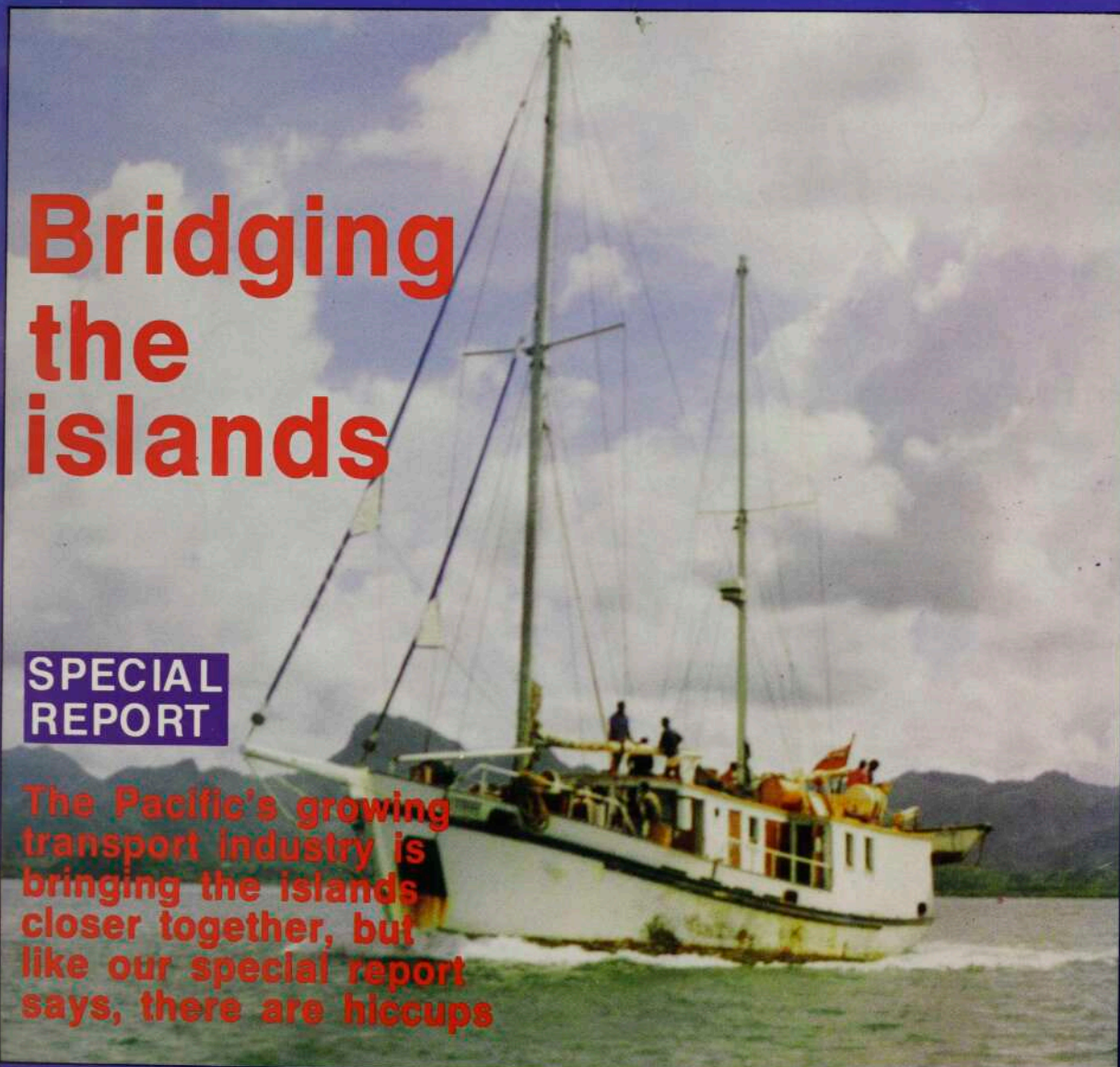
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# PACIFIC ISLANDS

M O N T H L Y



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MAY 1990

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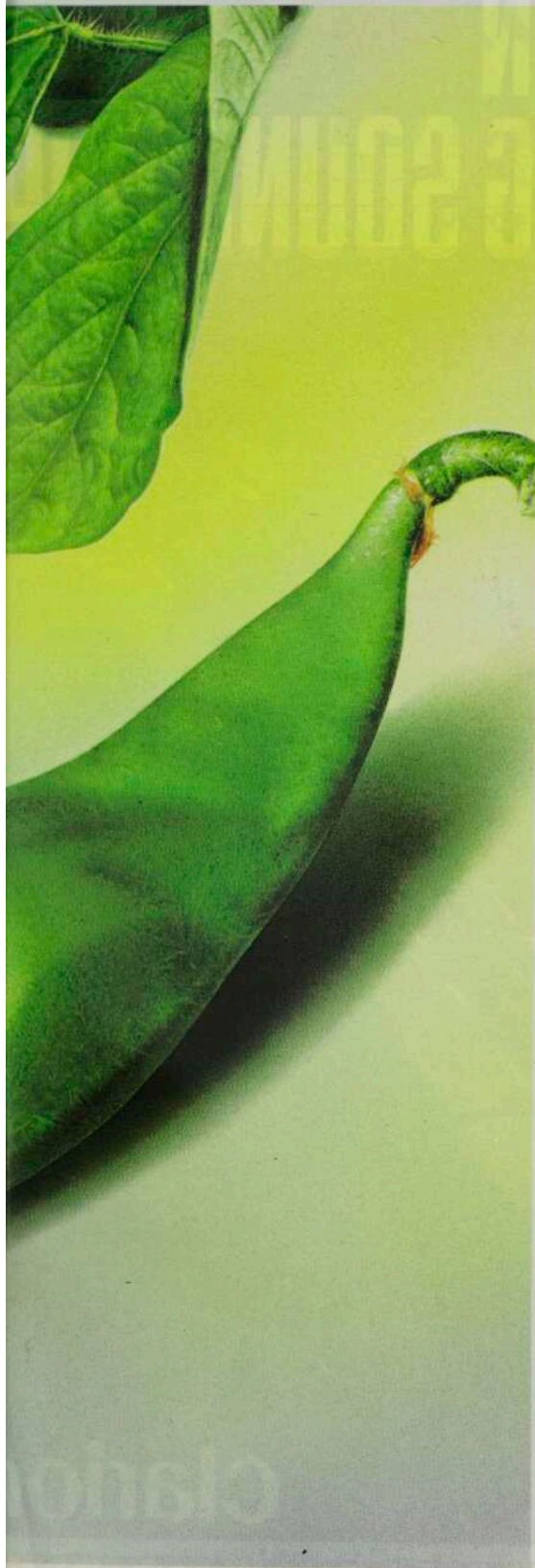
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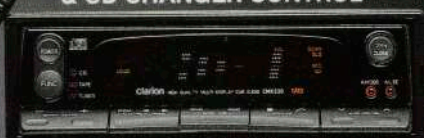


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# PACIFIC ISLANDS

M O N T H L Y

Vol. 60, No. 5

VOICE OF THE PACIFIC

May 1990



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From canoes to big jets. That's how the transport system has evolved in the Pacific Islands. The region is getting smaller.

## The Region

Tonga: the kingdom is quiet again after gaining wide publicity outside the country during a month in which the crown was said to have been threatened. But what really happened? p15

Vanuatu: Has Walter Lini sanctioned the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees? At least one memo from the Prime Minister's Office in Port Vila suggested a change in attitude in Vanuatu. p16

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## LETTERS

## The Bounty debate

GREAT ghosts of Pitcairn Island! Even William Bligh himself rarely displayed the fury which now emanates from the wounded egos of consulting psychologists with pretensions to historical scholarship. I refer to the letter in *PIM's* April issue in which Sven Wahlroos (PhD) takes me to task for failing to take his book *Mutiny and Romance in the South Seas: A Companion to the Bounty Adventure*, a product of what he refers to as "lifelong research", seriously. In truth it was hard to do, although I did say that the production was first class and the book "enviously attractive".

However, since the good doctor accuses me of being "unfair", "inaccurate", "uninformed", "misinformed", "inconsistent" and "petty" — (Have I left something out? At least I am not described as "unstable and psychologically thin-skinned", like poor old Fletcher Christian) — it seems appropriate to respond. In doing so though I am at a slight disadvantage, since I no longer have Dr Wahlroos' book in front of me. *PIM's* editor wanted it back and I more than happily complied with his request.

Let me take the accusations in that order. Apart from my failing to give the work an unqualified rave, my unfairness appears to relate to the use of the term "trivia" in reference to part — not all, notice — of the "companion". Trivia I said and trivia I meant. Given the usual application of the term, many entries in the companion could not be described any other way. Dr Wahlroos' airy dismissal of my objection to his casual handling of Fijian orthography as "minutiae", apart from being offensive to speakers and writers of the language, reveals that it is he who is being inconsistent, since the section in which it appears places great importance on the significance of place names and similar details.

It was not Dr Wahlroos' evident enthusiasm for collecting facts which I was referring to in questioning his "scholarship".

Read the review again, Sven. What I said was that I doubted the cause of scholarship would benefit from his psychological diagnoses. I still do, and so do a number of other Pacific scholars to whom I mentioned them. At least one of them is still laughing. Unfortunately, there is also evidence in this paragraph and in the book that Dr Wahlroos — like many zealous amateur historians — may think that accumulations of fact constitute history. How else does one interpret the phrase "... one single inaccuracy of history or fact?" As to my not being able to come up with a convincing explanation of the mutiny, I was unaware that reviewers were under an obligation to produce a counter-thesis, especially to "explanations" which are so patently feeble in the first place. Library shelves are already bulging with explanations far more convincing than the one in the book.

The inaccuracy, inconsistency and so on evidently relate to my comments on the Australian films of the *Bounty* story where I am also said to be misinformed. I regret to say that it is Dr Wahlroos who is both inconsistent and misinformed here. Filming for the 1916 film by Raymond Longford was also carried out in Tahiti, besides New Zealand and Norfolk Island. So say newspapers of the period, at least, although New Zealand Maoris were later chosen for acting parts. Whether the Tahitian footage was ever used is another matter, since no

print of the film is known to exist.

Chauvel's film was not only shot in part on Tahiti, but included scenes of Tahitian dancers which originally caused the Australian censor great concern since in some scenes the female dancers were bare-breasted. To suggest that they were actually Tongans is fatuous: Tongans don't dance that way, and then as now would not have been likely to display their breasts for a film. In any event, most of the first Hollywood film of the *Bounty* was shot on Catalina Island off the Californian coast, yet it is mentioned in the book. Inconsistent ... ?

As to Bligh and the "discovery" of Fiji, Dr Wahlroos is attempting a double take here. Commemorative stamp issues notwithstanding, the words in the book which are quoted in my review read "as the principal discoverer", not "the principal European discoverer" as Dr Wahlroos has it in his letter. Even amateur historians should be aware of the difference, since it is considerable.

But it is the last paragraph of Dr Wahlroos' letter which really gives the show away. My real sin is that my review is "unappreciative of romance and adventure and humour." Oh dear! Presumably these are qualities which Dr Wahlroos possesses in abundance. I must say it did not occur to me to display my fondness for romance and adventure in the review, but my ex-wives and my passports could attest to some of it. As for the humour, Dr Wahlroos may be assured that the review occasioned quite a bit of mirth among readers of *PIM*, so I am told. But in case I did not make the point clearly enough the first time, let me make it again, briefly. For all his professed lifetime of research, Dr Wahlroos has not written a very good book, and all his fantasising about adventure and romance and his self-inflicted Huzzabing for Otaheite will not alter that. As far as I am concerned, this correspondence is now closed.

NORMAN DOUGLAS  
Alstonville, NSW.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** must include writer's full name, address and home telephone number. All letters may be edited for purposes of clarity or space.

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## HEADLINES

## Cruiseship finds century-old wreck

**A**S part of its cruise to Pitcairn, Henderson and Ducie Islands, the *World Discoverer* planned to raise the anchor from the long-sunk *Acadia* near Ducie and present it to the people of Pitcairn Island.

The *Acadia's* anchor, due to arrive in Pitcairn in March, was to be mounted next to the anchor of the *Bounty* which is placed just outside Pitcairn's little wooden court house in Adamstown, the island's only village.

The *World Discoverer*, on a previous voyage last November, found the wreck of the sailing vessel *Acadia* lying in 40 feet of water near Ducie, an uninhabited dependency of Pitcairn, some 350 miles east of that island. Expedition leader and dive master Jack Grove made the discovery while checking out appropriate snorkeling locations for his passengers. The *Acadia's* dead eye (part of the rigging) had been located lying on the atoll's leeward shore on an earlier cruise, but the wreck itself had not been located at the time.

According to the ship's owner, Seattle-based Society Expeditions, they conducted a search through Lloyd's of London and confirmed that the wreck is that of the *Acadia* which ran aground off Ducie while carrying a cargo of wheat from San Francisco to Queensland, Ireland, on June 5, 1881. (Sounds like they were well off course at the time). Captain S. George and all the members of the crew of 21 survived the experience, making the trip to Pitcairn in lifeboats.

The *World Explorer* planned to raise the one-ton principal anchor of the *Acadia* (they were to leave three smaller ones in the water) by using air-filled lift bags to bring it to the surface. The whole event coincided with the 200th anniversary of the settlement of Pitcairn by the *Bounty* mutineers. Pitcairn, and its dependencies, constitute the only remaining British colony in the Pacific. □

### Successor for Pa Ariki

Pa Tapaeru Ariki's eldest daughter Marie Napa has been chosen as the successor to the title of Pa Ariki, one of the ariki (chief) titles on the Cook Islands.

Pa Tapaeru Ariki died on a visit to New Zealand last February.

Marie Napa's family say she is the rightful successor in accordance to historical precedents, as she is the eldest of the nine children and the only one living

in Rarotonga. The Takitumu tribe's leaders — the rangatiras and mataiapos — have endorsed Marie Napa's selection.

However another party has now declared their challenge to the role. They are asserting rights basing their claims on oral traditions that say the More family created the Pa Ariki title in pre-contact times. At this stage Marie is still considered to be the rightful successor and formal investiture will take place September this year.

Marie is 43 years old and has four children. She is married to the son of an ariki from the Arorangi district where she lives. However in accordance to the wishes of the Takitumu people she will move back to her tribal area this year.

She says that although her new responsibilities will not change her life style too much, she has a lot to do says she: "I will continue with my mother's work especially with her dream of rebuilding the Takitumu palace. I am thankful to the Takitumu people for accepting me. My mother was a very clever woman but I will do my best to follow on from her."

Succession according to the senior family line and Marie Napa is the eldest child of the previous Pa Ariki. The title was one of primogeniture succession before Christianity. □

### Closer ties

FIJI and New Zealand are working to improve relations after their traditional links were strained after the military coup of 1987. Fiji Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara said relations between the two countries should improve from now. He made the comment while speaking at a lunch in Suva which Fiji hosted for a New Zealand taskforce reviewing New Zealand's South Pacific policies. Mara said the visit should help New Zealand understand the aspirations of Fiji's various ethnic groups. But he emphasised the protection of indigenous Fijian rights was absolutely fundamental.

### Consular reopened

FIJI has announced it will reopen the consular office in Auckland and has appointed Radio Fiji general manager Ahmed Ali as the new consular general. The office was closed three years ago. Ali was Information Minister in the Alliance Government of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara which lost the 1987 general elections to a coalition of the Fiji Labour Party and the National Federation.

### Foreign help

ARMY commander Major General Sitiveni Rabuka, who visited China last month, said French aid was being sought for a US\$7.7 million maintenance workshop in Suva for the Fiji Military Forces. Said Rabuka: "We are forever grateful to some countries that are prepared to cooperate with our government such as the French government who are prepared to go into a joint venture with us in the establishment, construction, manning and running of a proper maintenance unit. I believe it's a very current topic in the Prime Minister's agenda of work."

Rabuka left for China on April 22 for a nine-day official visit. The invitation came from the Chinese Government and it gave Rabuka his first overseas trip since staging Fiji's first military coup on May 14, 1987. He was accompanied by his wife, Sulueti, and three army bodyguards, one report said.

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## HEADLINES

### Healing Move

FRANCE is expected to renew relations with Vanuatu by appointing a new ambassador in Port Vila in time for the South Pacific Forum in July. A diplomatic row in 1987 resulted in the expulsion of the French ambassador in Port Vila. Joe Natuman, who is secretary to Vanuatu Prime Minister Walter Lini, voiced "strong possibilities" of the appointment of a new French ambassador before the Forum. He explained as "pretty encouraging" talks with the French government and said "things should move fast from here". The French Embassy in Port Vila has been headed by a charge d'affaires in the absence of an ambassador.

### Constitutional review

THE Federated States of Micronesia will review its constitution during a convention scheduled for July in Pohnpei. The convention will be attended by 31 delegates, including tradition leaders, from the four states of Kosrae, Chuuk (formerly Truk), Yak and Pohnpei. The constitution, which was promulgated in 1980, is subject to review every 10 years.

### New relations

SOLOMON Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia established formal diplomatic relations on April 5. FSM's ambassador to Fiji, the Suva-based Alik Alik, will be accredited to Honiara.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands and Chile have also established formal diplomatic relations.

### Guilty verdict

THE 24 villagers charged with the murder of six people on the remote atoll of Fa'aite in French Polynesia were found guilty. The accused were charged with the burning to death of fellow church members in a bout of religious hysteria. All were jailed with group leader Francois Mauati getting the longest sentence of 14 years imprisonment. The six defence lawyers pleaded for acquittal on the grounds of collective insanity, saying the atoll, known as "Little bit of Paradise", went mad with fear after a Roman Catholic lay preacher said the end of the world was near. An appeal has been lodged.

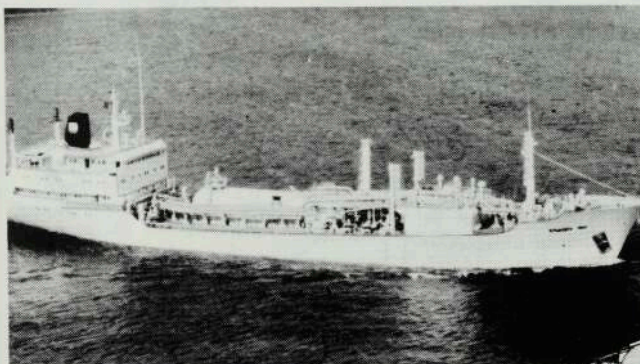
### Vitamin deficiency

CHILDREN in Kiribati between the age of six months and six years are some of the most deficient in Vitamin A, shows a survey by the Kiribati Ministry of Health and the United States-based Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific. The survey was carried out on six of the country's most populated islands. It found that of more than 4000 children examined, 15 per cent had one or more active signs of Vitamin A deficiency. The deficiency could cause night blindness.

### Games venue

FRENCH Polynesia will host the 1995 South Pacific Games. This was decided by the South Pacific Games Council in Port Moresby, on a vote of 16-12 last month. The unsuccessful bid came from Guam, which hosted the games in 1975, and the Solomon Islands, which hosted the Mini games in 1981. Next year's South Pacific Games is being held in Papua New Guinea with the venues being split between Port Moresby and Lae. French Polynesia hosted the games of 1971.

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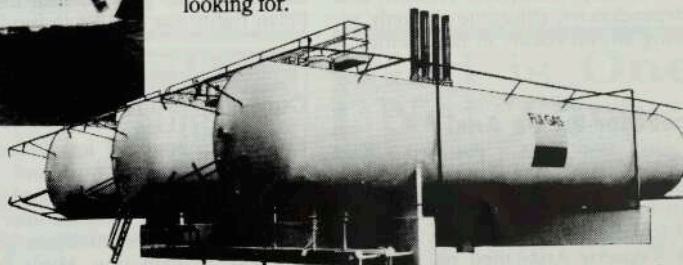


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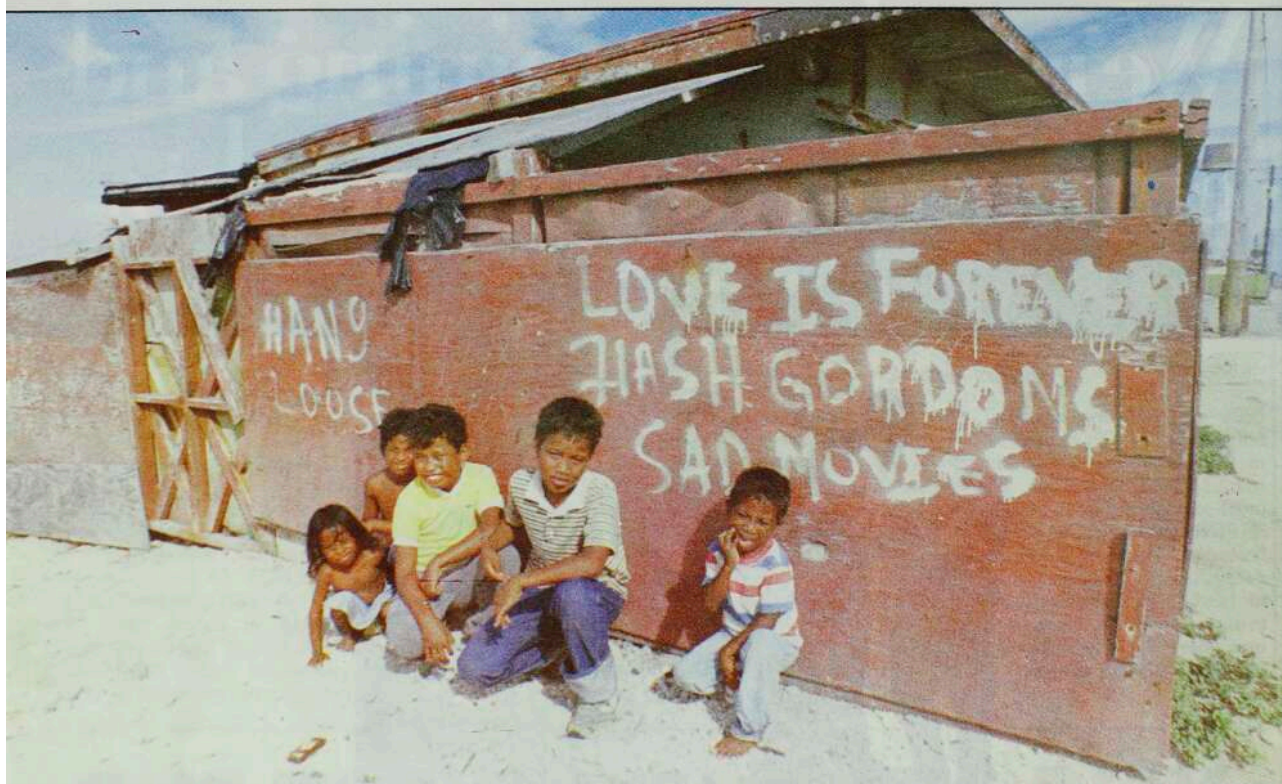


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THE REGION



Sad movies: graffiti on Ebeye give children a new message.

# Dangerous Playground

A new trade could turn the Pacific into a dump for dangerous rubbish.

By David Robie

**A** SHADOWY new trade feeding on the poverty of the developing world and the growing waste crisis in industrialised nations is having an unwelcome impact on the South Pacific. Frequently the brokers involved are carpetbaggers with limited experience in handling garbage and little regard for the delicate ecosystems of fragile island nations.

Usually the trade operates on the fringe of legality or cashes in on legal loopholes and the absence of environmental safeguards in independent Third World nations — countries that desper-

ately need fresh sources of income yet lack the infrastructure to police waste dumpers.

Environmental campaigners describe an "explosion of schemes" to ship waste from the North to the South. Waste brokers are sending flotillas of ships around the world, exploring for new potential dump sites. In the past two years alone more than 3.1 million tonnes of wastes have been exported from industrialised countries to the Third World.

The "toxic colonialism", as it is dubbed by some environmentalists, knows no national boundaries. More than 80 developing countries have been asked to

accept massive quantities of industrial waste. In painful choice between poverty and poison, nations are often asked to choose between short-term economic gain and the long-term health of generations of their people."

In 1988 a scheme was exposed under which the impoverished West African nation of Guinea-Bissau would have accepted 15 million tonnes of toxic waste from a consortium of American and European companies. In exchange it would have been paid US\$120 million a year for five years — roughly about the same as its gross national product. When the agreement was publicly condemned by the European Parliament and the Organisation of African Unity, Guinea-Bissau pulled out.

In Nigeria, thousands of barrels of toxic waste from Italy were discovered in the tiny port of Koko and the military regime threatened to execute by firing squad anybody trying to profit from the illicit trade. On the island of Guinea, after trees began to die researchers discovered 15,000 tonnes of incinerator ash had been dumped by a Norwegian shipping company.

With resistance towards the trade growing in Africa and elsewhere, waste brokers have been turning to the South Pacific for what they hoped would be

THE REGION



Playground: children on the beach at Ebeye.

easier pickings. Apart from one country, however, their proposals have all collapsed.

In Tonga, a plan promoted by King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV's daughter, Princess Pilolevu, to build an incinerator plant for burning imported toxic wastes was abandoned in 1988. A scheme in Papua New Guinea was also scrapped the same year. The national government in Port Moresby intervened to block a US\$38 million chemical detoxification plant planned by an American company in association with the Northern provincial government.

Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Western Samoa have also turned down waste dumping proposals.

The one exception so far has been the Marshall Islands where a Californian company's grandiose scheme for reclaiming land with garbage fill on low-lying atolls — an attempt to counter the so-called "greenhouse effect" — has won powerful supporters, including President Amata Kabua. In spite of the flaws in the plan which have been exposed since it was first mooted by the company in October 1988, a row last September over an alleged secret plan for the dumping of nuclear waste, and the eroding credibility of the proposal's architects, it is still favoured by the country's political and

business elite.

Now the company, Admiralty Pacific Inc, faces a struggle against a Californian rival, Micronesia Marine Development Inc — formed after the dispute which split Admiralty. And MicroMar is prepared to spend US\$1 million on a six-month engineering and environmental survey.

Admiralty Pacific's proposal is to dump 17 million tonnes of "non-toxic" waste over five years in the atoll chain and to add topsoil from New Zealand, or possibly Australia. The company would pay the Marshall Islands government a fee of US\$140 million with an option to continue dumping for a further 10 years.

"If the Marshall Islands accepts the Admiralty proposal it would set a dangerous precedent in the Pacific," says Lesley Stone, Auckland-based Greenpeace toxic wastes campaigner for the international Greenpeace environmental organisation. "It could encourage dumping companies from throughout the world to descend on the region, peddling their wastes."

Stone regards the European Economic Community's agreement last October to ban exports of nuclear and toxic wastes to their African, Pacific and Caribbean (ACP) trading partners as a major break-

through.

New Zealand became involved in the Marshall Islands proposal as an environmental consultant when President Kabua visited there last June: Environment Minister Geoffrey Palmer discussed the proposal with Kabua at the time and expressed the concern of other South Pacific nations.

"I said to President Kabua that acceptance of this proposal would contravene the spirit of the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme [SPREP] agreement which the Marshall Islands has signed and ratified," Palmer says. "While they have been told by Admiralty Pacific that the garbage could provide landfill to cope with a rising sea level from climate change, this could have massive implications for the environment."

President Kabua then asked for New Zealand's help in providing an independent environmental assessment and in the following month the Secretary of the Environment, Dr Roger Blakeley, was sent to Majuro to provide advice. Although Dr Blakeley won't be drawn on the nature of that sensitive feedback, he says New Zealand has "established its credentials as a leading independent country with sound environmental

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priorities."

For decades the mid-Pacific republic of the Marshall Islands has been a testing ground for United States nuclear weapons and a target range of ballistic missiles. Arguably the most exploited island nation in the Pacific, it was forced to "host" nuclear tests by the United States for 12 years after the territory was seized from Japan during the Second World War.

Bikini and Eniwetok atolls, in the northern Marshalls, remain too contaminated for people to inhabit; many islands were vapourised by the nuclear blasts. Thousands of islanders are seeking compensation for illnesses blamed on radiation, and for the loss of their ancestral lands. They are being paid out of a fund provided by the Compact of Free Association — an unprecedented treaty in which the United States accepted responsibility for nuclear test damages.

A thermonuclear test triggered at Bikini on 1 March 1954, with a force 1000 times stronger than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, swept a deadly cloud of fallout to the east, contaminating islanders on Rongelap and Utirik atolls. In May 1985 — just a month before it was bombed — the peace ship *Rainbow Warrior* evacuated the descendants of the islanders and moved them to a tiny isle on Kwajalein Atoll.

Kwajalein is still a United States military base — three years after the Marshall Islands gained independence under the compact and joined the South Pacific Forum. The atoll lagoon is a testing range for ICBMs launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in southern California.

The atoll republic is also destined for a key role in testing for the so-called Star Wars missile defence system.

The Marshall Islands government was one of the first to sign and ratify the United Nations-sponsored SPREP convention for the protection of the natural resources and environment of the South Pacific. The republic has also ratified a forum protocol about cooperation in dealing with pollution emergencies in the Pacific and another seeking to prevent pollution from dumping.

Although the government is keen on Admiralty Pacific's proposal, President Kabua stressed at the South Pacific Forum heads of government meeting in Tarawa, Kiribati, last June that his

cabinet would not proceed if feasibility studies being currently conducted were not favourable. Kabua is also counting on further independent advice from New Zealand.

Kabua signed a letter of intent with the developers early last year and the Nitijela (Parliament) passed a resolution giving Admiralty Pacific exclusive rights to dispose of the US garbage in the Marshall Islands if the company's proposal is found to be "feasible and of benefit to the Marshall Islands people".

In an earlier interview with *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Kabua said: "We'll probably bring some of the experts in New Zealand to look this things up. If it's not toxic and safe then we'll accept it because it can be a good thing to build land with." When Admiralty Pacific reportedly tried to persuade the Marshall Islands government to pay US\$3 million for the environmental impact study, President Kabua turned them down: "This company hasn't done its homework yet."

Admiralty Pacific also needs to seek clearance from the US Environmental Protection Agency and the republic's own fledgling agency which is following US guidelines. The proposal claims that waste dumped in the Marshall Islands would be "non-toxic waste and sludge". Dan Fleming, then company vice-president, told the *Marshall Islands Journal* the waste was "non-toxic" and non-hazardous... It is household garbage, with the metals removed."

However, since then Fleming has admitted "there is no such thing as non-toxic, non-hazardous garbage. But we can make it as safe as is possibly can be."

Greenpeace campaigner Lesley Stone stresses that the problems associated with landfills are well-known and well-documented: "Leachate produced when water filters through garbage can contain a highly toxic cocktail which will contaminate drinking water, rivers or coastal marine life. A 'landfill' in a lagoon would make it possible to contain the leachate and its effects would be magnified."

About two-thirds of the municipal waste is expected to be actual household waste. Other wastes typically found in municipal waste include commercial waste, construction debris, industrial process waste, hazardous waste from

small industries, sewage sludge, incinerator ash, asbestos-containing waste, and infectious waste.

According to a Greenpeace-funded environmental impact report handed to the Marshall Islands government, an estimated 58 million kilograms of hazardous waste would be included in the dumped garbage. Some of hazardous substances — probably including highly toxic cyanide, dry cleaning filtration residues, ignitable wastes, photographic wastes and strong acids or alkalis — would leach into the lagoons or water supplies, or otherwise pollute the environment.

Coupled with the fact that receiving landfills in the Marshall Islands do not comply with the regulations required for US landfills, the proposal poses significant short and long-term threats to groundwater, near-shore marine areas, air quality, and agriculture activity, says Greenpeace.

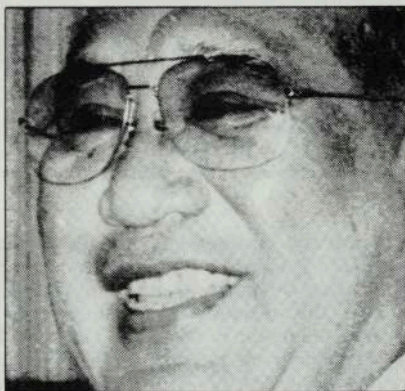
"There is good theoretical and empirical evidence that the hazardous constituents that are placed in land disposal facilities very likely will migrate from the facility into the broader environment," says the US Environment Protection Agency. "This may occur several years, even many decades, after placement of the waste in the facility, but data and scientific prediction indicate that, in most cases, even with the application of the best available land disposal technology, it will occur eventually."

The Greenpeace report stresses that for the Marshall Islands, a "whole range of different problems would be added to those of conventional landfills because of their unique location. Forces which will increase the difficulty of containing contaminants include wind and rain erosion during tropical downpours, potential inundation during several tropical storms, exposure and dispersal via wave and tidal action".

Greenpeace plans a Pacific-wide education drive on waste-dumping and the campaign ship *Rainbow Warrior II* is expected to visit the Marshall Islands about June. "There is no question of us telling people what they should do," says Stone. "It is a matter of creating an awareness of what garbage is and the price they'll have to pay for having it." Knowledge gained from the Greenpeace education drive would be made available to other Pacific countries in the form of useful literature and information kits.

A suggestion two years ago by President Kabua that several atolls be studied as possible sites for the dumping of nuclear waste from plants in the US and elsewhere was revived late last year. At the time the notion was first raised Congress instructed the Reagan administration to consider the islands as a nuclear dump in return for "big money".

Senator Tony deBrum, an outspoken



Kabua: "... it can be a good thing. ..."

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former Foreign Minister, condemns the idea as ridiculous. "It's just a sad story," he says. "First you get nuked — then you turn around an offer to store nuclear waste. It is one thing to do something out of ignorance and fear but to do it again for money would be inexcusable."

Last September a growing split between Admiralty Pacific executives Jim Thompson and Dan Fleming burst into the open with allegations of a secret plan to haul nuclear waste to the Marshall Island. Writing in a resignation letter to the board chairman, Thompson, the company's former vice-president declared: "I'm appalled by your secret plan to haul nuclear waste to the Marshall Islands under the name J. Thompson and Associates, when you know that all the Admiralty Pacific contracts clearly forbid doing so."

An earlier letter by Thompson had alleged Fleming, who was said to have been hired on a \$5000 a month retainer, had failed to fulfil his obligations of negotiating waste contracts on the West Coast and signing agreements in the Marshall Islands. Fleming, he claimed, had been asked to resign before his protest about the nuclear plan.

In another letter, reported by the *Marshall Islands Journal*, Thompson gave engineer Carl Strande the power of attorney to represent Admiralty Pacific in negotiating deals and noted that "nuclear waste will be done under the name of another entity to be formed".

A handwritten reply from Fleming asked: "What is this? Not only am I philosophically opposed to this, but our contracts with KADA (Kwajalein Atoll Development Authority) forbid it."

While environmental campaigners have been trying to sort out whether the nuclear waste proposal is genuine or a smokescreen for the boardroom feuding at Admiralty Pacific, a handful of opposition politicians are mustering support for an attempt to scuttle the garbage plan.

But now they are up against two companies. Fleming, president of the new MicroMar, says a preliminary engineering survey of Kwajalein has shown that the waste landfill project is technically feasible. Although Admiralty has an exclusive option contract with the Kwaja-

lein Atoll Development Authority (KADA) on developing waste landfill on the atoll, Fleming believes this is no obstacle to his company's proposal. He adds that MicroMar doesn't plan to bring in any household wastes that are toxic or nuclear.

But the opponents still voice their anxiety. According to the *Marshall Islands Journal's* account of one bitter debate in the Nitijela, Senator Evelyn Konou challenged the propriety of having Admiralty Pacific carry out its own feasibility study.

"Do we really trust the Americans?" asked Senator Hiroshi Yamamura. "How can we know that the so-called household garbage is non-toxic waste?"

Yamamura reminded the senators that the United States had conducted nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands and now there were people suffering from those tests. He also said the Nitijela resolution backing the project provided no safeguards against nuclear waste being brought into the country along with household garbage.

The only public meeting to discuss the issue was held on the tiny, overpopulated island of Ebeye which acts as a labour dormitory for Kwajalein Missile Range. About a quarter of the country's 43,000 population live in crowded conditions on a 33 hectare isle once described as a "biological time bomb" — and land is a desperate need for the development boom that is now going on. Some developers have described it as a "showcase".

Initially, Admiralty Pacific's plan was to use the garbage as footings for a bridge to link Kwajalein Island and Ebeye. Eventually the waste would also be used to reclaim the lagoon on Majuro Atoll, doubling the land area to almost 3000 hectares.

Other proposals are for a huge landfill on remote Bokaak Atoll which would raise the land mass level to 12 metres above sea level, and to fill a reef flat linking six islands on Kwajalein Atoll by building a causeway about three kilometres long. Both these latter schemes have apparently been shelved

for the time being.

*Marshall Islands Journal* editor Giff Johnson, author of *Collision Course at Kwajalein*, is among outspoken critics of the scheme. "Are the Marshalls going to be part of the Pacific community that has shown its power in regional cooperation or a nation that is viewed as one that will 'sell' its islands to the highest bidder?" he asked in a *Journal* editorial.

"It is bad enough that the Marshalls

must live with a legacy of American nuclear tests. But there is no reason to add to that, the US produced the waste, let it keep it." □



deBrum: "First you get nuked . . ."

Senator Tony deBrum warned that Admiralty Pacific could "hide the toxic waste" in an effort to make money more easily. "More than 40 nations have turned down the United States offer regarding the dumping proposal," he said. "Why should the Marshall Islands accept it?"

Although the Nitijela decisively approved the resolution, KADA went ahead with plans to hire its own scientists from other countries to research the scheme because Kwajalein would be the "first up" recipient for the garbage.

"We will conduct our own feasibility study before we'll allow any garbage from the United States to be dumped on our atoll," said Senator Imada Kabua, a chiefly cousin of the President and one of Kwajalein's three elected representatives.

#### Hawaiian meets with King

HAWAIIAN Airlines has stepped up its campaign to win rights for a third weekly flight into Nuku'alofa. The airline's senior marketing executive, Frederick R Davis, recently visited Tonga for talks with civil aviation officials, and he included a meeting with the King. David said an earlier application for the third flight had not been granted because of problems the airline was facing over running its existing two flights to the scheduled times.

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## SAMOA

## The best and the worst of Ofa

**N**ATURAL disasters bring out the best and the worst in people, and Ofa was no exception.

For example, the Mainland US Government agency handling disaster relief, the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) counted up the applications for household disaster assistance in American Samoa. They found 6900 of them.

The only problem is that other, pre-Ofa statistics showed that there were not that many households in the territory. Further, the Red Cross, running a different assistance programme, had a total of only 5200 claims. Since not all families were hurt by the storm this meant that many hundreds of families had sought to defraud the government. "The numbers of applications are outrageous," an anonymous FEMA official told the *Samoa Journal*. "We will be verifying everything."

FEMA faced a minor version of this same problem on the Mainland, after the San Francisco earthquake, but the feds had a basic identification tool to minimise the extent of the scam — and potential con men know about it. On the Mainland, 99 per cent of the houses have well-fixed addresses, usually a number and a street name. There are no such addresses for most houses in American Samoa, and island names are confusing to the Statesiders flown in for handling the claims.

The extent of the fraudulent claims was well publicised and caused at least one of the newspapers in Pago Pago to write a pained editorial on the subject, saying, in effect, "do not try to get more than your share".

While the fraud problem slowed the application-screening process and while there were some criticisms, as there always are in such situations, that the relief agency did not act quickly enough, FEMA did approve enough applications rapidly enough to cause another problem.

The Bank of Hawaii, despite regular infusions of currency arriving on every plane from Honolulu, ran out of cash. So many people had so many large Ofa checks so quickly that the bank could not keep up with the demand for dollars.

Bankers tried to convince the grantees to put at least some of the money in savings or checking accounts, but most families wanted cash on the barrelhead. "We can't cash \$4000 checks all in one go. We got nearly the whole island converging on us," complained one bank official. Another island bank, Amerika Samoa Bank, did not have this problem. (Despite the very real damage to the is-

lands, one wonders what happens to personal spending patterns, and to prices, with so much extra cash sloshing around in the island's economy).

It is not that all FEMA assistance flows quickly through a single pipeline. There are at least two principal programmes for storm-hurt families (as well as others for businessmen and for the government itself). The programme paying the most rapidly is the individual and family grant programme. There is also the housing programme, which in some cases will provide entirely new houses for eligible families, and in more cases will provide help to rebuild damaged houses. Given the size of the challenge and the relatively small number of building contractors in the territory, FEMA decided that it



**Cyclone Ofa in Western Samoa: simpler system of distributing relief.**

would, under some circumstances, allow families to repair their own houses or hire handymen to do it for them; this decision was an indication of FEMA's flexibility; it would not make such a decision on the Mainland, and had not done so during the last big storm to hit American Samoa.

Some 500 families, whose houses were totally obliterated during the storm, and who are now living in FEMA-supplied tents, will get 360-, 480-, 600-, or 720-square foot houses, built of wood on concrete foundations, at no cost. (The size of the house varied depending on the size of the destroyed house). FEMA contends that these houses, in most instances, will be both more comfortable and more valuable than the earlier house. Typically storms are more likely to flatten the less durable houses in a community than the sturdier ones. So, if all goes as planned, the basic housing stock of American Samoa will, ultimately, be improved by the combination of Ofa and

FEMA.

While the storm-relief programme in American Samoa are considerably better funded than those in Western Samoa they are also more complicated, and more likely to involve written applications.

In Western Samoa, where the damage was even worse, different and simpler systems of distributing relief were used. In one of them each of the 47 members of the parliament will be allocated 60,000 Western Samoan tala (US\$26,000) to help with storm-caused losses to families in the constituency. Since each member has, on average, about 3400 constituents, this works out to less than US\$8 per person.

The funds are usually distributed through the traditional power structure (village councils, and extended families) and in some constituencies it is simply divided among the families. In other dis-

tricts the money is distributed by systems which lay stress on prestige and age as well as on numbers (i.e. matai get more money than non-matai).

Meanwhile, Ofa provided an opportunity for the new owners of Hawaii Air to seek to rebuild its frayed reputation in American Samoa. Hawaii Air put together two special "alofa flights" which brought emergency relief supplies to American Samoa from Hawaii. Diverting a DC-8 from the normal Honolulu-Marshall Islands run (an Air Marshall Islands operation) the first of the two flights brought 25,000 pounds of non-perishable food, medical supplies and other items donated by the Samoan community and others in Hawaii.

On the first flight, the Bank of Hawaii paid for 14,000 gallons of fuel, and Pacific Resources, Inc. paid for another 5,000 gallons. Hawaiian Airlines cockpit and cabin crew, as well as ground personnel volunteered their time to make the flights. □

## THE REGION

## TONGA

## The day of the devils

**T**HE Kingdom of Tonga scored an international publicity coup last month, but one which its leaders probably could have done without. The breathless saga first hit Pacific Island airwaves on March 28. A female member of Tonga's 3000-member Tokaikolo Christian Fellowship claimed to have been kidnapped, interrogated and drugged by two men in dark glasses and a modern-day witch with computers on her chest. The woman prayed in her drugged delirium and, she later claimed, an angel dressed in shining white released her from her captors' van.

The kidnappers apparently wanted to know about an audience which Tokaikolo members and four visiting New Zealanders had just held that day with King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. Tokaikolo's leader, the Rev. Lifau Vailela, also went on Radio Tonga with what one foreign diplomat described as "weird" allegations of devils being loose in the Kingdom. Two days later, the four Kiwis accompanied by a large Tokaikolo group, had a second audience with the King amid growing rumours of a conspiracy by Police Minister George Akau'ola and foreign mercenaries to stage a coup d'etat.

The first outsiders knew of this threat to Tonga's monarchy came from Akau'ola himself. He chose April Fool's Day to go on Radio Tonga to address a "whispering campaign" which had sprung up since the national elections, particularly regarding the Protected Persons passport scheme. Most of Akau'ola's speech dealt with rumours of corruption and misuse of funds from the passport scheme. In almost a postscript to his half-hour speech called "Peace and Security in Tonga Today", the Police Minister claimed the four New Zealanders and the Fellowship had told the King "amazing, untrue and unbelievable" lies about a conspiracy to overthrow the country.

Akau'ola said later that, during their first audience, the Kiwis told the King an Auckland man was training terrorists to invade Tonga. When the Auckland police reported back that the Auckland was a respected, wealthy businessman who knew nothing of coups in Tonga, the four Kiwis changed their story, said Akau'ola. They then accused the Police Minister and other defence officials of planning a coup funded by an "unfriendly country". American backing was hinted at for a force of 19 European mercenaries who were to arrive in a helicopter on April 6. (Akau'ola told reporters his police force didn't have a heli-

copter so he was looking forward to taking delivery of one on the due date.)

On Monday April 2, the Kiwis got deportation orders but refused to budge. One of them, conservative Catholic journalist Bernard Moran, told the foreign media their lives were in danger from the coup plotters. At the Rev. Vailela's suggestion, the four had earlier abandoned their hotels for the Tokaikolo church compound, where they were placed under tight security.

All of which was "puzzling" to the New Zealand High Commissioner in Nuku'alofa, John Carter, because none of the Kiwis had come to him for help. Carter described the coup rumours as



Tonga's King Tupou: told of coup threat.

"pie in the sky", and a source of some amusement to Tongans.

Tongan journalists reported conflicting stories from the Kiwis. None would comment on their audiences with the King, nor offer any evidence to substantiate allegations on a coup conspiracy. Christchurch engineer Dennis Lloyd McLachlan said he'd been invited to speak to the Tokaikolo church on the topic of One World Government, after a similar speech to the Fellowship's Auckland congregation. Moran apparently told some local reporters his ticket to Tonga had been paid for by fellow visitors John and Sharon Fawcett, but he thought he was coming for a holiday. Back in Auckland, Moran's wife, Annetta, told Radio New Zealand her husband had gone to Tonga to write articles on

the church there.

Meanwhile, news was emerging in New Zealand of the previous exploits of McLachlan and the Fawcetts. McLachlan had been convicted last year of criminal libel (an extremely rare charge) against the former Prime Minister, Sir Robert Muldoon. McLachlan admitted on radio he was out of New Zealand illegally as he still had some time to serve in his sentence of period detention.

Attorney-General David Lange weighed in with a blunt dismissal of the Fawcetts' credentials. Lange said he'd run into the Fawcetts last year when they preached publicly and circulated recordings alleging that the Soviet Union was providing arms to Maori terrorists for bloody attacks on the Commonwealth Games and at Waitangi. John Fawcett responded that he and his wife didn't make a habit of stirring up anarchy and it was rubbish to say they were always claiming anti-government plots. Fawcett accused the several Christian groups who'd complained to the media of wanting to discredit him and his wife.

So April 6 dawned and it found McLachlan and Sharon Fawcett in the Nuku'alofa magistrates court on three immigration charges. No foreign mercenaries. No helicopter (sorry, George). The following week the pair were found guilty and along with their two companions, placed under house arrest at the Tokaikolo compound until the first flight to New Zealand on April 14. The foursome were met at Auckland by about 50 Auckland Fellowship members and whisked off to a reception.

But the four remained unrepentant. Moran said the King was still in danger. Although one coup had been averted, said Moran, "the same European people" responsible for it were still in Tonga. He accused David Lange of "blackening (the) names" of the Fawcetts in a letter to the King. Lange said he'd written to the King after the four had been served deportation orders, to tell the King "of my experience at the hands of these people".

Lange said he's always known where the Fawcetts were speaking around New Zealand because he'd get letters from people warning the nation was in peril.

"And then I heard the tape recordings of this woman," Lange said. They were "full of Messianic prophecy and doom, and Waitangi Day being disrupted by civil war, angels taking people off hither and yon," he said. "Why she bothered to book a plane to get to Tonga I do not know, because most of the time she seemed to go by angel." Lange said Waitangi and the Commonwealth Games had come and gone. "Armageddon had not descended, and I think they lost their credibility." He had decided to "tell the King that". □

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## VANUATU

## Now, bring the Vietnamese

By David North

**V**ANUATU, following a series of conflicting statements, has apparently decided to accept a hundred Vietnamese refugee families, providing a series of conditions are met. The road to that decision was a rough one.

First a self-identified ambassador of the President of Vanuatu, Selwyn A. Leodoro, told Vietnamese in California that his country would welcome refugees from Hong Kong.

Then the office of Prime Minister Walter Lini and the Vanuatu Foreign Office vehemently denied these reports, and said that Leodoro had been fired as Secretary of the President prior to the California trip.

In March Walter Lini visited Hong Kong with Leodoro, and reportedly told both the Hong Kong Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that Vanuatu would resettle 100 Vietnamese refugees families now stuck in Hong Kong.

The California-based, Japan-linked, Vietnamese-run Cuong De International Foundation, led by a Vietnamese resident of California, Lien Bang Phuoc Nguyen, was to make the arrangements. Nguyen and a resident of the Washington area, Elwood McKee, told *Pacific Islands Monthly* that they met with Lini and Leodoro in Hong Kong in the latest round of these negotiations.

None of the refugees have yet arrived in Port Vila, and a number of hurdles need to be surmounted before they do, but it appears that Vanuatu, at least in principal, has agreed to such a settlement.

If the resettlement occurs, it will happen because of two independent factors: the persistence of a small group of Vietnamese-American businessmen, led by Nguyen, and the adventurous nature of Vanuatu's foreign policy. Prime Minister Walter Lini has proved himself to be a risk-taker, and Vanuatu's decision to be the first of the South Pacific nations to accept the refugees fits into that pattern. Vanuatu after all, has briefly flirted with Libya's Gaddafi, accepted Soviet fishing fees, routinely voted against the West in the United Nations, and licensed banks for non-Vanuatu operations which routinely get into trouble. It is in character that Vanuatu should be a pioneer in the acceptance of refugees of a different background than the host population.

Nguyen is an American citizen, an official of the Mitsui Company (one of Japan's largest corporations), and, in

addition, a successful entrepreneur in the export-import business. His firm, he says, exports more goods to Japan from the United States (mostly meat products) than it moves from Japan to the US an accomplishment that American business, generally, has been unable to copy.

Nguyen has an appropriate background for international affairs. His late grandfather, for whom the family foundation was named, was Chamberlain to the Emperor of Indochina until 1905 when he had to leave the country (then ruled by the French) and repair to Japan. The Chamberlain's family apparently had and still has some



**Lini, Kasahara at Hong Kong airport on March 27: good news for the Vietnamese refugees?**

money, as well as useful Japanese contacts. Nyguen spent many years in Japan, speaks Japanese (and English) fluently and has a Japanese name, Ben Kasahara. Lini used that name in his recent correspondence with him.

More than a year ago Nguyen and some Vietnamese colleagues in California decided that the United States, Australia and Canada were not accepting enough Vietnamese refugees, particularly, from Hong Kong, and that one more new sites for resettlement were needed. They decided that Vanuatu would be a good place to settle, partially because there was a precedent for Vietnamese living in that country.

Nguyen made seven trips to Vanuatu

in his effort to secure resettlement opportunities for his countrymen. He told *PIM* that each trip involved three to five other persons, and that his family has spent more than a quarter of a million US dollars in travel, communications, legal fees and the like in its efforts to arrange the hoped-for refugee resettlement.

According to Nguyen, now optimistic about the prospects for Vanuatu's acceptance of refugees, it has sometimes been a frustrating process. "There were times when I sat in a hotel room in Port Vila for ten days, just waiting for the response to a letter."

He had been disturbed by denials a few months ago that Vanuatu was even thinking about accepting refugees, and seemed to be reluctant to talk about the matter.

Why did Vanuatu shift its policy on this point?

Has the Government of Walter Lini simply been changing its mind — frequently — on this issue?

Has there been turmoil within the Prime Minister's inner circle, with Leodoro in, out, and back in again?

Did the story break on the planned resettlement of refugees in Vanuatu at an inconvenient time for Lini, thus generating both denials at the time, and a subsequent confirmation in Hong Kong?

Is someone in Vanuatu playing fast and loose with the truth?

Or is the real explanation some combination of the possible answers outlined above?

It is hard to know what happened in the past within the government's inner circles, but the Prime Minister has laid out some of the ground rules for refugee resettlement, and within them Nguyen and his colleagues have made some tentative plans.

The Prime Minister's letter of March 14 to Nguyen (Kasahara) is both welcoming and vague. It is headed (in solid caps): "APPROVAL TO RECRUIT INTERNATIONAL VIETNAMESE FOR VANUATU PROJECTS".

It goes on to say: "As Minister of Immigration I give my approval to your request to recruit up to 100 professional and technical workers from the Refugee Detention Camps in Hong Kong to work on various projects that your organisation will undertake in Vanuatu especially the Community College and fisheries projects."

The term "recruit" implies admission to Vanuatu, but does not state it. Nor is there any reference at all to the terms and conditions of the Vietnamese presence in the country, nor to the arrival of family members, which Nguyen expects. (For example, will the Vietnamese in Vanuatu, like the Vietnamese on

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Guam, be able to acquire citizenship ultimately?) There are conditions, however, as follows:

"This approval is subject to: 1) agreement by all parties involved, i.e. UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and the Hong Kong (Br.) Government. 2) The formalities to be completed with Immigration and Labour Department [of Vanuatu]. 3) My formal declaration in due course."

The first of these three is no problem at all, the Hong Kong and the UN authorities will be delighted with the prospect of 100 families leaving, and even more so with the arrival of a new country among those accepting refugees. The second and third provisions can be handled easily, if Vanuatu's current policy remains its policy.

Lini's letter, incidentally, contains an indication that Leodoro is back in his government's good graces: "You [Kasahara/Nguyen] and Mr Leodoro should proceed to arrange with all parties concerned to recruit the workers."

Two other questions remain to be answered: first, how will the resettlement of the refugees, including the air travel, be financed, and what will the refugees do once they get to Vanuatu.

On the first point, Nguyen has already done some calculations, saying that air travel perhaps could be secured for US\$3500 a family. He is not asking Vanuatu to pay for the travel.

As to what the refugees will do once they arrive, if they arrive, this much is

clear. Their first stop will be in Port Vila, though later some may settle on Pentecost, the home island to both Lini and Leodoro. The Cuong De International Foundation is negotiating to lease an existing building (served by electricity and telephone) and 14 hectares of land (35 acres) in the Fresh Water Hill area near Port Vila. This will serve as a staging area for the arrivals.

There are expectations that the Cuong De Foundation will open a headquarters in Port Vila and will help with the estab-

lishment of a community college.

Meanwhile Vanuatu and Vietnam may be moving toward closer relations with or without the refugees. A report from the Vietnam capital of Hanoi, quoted Vanuatu President Frederick Kalmoana Timkata as saying his country was prepared to develop cooperative relations with Vietnam.

Timkata made the statement after receiving the credentials of Vietnam's Ambassador to Vanuatu, Tran Tuan Anh. □



Together: from left — Kasahara, Leodoro, Lini, and retired CIA officer Elwood McKee arrive for lunch in Hong Kong.

## FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

### From Truk to Chuuk

**T**RUK, the most populous state in the Federated States of Micronesia, has a new name (Chuuk), a new constitution, and a new Governor.

Gideon Doone, the embattled incumbent Governor, who shrugged off impeachment proceedings, and survived the first round of a two-round election process, was defeated in the runoff election April 3 by former FSM Senator Sasao Goulard. The final, but unofficial tally was 11,243 for Goulard and 9916 for Doone. Special arrangements were made so that Chuukese who live elsewhere, such as in Guam and in the Northern Marianas, were able to cast absentee ballots.

Four years earlier Doone defeated Goulard in the runoff for the governorship.

This year's gubernatorial runoff was just the most recent of a series of political events in the area. Truk has been dropped for Chuuk. Similarly, the principal island, formerly Moen is now Wenn.

The old state constitution had a single-body legislature. The new one has a 10-member Senate and a 28-member House of Representatives. The new members of these two bodies were elected on March 6.

Chuuk not only has a new constitution for the state, its voters have recently elected a set of delegates to help draft a new constitution for FSM. That body consists of an odd-number of members, 25 elected ones, and six traditional leaders; the latter include two each from Chuuk, Pohnpei and Yap, but none from Kosrae, where no seats were set aside for chiefs.

Among Chuuk's delegates to the constitutional convention will be for the former President of FSM, the founding President, Tosiwo Nakayama. Nakayama came in third in Chuuk's at-large balloting for delegate, but that was good enough to secure a seat as a delegate.

Nakayama, his friends and relatives, played a major role in the governor's race as well, since Senator Goulard is his

son-in-law.

Goulard and Doone were among four candidates seeking the Chuuk governorship who went into the first-round of elections on March 6. Eliminated in that election was the sitting Lt. Governor, Bob Mori, and Kasio Mida, a Nakayama associate who had held the job of FSM liaison officer in Honolulu.

One of the principal issues in both the initial and the runoff elections was the sustained impeachment trial of Doone. Under the old Truk state constitution, the unicameral legislature had the power to initiate impeachment proceedings against a sitting Governor, with a panel of three judges assigned to hear the charges. If one or more of the charges were sustained, the Governor would be removed from office.

The legislature voted 21 charges against Doone last year; the prosecutors dropped nine of them, and the court dropped eight more (often on the grounds that they needed level of proof could not be secured). This left only four to be decided by the three presiding judges.

The judges found Doone innocent of these four charges, and his temporary suspension as Governor was ended. □

THE REGION

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

# The threat of nationalisation

By Robin Bromby

**A** LEADING Papua New Guinea politician has raised doubts about the security of hundreds of millions of dollars of foreign investment in his country. Deputy Prime Minister Akoka Doi has come out in favour of nationalising all major foreign-owned companies in Papua New Guinea. While Prime Minister Rabbie Namaliu has said the government has no nationalisation poplcy in mind, Doi's statements must threaten what remains of business confidence in that nation.

Doi told a provincial premiers' conference in Port Moresby that the Government was moving toward ensuring that Papua New Guineans take over all major foreign-owned companies operating in the country. "There must be a change toward economic nationalism," he said. The following day, Prime Minister Namaliu issued a statement trying to set foreign investors' minds at rest. He assured the business community that the Government was committed to honouring existing contracts and arrangement with foreign companies.

But a few days later Doi spoke again on the issue: "The Prime Minister is right in saying we do not intend to nationalise foreign investment but I personally want to see it happen that way." He specified companies operating in the areas of stevedoring, transport, retail and wholesale as ones which should have already gone to Papua New Guinea ownership.

Also of concern in Port Moresby is the decision by the PNG Trade Union Congress to press for a 20 per cent wage increase for all workers — at a time when the Papua New Guinea economy is being hampered by the fact that wages are uncompetitively high by Third World standards, while productivity and skills levels are well below those of neighbouring Asian countries.

For the moment anyway, foreign companies — including those involved in mining and oil development — are keeping up a public face that they still have confidence in Papua New Guinea. Privately, though, most expatriate managers are extremely worried by both the unpredictability of the local politicians, and of the government's failure to get any handle on the escalating law and order crisis. One Australian living in Port Moresby summed up his decision to pull out of the country next month: "You know things are grim when you choose a restaurant mainly by the level of security it offers."



A Talair Dash 8: vital cog in the communication network.

# Buchanan accepts a truce

By Robin Bromby

**J**UST at a time when the last thing it needed was another business crisis, the Papua New Guinea Government was confronted by threats from the country's most colourful expatriate entrepreneur. Citing departmental refusal to allow his companies to employ urgently needed foreign workers and what he saw as official "anti-foreigner" feelings, Dennis Buchanan closed down his daily newspaper, *The Niugini News*, and threatened to ground Talair, the nation's main third-level airline.

It was not the first time Buchanan had threatened to leave the country after doing business there for 40 years, but the Government was quick to try and mend fences. They must have been aware that, although Buchanan is well-known for his occasional outbursts, he had faced similar problems in Vanuatu last year; there, after being refused work permits for expatriate staff, Buchanan sold his Air Melanesie and pulled out all his investments in Vanuatu.

The end result of the Papua New Guinea imbroglio is likely to be that Talair will continue operating but that the *Niugini News* could remain closed — the staff has been paid off and any new buyer is likely to be deterred by both the paper's chronic financial losses and revived ministerial talk of new Press controls in Papua New Guinea (Communications Minister Brown Sinamoi having said he will introduce legislation to control all the media and would ban journalists from Parliament).

The latest row began when Buchanan

suddenly announced that he was closing both Talair and the paper, both of which are owned by his family company, overnight.

Talair operates more than 50 aircraft, ranging from Dash 8 airliners to single-engined light planes. It flies to 136 destinations and employs about 1000 people, of whom 800 are Papua New Guinea nationals. In a country where air travel is the basic form of cross-country travel, Talair is a vital cog in the communications network. It is also one of the largest privately-owned airlines in the world. With the airline, newspaper, property and other investments it is estimated that Buchanan's investments in Papua New Guinea total about K50 million (US\$49.07 million). He is well aware that nothing like this amount would be realised if the assets were all disposed of, a factor which no doubt gave the Government some leverage.

The threat of closure arose over the issue of work permits to expatriate staff Buchanan wished to employ — or, rather, the non-issue of work permit. Government sources in Port Moresby agree much of the trouble has arisen at Papua New Guinea's Brisbane consulate which has attracted a reputation of being difficult with expatriates seeking work permits. Buchanan has also criticised the permanent heads of the two departments in Port Moresby, Civil Aviation and Labour and Employment, for also making problems for him: the department heads are, coincidentally, sisters — Jean and Rose Kekedo, respectively. There was also another grudge in that Buchanan felt that Talair had been tre-

## THE REGION

ated unfairly in being excluded from operating charters for mining and petroleum companies.

Buchanan's charge is that a streak of anti-expatriate dislike runs through the Public Service. His other complaint is that the breakdown of law and order in the country is making it extremely unpleasant for anyone trying to run a business and, as if to prove his point the day after he threatened to close all his businesses the Lae office of Talair was hit by armed robbers who made off with the K5000 (US\$4907) payroll. He also claimed that it was impossible to find foreign engineers willing to work in Papua New Guinea because most potential employees were worried about their personal security if they worked in the country.

Buchanan is not on his own in complaining about either issue: the rapidly deteriorating law and order situation is a matter of intense concern to the expatriate business community in Port Moresby. And there would be many companies operating in Papua New Guinea which have, at one time or another, run into problems obtaining work permits for foreign staff members.

The particular incident which set Buchanan off this time was the problem of Talair's chief pilot, Bryan McCook, had in obtaining a new work permit at the Papua New Guinea consulate in Brisbane. McCook has lived in Papua New Guinea since 1956 and had left the

country just before Christmas on leave. Buchanan then went to Prime Minister Rabbie Namaliu and made it clear that he had lost his patience and made the threat of complete closure. McCook had his documentation within 18 hours. Buchanan had also been seeking a permit to employ an expatriate to run the English-language *Niugini News*, but the government apparently stuck by its belief that a local person could do that job.

Both the government and Buchanan were hit by a barrage of criticism.

The Public Employees Association (PEA) likened Buchanan to Bougainville rebel leader Francis Ona in making threats to the national government. "We've had enough threats," said PEA general secretary Jack Kutal. "No responsible government should accept threats by any foreigner or any agents dealing with foreign interests." He added that any foreigner who did not want to accept the country's laws should pack up and leave. The Opposition lashed the government for seeming to give into Buchanan's demands, with MP Albert Kipalan saying the government should freeze all of Buchanan's assets, and this was followed by threats from the Tax Office to investigate Talair's financial affairs.

Meanwhile, Civil Aviation Minister Bernard Vogac revealed that he had indicated to Buchanan that the businessman should leave the country if he felt strongly aggrieved, but he denied there

was any anti-foreigner feeling in his department.

Then the government struck back by seeking a court order to restrain Buchanan from closing the airline on the ground that would cause undue inconvenience to the travelling public. An order to seek continuation of the *Niugini News* was received too late — the staff had already been paid off.

It later emerged that Buchanan had gone so far as to inform the International Air Transport Association that Talair would merge with his Queensland operation, Flight West, and much of the airline's fleet was assembled at Port Moresby's Jackson Airport. The airline's offices turned customers away when people tried to book on Talair flights. But the airline did eventually operate limited services while the battle of wills continued.

Further court action was instituted by the Government to prevent Buchanan from liquidating his assets until customs and taxation clearances had been obtained — this was aimed mainly at forestalling Buchanan from flying his aircraft to Australia.

As Press time approached for *Pacific Islands Monthly*, a temporary agreement between the two parties had been reached under which Talair resumed all its services, with Buchanan undertaking to operate the airline for six months while the Government considered his demands. On its part, the Namaliu administration discontinued its action before the National Court. □

## NIUE

## Rex beats the odds

**T**HE lone political hoarding outside a takeaway shop in Niue's main street boldly proclaimed: "It's Time For A Change." And in the island's sixth general election voters made it clear that's what they wanted. Six new assembly men got the nod — youth nudging out their senior counterparts.

Most of the backing went to village and common roll candidates sympathetic to the Niue People's Action Party — a small group strongly opposed to the Sir Robert Rex government which has dominated politics on the island since 1974. Topping the poll was Mrs Tauveve Jacobsen, a relative newcomer to local politics. She successfully gained a seat in a by-election last year and is renowned for her tough questioning of Cabinet Ministers during Assembly debates. She obviously drew in votes from supporters of Lady Patricia Rex who was re-elected but with a greatly reduced total. Matua Rex a former Cabinet Minister also sneaked in but with a reduced majority.

Newcomers to the 20 seat Assembly

include Fisa Pihigia former head of the Customs Department, Dion Taufitu former Clerk of the House, Morris Tafatu a former politician who resigned because of ill health last year.



Rex: back in.

Dark horse among the 19 hopefuls who sought a common roll seat Sani Lakatani from New Zealand sneaked in.

He is a founder of the NPAP and despite being married into the Rex family has been strongly opposed to past government policies.

On election night NPAP leader Young Vivian who was returned unopposed in the village seat of Hakupu was quietly confident he'd have a 12-8 majority in the new Assembly. But his confidence

was shortlived. Pre-election splits in the NPAP — caused by a leadership row between Vivian and Lakatani — soon developed into a gaping wound. Veteran politician 81-year-old Sir Robert Rex drove the wedge in deeper and within 24 hours after the election night, results shifted his lobbying machine into top gear.

In a surprise manoeuvre Sir Robert managed to lure at least four assemblymen sympathetic to the NPAP into his camp and successfully retained control in a 12-8 turnaround which saw him comfortably returned as premier and keeping Speaker Sam Tagilagi firmly in command.

The defections angered many electors who voted for change and left NPAP leader Vivian stunned. Major decisions now facing the new government include sorting out an airline service capable of meeting future planned tourist demands, cutbacks in the public service, and repairing damage sustained to the Niue Hotel and Lord Liverpool Hospital during February's Cyclone Ofa. □

# THE REGION

U.S. ARMY



Johnston Atoll: a highly restricted United States Army facility.

## JOHNSTON ATOLL

### Grim news on nerve gas

"We plan to begin toxic operations in April or May."

"There are both persistent and non-persistent nerve agents."

"The explosives and chemicals burn clean."

**T**HE vocabulary is appropriately grim as the spokespeople of the Pentagon describe the planned destruction of chemical weapons on America's Johnston Atoll, some 1000 miles west-south-west of Honolulu.

A massive amount of chemical weapons, including 400 tons of lethal nerve gas, will be destroyed on Johnston, a process which may go on for years. It is good news, in terms of armament reduction and in reducing East-West tensions. It is particularly good news for Germany, where the nerve gas used to be stored. (There may have been some politics involved; President Bush likes the conservative German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who faces an election soon, and whose people dislike the American chemical weapons). And it is clearly better for a nation to be using the Pacific to destroy weapons rather than to test them (as the French do), but the whole process is still pretty scary.

Johnston Atoll has long been a one-purpose island, a highly restricted United States Army facility where chemical weapons are stored but it formerly played its role silently. More recently, notably as the United States Government announced that it was moving large amounts of chemical weapons out of Germany, its role became more obvious.

The Lt. Colonel at the Pentagon would not, understandably, divulge to *Pacific Islands Monthly* the route of the nerve gas from the German North Sea port of Nordenham to Johnston Atoll; presumably the proprietors of the Suez and the Panama canals would just as

soon not have that particular business, so maybe the sea voyage will be a long one. Nor would he talk about the timing of the move, but he and his colleagues were remarkably open about everything else.

There are 100,000 units in this collection of nerve gas, mostly in artillery shells; the gas comes in two forms. First, there is the non-persistent type, GB or Sarin, which is mixed with a liquid like water. "It dissipates in a matter of hours." (The enemy was supposed to breathe it, with death following quickly). Then there is the persistent form, VX, which is mixed with a liquid that looks like oil for your car engine. "It dissipates in a matter of days." (It was supposed to penetrate the enemy's skin).

In addition to the nerve gas which will arrive on the island later this year, there is a substantial stockpile of other chemical weapons. Some of them have been there since about 1960 when another World War II enemy of the United States, Japan, persuaded Uncle Sam to remove the material from Okinawa and from Japan. The Army will start destroying these stockpiles while the nerve gas makes its way to the atoll.

The Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Disposal System (JACADS) works like a chemical assembly-line in reverse. First, in a closed chamber, robot-like mechanical arms and fingers take the shell apart, and send the three principal components off in different directions.

The metal parts of the shell are melted down at high heats in the decontamination furnace. It was not quite clear to sources whether the end-product

was a scrap metal, or something that needed to be buried in an "approved, hazardous landfill"; it was not known to them whether Johnston Atoll would provide the landfill or if the remnants would go elsewhere, "but we will let you know when we find out". The most detailed information came from a woman working at the Army's Fort Aberdeen Ordnance Facility some 60 miles from Washington.

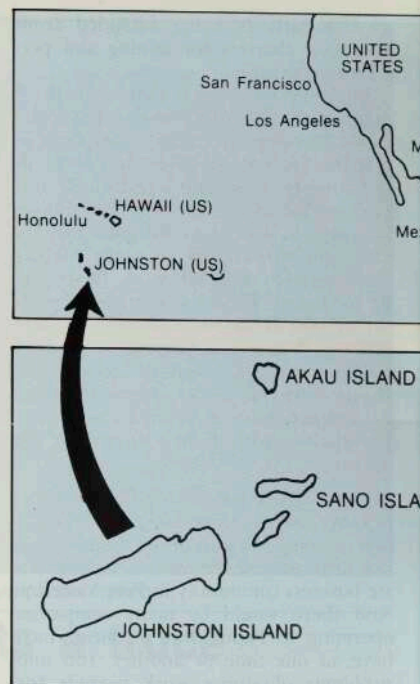
The explosives are burnt off in the "de-activation furnace" while the nerve-killing chemicals are burnt in the "liquid incinerator". These are the compounds that are said to burn cleanly.

The packing material that the shells arrive in is taken off to the fourth facility, the "dunnage incinerator" where it, too, is burned to fine ash. One hopes that all goes as scheduled during each and every one of the 100,000 attempts.

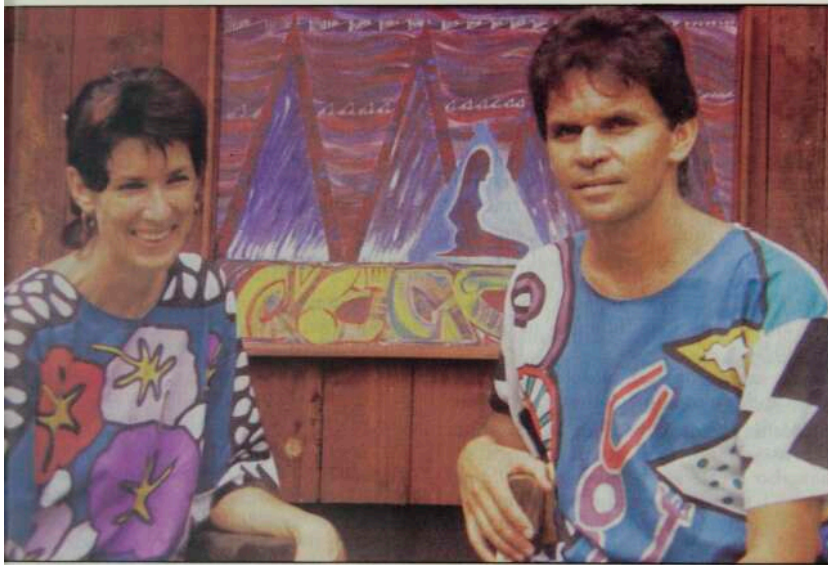
The last time Johnston Atoll made it into the United States Press was a couple of years ago, and the atmosphere was different. A prominent American writer and conservative political activist, William Buckley, was sailing across the Pacific with some well-connected chums.

Buckley, born to millions, and a media star from his early twenties, has a nationwide weekly television show; his brother served for six years in the US Senate. He knew it was a military island, but figured that, with his contacts, he and his then ocean-weary friends could stay on the island, at least for the night.

They were told to leave after their supplies of fuel, water and ice had been replenished. □



THE ARTS



Kay and Ian George: "We need art to reflect our culture and society."



## Adding colour to life in Rarotonga

By Angela McCarthy

**T**O walk into Akaoa Art Studio is a visual experience in contemporary Pacific art and design. Bold colourful wallhangings, paintings, bonecarvings and painted clothing lie or hang everywhere. No other outlet in the Cook Islands has such variety.

The two artists, Kay and Ian George, arrived in Rarotonga 18 months ago from New Zealand. They say the environment has strongly influenced their work from the day they arrived. "My art has changed since coming here," explains Ian. "My colours are brighter, I have dropped the New Zealand symbolism and the harsher contrasts. I am now using more South Pacific motifs and local legends and symbols."

The new symbols highlight the central theme in Ian's paintings — youth searching for a culture, tradition and identity. It is a valid theme for many Pacific Islanders living away from their home islands — including Ian himself.

A New Zealand-born Cook Islander, Ian taught art in Rotorua, specialising in New Zealand Maori. In 1988 he was part of the Rotorua guide group for Te Maori Exhibition — a collection of sacred New Zealand Maori artifacts then on show in Auckland. Recalls Ian: "There I was telling people about Maori carvings and realising that I knew nothing at all about my own Cook Island Culture. Yet our culture is our identity and as a painter and an individual I felt I needed to know about my own culture to develop further." So Ian talked Kay

into moving to Rarotonga.

Rarotonga was initially a disappointment in the area of visual contemporary artwork. Aside from Mike Tavioni's tie-dyeing and carving studio there was little to see, although the performing arts were strong. To Ian, even the woodcarving was disappointing, because it was orientated too much to the tourist market. The foundations for the development of art did not exist. Art was not taught formally in schools at any level, and there were very few support services or organisations with which to exchange information. The artists were there. But their profile was low.

In need of a job Ian presented himself to the Education Department emphasising his art background. He was immediately employed as an English teacher but asked to come up with an outline for an art programme for the following year. The Department was keen to have a formal school art programme running to help prepare youths for the South Pacific Arts and Cultural Festival in Rarotonga in 1992. Before Ian, there was no-one with the experience to do it.

Since then Ian has established an art department at the national high school, now in its second year, and runs ongoing courses at the Cook Islands primary training college. He is also writing a formal art curriculum for the Cook Islands.

Ian is quiet, but determined. His ponytail and casual clothes contrast with his piercing eyes and resolute manner. He believes strongly in what is important in life and is prepared to put time and

energy into achieving his goals. His enthusiasm for his art and artforms in the Pacific is infectious, as the large numbers of students wanting to take his art classes show.

Somehow, along with the art education, Ian also managed to keep producing his own artwork. As well as contemporary Maori paintings he does black ink drawings which were popular in the art exhibition Kay and Ian held last year. He also carves. He was a woodcarver in New Zealand. In Rarotonga he is experimenting with bone because of the difficulty getting wood. The local carvers use demolition wood offcuts which is not readily available. Therefore Ian realises on friends and family in New Zealand to send beef bone supplies to him.

Ian's bonecarvings are beautiful. They are more angular than New Zealand Maori pendants and have distinct Cook Island motifs. His work is recognisable.

At a more traditional level Ian is researching the existence of a Cook Island equivalent of the New Zealand manaia, which is a lizard-like spiritual motif of life and death, prominent in some form in most Polynesian art. Because of the common ancestry of New Zealand and Cook Islands Maori he feels sure it existed but destroyed by the missionaries because of its symbolism. Once he finds it he wants to re-establish it, through paintings and carvings, as a traditional spiritual motif of the Cook Islands.

Artwork aside, Ian, Kay and other local artists have set up the Te Pua Neinei Arts and Cultural Society. The group has a bi-monthly newsletter and various

## THE ARTS

events that culminated last year in the first collective Cook Islands, art exhibition. The Georges felt a group was needed to pull all the artists together for motivation, moral support and help with materials.

Ian is pleased with his achievements and feels he has learnt a lot in Rarotonga: "Art is part of culture so we need art to reflect our culture and society. It hasn't been happening enough here. What's more I feel I can call myself a Cook Islander now. I am living the culture and although I find it static at times the fact that I am involved in causing change makes me feel I belong."

Kay, too, feels that she has gained from the move to the Cook Islands. She feels her love for painting bright colours and bold design are more in tune with the Pacific than the more sophisticated Sydney scene where she first began painting seriously. There, she says, the city felt so gloomy that she started using bright designs to add brightness.

Although she has a fondness for wearing black — a sophisticated safe colour — she paints striking, bold garments that reflect Rarotonga's tropical environment. Her trademark is the insertion of a black and white design somewhere in every garment she creates, whatever its main

colour. The effect is striking and original.

Initially she did everything from the designing to the cutting, painting and sewing. However orders have increased so much since the exhibition, she has hired a machinist. A unique touch at the exhibition opening was the appearance of some guests wearing Kay's garments.

Kay is a thin, reserved woman who comes alive when talking about art, colour, books and other varied passions. Then she becomes animated and talkative and gestures continuously to explain her ideas.

She says people should feel comfortable and enjoy the clothes they wear.

Clothing is not the only art medium she uses. Since being in Rarotonga she has also created a number of wallhangings: "I was down on the beach one day and found my mind spilling over with ideas I wanted to paint so I raced back to the house, found the only large piece of untouched fabric I had and couldn't leave it alone." The result was an abstract wallhanging full of the movement of the sea and the reef. Kay feels her best work come from this sort of spontaneity.

She believes her childhood in Tokoroa

and Rotorua amongst Maori and Pacific island communities (her grandfather was a painter and signwriter) and the more recent experiences of visiting the Australian Northern Territories red deserts and aboriginal artforms, are strong influences on her painting style.

For Kay, painting was first a hobby while living in Sydney with little money. She often used old clothing to doddle on. It was cheap and easy to obtain from junkshops and friends.

"It became a form of meditation for me but then as I got more confident I realised there was a world of art out there for me to explore. I began painting anything I could get my hands on — from earrings to jackets and corsets," she said.

She first sold her work at the Sydney markets, and then moved into an art collective before eventually setting up an inner city shop with another couple.

It was at this point that she met Ian, again — an old face from her home town. She found his optimism and interest in indigenous art a welcome change. She moved to Rarotonga in New Zealand to join him and there they made the decision to shift to Rarotonga where their baby was born. □

## Rockefeller Fellowships 1991-92



### PACIFIC ISLANDS STUDIES

The Center for Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawai'i, invites applications for Rockefeller Residency Fellowships in the Humanities. Fellowships are open to academic scholars at junior or senior rank, to independent scholars without academic affiliation, and to other qualified writers in Pacific Islands studies from any country. Fellows will work on an original book-length scholarly manuscript or major articles relating to one of the following topics under the theme "Identity and Change in Contemporary Pacific Cultures": (1) contemporary social, political, and

religious movements in the Pacific; (2) indigenous Pacific literature; and (3) the interplay of Pacific art and politics.

Two fellowships will be awarded for academic year 1991-92 at a stipend of \$30,000 plus fringe benefits for nine months. Application deadline is December 31, 1990. For application forms and further information write to Director, Center for Pacific Islands Studies, School of Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Studies, 1890 East-West Road, Moore Hall 215, University of Hawai'i, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822.



# The right of the unborn

Guam's struggle with its new abortion law has renewed debate on women's right

By David North

**G**UAM enacted what is said to be the toughest anti-abortion law under United States flag in March, and proceeded to get into lots of trouble. The bill was passed unanimously by the 21-member Territorial Senate and then was signed into law by Governor Joseph Ada, a Republican, despite advice from his own Attorney-General, Elizabeth Barrett-Andersen, that it was contrary to the US Constitution.

The law makes it a felony to perform an abortion, a misdemeanor (i.e. a lesser offence) to experience one, and, significantly, a crime to even suggest to a woman that she has the option of having an abortion. The only circumstances under which an abortion is legal is if:

- the pregnant woman's life is in danger; and
- the proposed abortion is approved by two physicians working under the supervision of a territorial agency.

The drastic anti-abortion provisions would have been controversial enough but what really brought wrath down on the island was the ban on abortion information. This was seen as an attack on freedom of speech and of the Press, both of which are enshrined in America's 200-year-old Bill of Rights, a section of the Constitution. In the uproar that followed the enactment of the bill the following happened:

- a suit was filed in federal district court to suspend the law until a full hearing could be conducted; the requested suspension (a temporary restraining order) was granted immediately;
- a New York lawyer, who flew to Guam to fight the bill, invited arrest by reading the section of the Honolulu telephone book listing abortion clinics, thereby providing information on abortions; she was duly indicted, setting up another challenge to the new law, this time in the Guam Superior Court;
- a strategically-placed member of the U.S. House of Representatives, George Miller (Democrat — California) announced that he was withdrawing his support of Commonwealth status for Guam until the freedom of speech issue

was resolved; he is the ranking Democrat on the House Committee on Interior and Territorial Affairs, and a long-time supporter of Guam's interests;

- most of the American Press coverage was negative, focussed, as one would expect under the circumstances, on the freedom of speech issue; and

- the office of the island Congressman, Ben Blaz (Republican) spent almost all of its time in the following weeks



trying to control the damage to the Commonwealth bill. The Congressman took to the Floor of the House to plead with his colleagues not to "relegate us to darkness [because of the abortion bill] . . . it would be tantamount to spanking us and telling us to go to our room and languish through to another quarter of a century of benign neglect . . . we have been in our room for almost 100 years already."

While abortions do not happen frequently on Guam (see box) there is strong sentiment against it in many quarters. The traditional Chamorro Families (the island's indigenous establishment)

disapprove of it, as does the outspoken Catholic Archbishop Anthony S. Apuron.

The latter threatened to excommunicate any member of the Senate who did not vote against abortion, and since 20 of the 21 members are Catholics, it apparently made an impression. (In New York State, meanwhile, the equally Catholic Governor, Mario Cuomo, a Democratic presidential possibility, gracefully shrugs off comparable threats from his bishop on the same issue).

It was in this setting that a member of the Democratic majority of the Guam Senate, Elizabeth Arriola, introduced the bill that later became law. (One of the unrecognised ironies of the story is that Guam Senate has a higher proportion of women than can be found in all but one of the Mainland state legislatures; eight of the Guam Senators, or 38 per cent, are women).

No matter what one may think of the abortion provisions of the bill, the Senator's bill contained a couple of bobby-traps; first, as the Attorney-General noted, the attack on freedom of speech was clearly unconstitutional, and secondly, the drafters of the legislation failed to include the one-sentence safety device that is normally found in American legislation. That is the "separability" section which simply says that if one part of the legislation is found unconstitutional, the rest of it is to be separated, and allowed to continue to function. There is no such sentence in the bill and if the ban on advice about abortions is regarded as unconstitutional, the whole act collapses.

While the members of the Senate ignored these built-in problems they did adopt an amendment which will give the voters of Guam a chance to vote on the issue. A majority of those voting on this issue on November 6 can, if they chose, kill the bill. While there was no partisan squabbling on the substance of the law, or its ban on abortion information, there was on the question of the referendum. The Republican minority in the Senate did not want the November vote, but the Democratic majority wanted it, and got it. Senator Arriola did not want the vote,

## ETHICS

but abstained on the issue.

Governor Ada was not happy with the choices he faced. (He could sign the bill, let it be law without his signature or veto it). The Governor, like Congressman Blaz, is opposed to abortion, but, like the Congressman, prefers a more moderate stand on the issue in that he would permit abortions in cases of rape, incest or a grossly deformed fetus, as well as in cases where the mother's life was in danger.

Rather than using the veto to seek these modifications he went ahead and signed the bill saying: "I still believe that a fetus is a human being. And, therefore, as human beings they have rights, civil rights." He said that Guam would develop a programme to accept, and to find adoptive homes, for unwanted babies as an "alternative to abortion".

Between the passage by the Senate, and the Governor's signature, the story had hit the front page of the *New York Times*, and secured the attention of Mainland lobbyists, politicians and commentators; there was sustained Mainland media attention to every aspect of the issue (see related story).

The first lobbyist on the scene was a photogenic New Yorker, Janet Benshoof, Director of the Reproductive Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). (ACLU lawyers, incidentally, have been active in the past in litigation involving Palau and nuclear weapons, taking the anti-nuclear position). Benshoof had been alerted to the issue by another Mainland-trained, female lawyer, Anita Arriola, the Senator's daughter who has since become a leader of the abortion rights group on Guam.

Benshoof sought to dissuade Governor Ada from signing the bill, and when that did not work, and the bill became law, she challenged it at a meeting in Guam's Press Club. It was a carefully staged, thoroughly-announced breaking of the law. The Attorney-General, Barrett-Andersen, knew what was going to happen, and had two of her investigators in the audience, one with a tape recorder. And the Press and abortion-rights supporters were on hand as well. It was then that Benshoof invited arrest by reading from the medical section of the Honolulu phone book. The younger Arriola was to be her defence lawyer in Guam's Superior Court. But cooler heads prevailed, and, rather than face sure defeat in the court room, the case against Benshoof was dropped.

Guam judges, perhaps because of the apparent prowess of the anti-abortion faction, have shown a lack of interest in hearing these cases. Benshoof's arrest was first brought before Superior Court Judge Ramon Diaz, who said it would not be appropriate for him to hear the

case, which wound up in the court of Peter C. Siguenza. Similarly, the one judge on the federal bench in Guam, Cristobal Duenas, ducked the case and the court system had to fly in the Federal District Court Judge from the Northern Marianas, Alex Munson.

Munson, presumably looking at the free speech issue, let it be known that "this will be the easiest trial of my life". The case that Munson will hear on May 8 is the attempt on the part of the ACLU to dismiss the Guam law as unconstitutional; Benshoof is expected to make that argument. She quickly won the first round on this issue, when Munson agreed to grant a temporary restraining order, essentially suspending the operations of the law until he can make a decision.

A day or so later the other side of the issue brought in its own Mainland lobbyist. (The American terms for the two factions are pro-choice or choice, for those opposing abortion restrictions, and pro-life or life, for those supporting such restrictions). The pro-lifer was an equally photogenic male, Brian Young, a staff member of the American Life Lobby from California. Senator Arriola met him at the Won Pat International Airport with a red carnation lei. One of the banners displayed at the terminal was one showing a headless picture of baby, being held by forceps, as it was placed in a glass container; the caption read: "Freedom of Choice?"

Meanwhile, back in Washington, Congressman Ben Blaz struggled with the

side-effects of the abortion dispute. The Congressman, over a long period of time, has secured the agreement of 174 House members to co-sponsor his bill making Guam a commonwealth. It is not exactly a hot issue among most members of Congress, but Guam's position is understandable to them and Blaz is well-liked; the Commonwealth Bill is, and probably will continue to be, the most significant challenge in Blaz' legislative career.

When the word came that Governor Ada had signed the bill, Congressman Miller objected strongly. He sent a letter to all of the other co-signers of Blaz' Commonwealth Bill asking that they join him by withdrawing as sponsors of the bill. His rationale was that "states and territories may have the right to pass laws that deny women the right to choose, but no government has the right to deny its citizens freedom of speech".

Miller's position was doubly troubling to Blaz; first, Miller is expected, at some point, to succeed the ailing chairman of the House Interior Committee, Morris Udall (Democrat-Arizona), and this is the committee that handles all territorial legislations. Secondly, Blaz will need the support of urban liberals in the House, like Miller, if the Commonwealth bill is to succeed.

One of the reasons why the Mainland is so interested in the Guam bill is because it is, at the moment, the most likely vehicle to bring the abortion issue back to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Some 20 years ago a more liberal court ruled, in *Roe V. Wade*, that states cannot bar women from having abortions. Legal abortions then became a routine, if not applauded, part of American life. Last year a more conservative court (President Reagan made several life-time appointments to the court) took a step back from *Roe V. Wade* and said, in a Missouri case, that states could limit the right of women to have abortions.

The Missouri case had two immediate consequences, one political and the other legal. Politically, it energised the pro-choice movement. The abortion issues became a significant one in state elections, and the consensus was that pro-choice candidates benefitted thereby.

Legally, the Missouri case has stimulated the pro-life forces to find another test case to move to the Supreme Court. They want one which will force the Justices to decide not whether or not a legislature can limit a woman's right to abortion, but whether the state can eliminate that right. The lifers have been thwarted in state after state, as either in the legislature, or, in the case of heavily-Mormon Idaho, the Governor, has blocked such legislation. □

## Abortion rare

WHILE the debate is at a fever pitch over abortions in Guam they are infrequent, at least by United States Mainland standards.

In recent years there have been more than 3000 live births each year on Guam, in comparison there were 82 abortions recorded in 1988 by public health authorities rising to 159 in 1989. The latter figure works out to 53 abortions to 1000 live births, the usual statistical measuring device.

On the Mainland, the ratio is about 425 abortions to 1000 live births; in Hawaii it is higher, 611 per thousand, while in Washington, D.C. there are routinely more abortions than live births.

Some of the abortions in Guam in recent years may have been performed on women from the nearby Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, where abortions are illegal. The constitutionality of the Marianas ban may be challenged as a by-product of the legal activity on this matter in Guam. □

# PACIFIC ISLANDS

M O N T H L Y

## BUSINESS

### The Honiara S.O.S.

Dropping trade shakes the economy

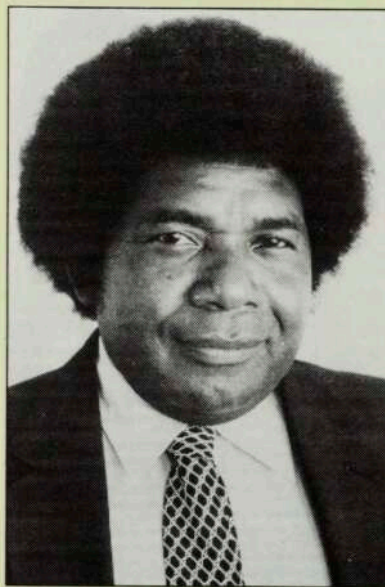
By Robin Bromby

**S**IGNALS that the Solomon Islands Government is extremely worried about the state of the nation's economy have been emanating from Honiara. Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni has said that major changes will be made in the economic policy, although there emerged an apparent conflict between the government and the Central Bank of Solomon Islands, the latter being accused of trying to devalue the currency to aid exports and make imports more expensive. There have also been reports that Australia may withhold aid from the Solomon Islands because the authorities in Canberra are unhappy about the way in which the money is being distributed.

Solomon Islands terms of trade have been deteriorating for a year after an improvement in 1989. This reverse was brought about by lower international prices for copra, palm oil, cocoa and fish, while import costs tended to rise, particularly for fuel and manufactured goods.

But — like their counterparts in Papua New Guinea — farmers are finding that world price falls are hitting them hard. The Commodity Export Marketing Authority (CEMA) announced its payments for copra would drop from late March — and they were substantial falls. The new prices were to be S\$400 (US\$167) per tonne for first grade against a previous price of S\$500 a tonne. Second grade dropped to S\$390 (US\$163) a tonne from S\$490, and third grade copra will now be bought at S\$370 (US\$154) a tonne, down from \$470. CEMA chairman James Roni said the cuts were made to prevent the copra reserve fund running out of money. "This is becoming a critical situation to us," he said.

Reserve funds could be exhausted by September if prices continue at their present depressed level; one that occurs



**Mamaloni: no plans for devaluation.**

(assuming there is no government intervention), then CEMA estimates that farmer will receive about one-third of the present reduced prices for copra. Roni said his board had asked the government to reduce copra export duties and to pick up the tab for part of what CEMA is paying the growers by way of subsidies — which would allow the reserve fund to last into the first quarter of 1991.

Low prices have also hit cocoa incomes in the Solomon Islands, and farmers are growing reluctant to increase their production of both cocoa and copra which could lead, CEMA believes, to considerable falls in export volumes. Copra accounted for 9.2 per cent of Solomon Islands export revenue in 1988, taking third place after timber and fish. The government moved quickly, and agreed to drop export duties not only on copra,

but crude coconut oil, cocoa, fish, palm oil and kernal.

Prime Minister Mamaloni, in an economic statement, said the prospects for the Solomon Islands economy during the next decade were better than many critics were making them out to be, and tried to sustain optimism by predicting that his government's plans will see full economic recovery by 1995/1996.

The government is to bring in new measures, which includes new income tax laws, a sales tax, new incentives package to attract investment, industrial development strategies, plus review of provincial government funding and all central government fees and licences. Privatisation is to continue and there will be what have been described as drastic changes in the Public Service.

Mamaloni stressed that he was not planning to devalue the Solomon Islands dollar.

"To devalue the dollar any further than its current value would be favourable to the prices of exports but disastrous to the Solomon Islands community at large in terms of prices of goods, cash savings and purchasing power," he said. The alternatives were to leave the currency where it is, or gradually pursue revaluation as the new fiscal measures took effect.

Later, at a Press conference in Honiara, Mamaloni revealed he had been told by the Central Bank that it intended not only to devalue the Solomon Islands dollar but it had also requested the government cut its budget by S\$10 million (US\$4.18 million) out of a total budget drawn up last December of S\$97.6 million (US\$40.4 million). Mamaloni said the Cabinet had instructed the bank not to act immediately, and indicated he was angry it had moved towards devaluation when the government's plan had been in favour of revaluation if anything. He indicated that he had instructed those ministers invited to a briefing by the

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Central Bank not to attend.

Central Bank director Sam Iro said later the invitation to ministers was so that views could be exchanged on the best way to tackle Solomon Islands' economic problems. He said there was concern about the continuing decline of the country's foreign reserves: on January 10, these reserves stood at S\$55.3 million (US\$23.13 million), but by the week of March 16 they were down S\$45.7 million (US\$19.12 million).

The latest move to try and stem the flow of funds out of the country came with the announcement that a stamp duty is to be levied on purchase of foreign currency in excess of S\$3000 (US\$1255).

Minister for Housing and Government Services Allan Qurusu said the government was working on a wider taxation package in the longer term. Personal rates are likely to be reduced considerably with those earning less than S\$5000 (US\$2092) being totally exempt. This, or alternative measure to lighten the personal tax load, would reduce government revenues by about S\$4.3 million (US\$1.79 million), money which would have to be recouped from other sources. A "turnover tax", whereby companies pay on revenue received regardless of whether a profit is made, was being considered; as was a sales tax on hotels, lottery games, overseas telephone calls, restaurants and clubs.

Qurusu also announced new import duties covering 38 items. These included a 50 per cent increase of duty on imported fresh fruit. Other items which now attract higher duty are: a range of fresh vegetables, fresh and tinned meat, eggs, fresh and tinned fish, chocolate and ice cream, wine, beer and spirits, cigarettes, video tapes, lubricating oils and matches.

The minister said everyone had to make sacrifices for the nation, and that he had been urging domestic manufacturers to take up the slack caused by reduced imports. Solomon Taiyo had assured the government it would produce a range of tinned fish for the local market, he said.

The latest cloud over the country's economy is a report from Canberra that the Australian Government is considering withholding some of the A\$9 million (US\$6.8 million) planned to be spent on programmes in the country this year. Officials are concerned the Solomons government wants aid given in such a way that Australia will not have proof that it is being spent in the way intended. The government in Honiara wants aid channelled into the provincial administrations, a move which is seen as an attempt by the Mamaloni government to pacify provincial politicians. □

## New debate on economy faces obstacle in PNG

**A** PORT Moresby economist has opened up the debate by calling for the country to lay the groundwork for industrial development — but there are many obstacles in the way. However, there seems to be widespread agreement in Papua New Guinea business circles that diversification is needed, but this depends on the government being prepared to tackle several problems — law and order, education, wages — before anything meaningful can happen.

In a recent speech Dr Hanumant Mannur, associate professor of econo-

mics at the University of Papua New Guinea, urged preparation for industrialisation by the year 2000. He said the Bougainville crisis must serve as a warning that the country should stop concentrating on the mining industry and develop other sectors of the economy.

In an interview with *Pacific Islands Monthly* Dr Mannur said one of the problems with Papua New Guinea was the high wage structure compared with neighbouring Third World nations, and the cost of living and land — when rent for a house in Port Moresby could cost K1000 (US\$1000), he said this problem was compounded by low labour performance with poor workforce discipline and productivity.

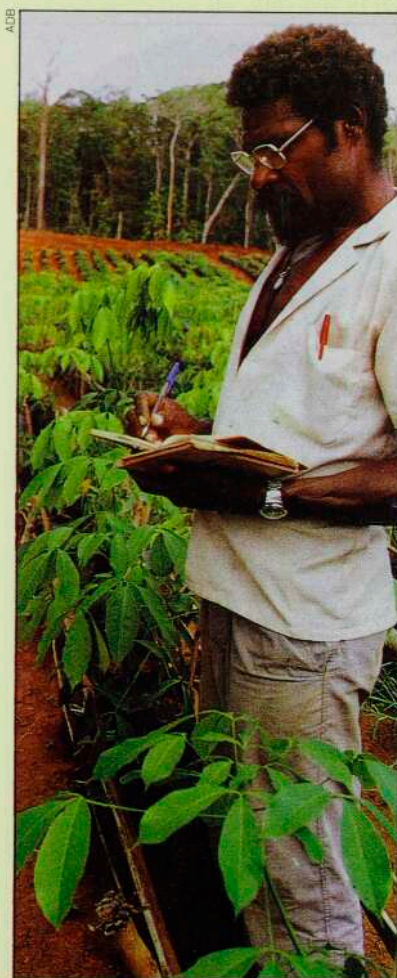
"The government has to do something about labour skills before Papua New Guinea can become competitive," he said. "We have to learn from the Singapore and South Korean experience." Just attacking the level of wages was no solution, and it could generate new labour relations problems. Dr Mannur argues that the country needs to develop a "productivity consciousness", with the political will to get people to perform. "What we should be spending on education — both primary and secondary — we are spending on military operations," he said.

Transport was another problem to be addressed, and that trying to get a manufacturing sector going would be jumping the gun without better transport. Industry would have to be largely export-oriented, and concentrated in one or two places, probably Lae and Port Moresby. There was no point in worrying about balanced growth and giving each region a manufacturing sector; nor was there a likelihood that any substantial import-substitution sector would be feasible as it was usually far cheaper to import goods than try and manufacture them locally in small quantities.

The bureaucracy was another blockage to economic development. It was simply too hard for people to get approval for projects. "It's not geared to help manufacturing — you need a one-stop shop for foreign investment," said Dr Mannur.

Overall, he said, the outlook for diversification was not bright. "As long as the minerals boom continues, people here will take it easy. They will pay high wages and forget about developing a manufacturing industry."

In the meantime, there needed to be greater efforts made to diversify the rural sector following the collapse of coffee, cocoa and copra prices. Rice and



**Diversification?** growing rubber and other crops at PNG's Cape Rodney. The Smallholder project, aimed at increasing incomes for about 1200 families, is supported by a concessional Asian Development Bank loan of \$15 million.

## BUSINESS

fruit could be developed in many areas in order to cut imports of those commodities — rice imports alone cost Papua New Guinea K80 million (US\$78.9 million) a year. Fishing could also help, but it was an industry still in its infancy producing export revenue of a mere K9 million a year.

Graham Hogg, executive director of the Papua New Guinea Employers' Federation, said that much investment was "on hold" simply due to fear — fear of the implications of the Bougainville crisis, and of serious law and order problems throughout the country.

But, said Hogg, even without those problems there was a general feeling that there were limited opportunities for industrial expansion or development. The average urban wage was eight times that of typical rates in South-East Asia, while rural wages were 3.5 times higher. Without any sizeable internal market, these cost factors were a major barrier to developing a manufacturing sector.

The PNG Chamber of Commerce is now engaged on preparing a submission to the national government aimed at overcoming blockages which inhibit the private sector and which are currently — in its view — inhibiting new investment. Chamber of Commerce President Stan Joyce said the general view in the private sector was that law and order needed to be re-established through Papua New Guinea. Also, bureaucratic blockages needed to be eliminated, such as those which made it difficult to acquire visas and work permits.

Joyce said it was difficult to encourage investors into a country where they could be afraid for their lives.

The country had too many regulations. A local person had to get official permission to go into business with a foreigner, and major superannuation funds had a great deal of money but were very restricted as to how they could invest — they could not go into the stock market, for example — which was a severe inhibitor to the development of a

local capital market.

In a recent article, John Millett of the Institute of National Affairs in Port Moresby drew attention to the fact that the country had intensive but not extensive growth. And another problem: "The population increase is mostly in the rural areas and hence that is where most of the output increase must come from. Such a focus would dictate, for example, that much more effort be put into mobilising customary land than into exploiting other natural resources."

Millett said it was the unbalanced development strategy which was causing the breakdown in law and order. Crop diversification alone could not overcome the problems caused by low prices for the main export agricultural products.

"Tea was introduced into the Highlands to reduce dependency on coffee. Villagers and smallholders weren't attracted to it — they dedicated their land to the crop providing the best returns, measured in the broadest sense. On the basis of relative prices, of tea and coffee, some plantations switched from tea to coffee, at considerable cost — in both investment and foregone production. Today relative prices of these two crops have reversed — for how long, though, is another question," Millett said.

No amount of crop diversification could prevent the individual farmers from the behaviour of his particular crop. Millett argues that consolidation rather than diversification was needed now, especially in the rural sector.

What is clear is that the debate about the fundamental strategy for Papua New Guinea's economy is only beginning. Millett makes the point that "three minerals", four major crops plus a few minor ones, timber and fish seems to be an impressive line-up for the size of the economy", so the question could well be asked: why are so many people so worried. It is this fear in the minds of investors which could be the main inhibitor to Papua New Guinea's short-term development. □

## Fiji to export farm prawns

By Penny Gibson

**F**IJI will begin exporting salt-water prawns in September following the recent takeover of the country's only prawn farm, declared bankrupt in 1988 and closed in 1989.

Coral Reef Prawns (Fiji) Ltd and its parent company, Barrier Reef Fisheries (Australia) Ltd, are investing over F\$1 million to upgrade and reorganise the farm to turn it into a commercially profitable venture. It has already begun supplying the local market.

With international prawn prices between \$10-\$20 a kilo and an initial production of two tonnes a week, a conservative estimate of sales is over \$20,000 a week, or \$1 million a year. The local market, mainly the tourism industry, will absorb 30 tonnes a year, with the rest being exported to New Zealand, Australia and, perhaps, the United States.

Farm manager, Australian aquaculture consultant Paul Thomas, also anticipates becoming a regional supplier of juvenile or post-larvae prawns to farms that do not have a specialised hatchery, which is necessary to produce juvenile prawns raised from eggs. The company has already exported to the Solomon Islands and Thomas expects to supply Fiji farmers or village co-operatives who take up the lucrative prawn farm business.

The hatchery began production in early March and can produce three million prawns a month, although the farm will initially require only five million a year. The company will swing into full production after the completion of major reconstruction work on the 25 hectares of ponds to enable improved management of the growing prawns, expected by the end of this month. In two years the company will invest in the necessary equipment to intensify production two or three fold.

The prawn farm is on the north coast of Fiji's main island of Viti Levu, on reclaimed land that is too saline for other forms of agriculture. It has had a chequered history, being initially funded and established by the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation as a Government fish farm in 1972, then switching to prawns in 1976. In 1978 the Government decided to turn it into a commercial undertaking run by a private company, but this didn't transpire until 1984 with a joint venture between the Government's Fiji Development Bank (FDB) and France Aquaculture, a worldwide fish farming organisation.

The FDB declared the over-capitalised, over-equipped venture bank-

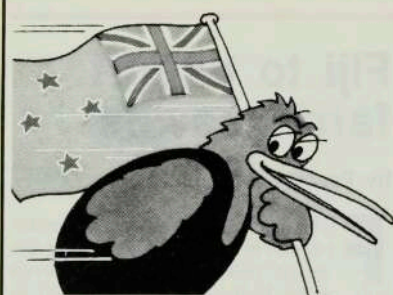
### Rice trials a failure

**T**RIALS with rice cultivation in Morobe's Markham Valley have been described as a failure, although Rice Industries Pty Ltd — the company behind the scheme — said it was still determined to develop the industry on a commercial scale. It said the first experiment failed because of poor soil, and problems with management techniques, the irrigation and weed control.

Livestock and Agriculture Minister Galen Lang said the Government still held high hopes that rice would prove a viable industry in Papua New Guinea.

### Telecommunications boost

**A**BOUT K80 million (US\$78.52 million) is to be spent by the Post and Telecommunications Corporation to upgrade communications throughout Papua New Guinea. The new works announced by Communications Minister Brown Sinamoi include money for more rural telephone services, a contract to digitalise Papua New Guinea's telecommunications network, a new headquarters building in Port Moresby, cable and transmission equipment and a satellite development programme.



# THREE MILLION KIWIS

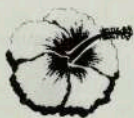
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## BUSINESS

rupt in 1988. Although the Government injected F\$70,000 to prop it up, France Aquaculture pulled out in June 1989. Barrier Reef Fisheries negotiated a controlling interest (51%) shortly after.

With such a high percentage of local sales, the company doesn't qualify for Fiji's tax-free status, but does receive some Government assistance, particularly on reduced duty on the importation of capital items. Discussions are continuing with Government on further incentives such as tax relief.

The farm grows the same salt-water *Penaeus monodon* prawns produced for export around South East Asia and the Pacific. Farm-grown prawns have a five to six month life-cycle that starts in the hatchery and continues in breeding tanks until they reach the post-larvae stage (four weeks), when they are released into the ponds for maturing. To ensure continued high production of quality prawns, proper water quality must be rigorously maintained and the prawns fed every 4-6 hours with a special pelleted diet imported from the United States.

Initial stocking will be 10 prawns per cubic metre in the ponds, but this will increase to at least 20 when the company installs the equipment to aerate the ponds with oxygen, currently planned

for 1992.

Coral Reef Prawns will do its own marketing, concentrating on regular supplies to the New Zealand and Australian markets and increasing during Christmas and Easter when prawns are in high demand. The international price depends on the size and quality of prawn and the current supply and demand situation, but usually fluctuates between F\$10 and \$20 a kilo. Locally, the 15 centimetre long prawns sell for \$15 to \$28 a kilo "at the farm gate" depending on the level of processing.

A F\$40,000 processing plant, built to Australian Department of Primary Industries standards, has just been built to chill the fresh prawns and process them to the level required by the buyer. Initially it will be used to process prawns for the local hotel market. Most exported prawns will be sold chilled only.

Thomas said prawn farming was a highly specialised process and he conducts intensive training for the 12 staff in prawn breeding and farm management, with the aim of handing over to locals and doubling the staffing level by the completion of his two year contract.

He said he expects Coral Reef Prawns to spawn interest in a new export industry for Fiji. □

## Tuna industry loses battle

**T**HE United States tuna industry, which appears so rich and strong from the islands' point of view, has lost a major battle in the US Congress.

It may have been partially self-inflicted, and it certainly was complicated, but the result was clearly not desired by the owners of the tunaboats and of the two big tuna factories in American Samoa.

The tuna industry found itself outgunned despite an interesting set of allies: President Bush, the US State Department, some California Congressmen, American Samoa's Democratic Congressman Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, and its legislature, the Fono. On the other side, which is winning so far, are the Governors of the four US flag jurisdictions in the Pacific (American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii and the Marianas), the big sea sports fishermen and, importantly, most of the members of the House of Representatives Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee (including Congresswoman Pat Saiki, Republican of Hawaii).

The issue is whether the US should manage (i.e. regulate) the harvest of tuna within 200 miles of its coasts, in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The tuna industry does not want this regulation; but a larger group pushed for it,

winning a 396-21 roll call vote on the floor of the House of Representatives.

The tuna industry usually gets its own way in Washington.

When the US Department of Labor tried to extend Mainland-level minimum wages to workers in the Pago Pago tuna plants, the tuna industry defeated the Department; when the State Department negotiated the multi-year and multi-million dollar treaty with the Pacific Islands over tuna fishing rights Uncle Sam paid 80 per cent of the bill. (That treaty, incidentally, seems to be perking along happily, now about half-way through its five-year life). So why did the industry lose this battle in the Congress?

Part of the answer lies in the convoluted argument that the industry tried to make, and part in the complex environment in which the 200-mile limit issue was fought.

The industry contends that if the US were to regulate the harvest of tuna within the 200-mile limit it would make it harder for the State Department (and the industry) to bargain with other countries for the US tuna fleet to fish in their waters. While the US and the Pacific islands have worked out such a treaty, there is no such treaty in place with the nations of Central and South America,

## BUSINESS

and the Eastern Pacific is a rich hunting ground for the San Diego — and Pago Pago-based vessels.

The industry argues that the only way, effectively, to manage and conserve tuna is to do so on an international basis, and that the US ability to do this would be hurt by the US regulating within its own 200-mile zone. Regardless of its merits, this is an indirect line of reasoning and is hard for some to follow.

Further, the overseas precedents are not attractive. Japan, Korea and Taiwan do not regulate tuna within their waters to give those nations a stronger position when their ships fish in someone else's waters; no members of Congress mentioned these precedents on the floor of the House.

Congressman Faleomavaega, in a letter to the editor of the *Samoa News*, linked this argument to American Samoa's immediate interests: "The United States is currently negotiating with Mexico for the rights to fish for tuna in the waters over which Mexico has economic control. Additionally, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Peru have suggested the formation of a multilateral regime to manage tuna in the waters over which those countries have economic control. Should these negotiations result in other multilateral agreements, the catch from this region would go to the canneries in Samoa and Puerto Rico ..."

The other side of the issue says that they are also for conservation, which is popular in the States, and argues that there is the position of consistency. The US already manages all other fish in its EEZ (and, at the state level, all freshwater fish). Why not, asked the supporters, extend the rule to tuna as well?

Further, as Congresswoman Saiki argued, the legislation would not impair the tuna industry's prowess because "the U.S. has implicitly acknowledged this management right [within the EEZs] by signing the South Pacific Tuna Treaty."

The second reason for the industry's difficulties was the legislative environment. The question of controlling tuna within the American EEZ was one specific issue within a much broader context of the regulation and conservation of big-sea fish. These issues were forced on Congress by the impending automatic termination of the Magnuson Act, the omnibus legislation which currently supports commercial fishing in the US and regulates the harvest of most sports and commercial fish in the ocean.

Many commercial and sports fishermen want the Magnuson Act to be re-enacted, to protect specific research, protection and subsidy programme that they are now enjoying. Further, the current version of the bill includes both a ban on the use of driftnets within the American EEZ as well as a recommendation to the

Secretary of State to push for a worldwide ban on the "walls of death". In short, the entire bill presented an attractive package for the Congress.

Such issues in the Congress are usually worked out by members of the House who have become experts in the field; in this case it was done by the members of the Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment Subcommittee of the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. Typically the rest of the membership of the House accepts what their colleagues have laboured over in committee, expecting that the favour will be returned when their committee's work reaches the floor.

In this case, one of the members of the subcommittee is Pat Saiki; she successfully urged her colleagues to support the regulation of tuna within the 200 mile limit, this position is popular in Hawaii sports-fishing circles, which worry about commercial fishermen taking too many tuna and billfish in Hawaiian

waters.

Her stand was also supported by the four island governors, all of whom have a generalised interest in the EEZ, on the grounds that someday some minerals or other goodies may be found in those waters. A stronger, and more obvious reason for the Governor's position is inter-island unity. The four Governors have taken a position on this issue which they regard as supportive of the interests of the independent island states who, in effect, sell fishing rights to tuna in their EEZs via the Tuna Treaty.

At least two of the Governors, John D. Waihee III (a Hawaii Democrat) and Joseph Ada (a Guam Republican), had additional reasons. In Waihee's case it was the sports-fishing and related tourism interests, and in Ada's we are told, it relates to a sense that there may be more tuna around Guam than the tunaboat captains admit; one hears stories of tunaboats leaving Guam empty, and returning with large catches a few days later.

The only commercial tuna processing plants in these four territories are in American Samoa which makes the position of Governor Peter Tali Coleman (Republican) particularly interesting. Tuna is important to Pago Pago, the tunabots bring many kinds of business to the harbour, and the two tuna canneries totally dominate the private sector in the islands.

Why would the Governor support legislation which the industry contends threatens its future? According to one of his close associates, "the Governor is very supportive of the tuna industry, but in this case the industry has not yet made a very strong argument for its position".

The Governor himself is outspoken. He was quoted recently in the *Samoa News* as saying: "I'm sick and tired" of the tuna industry saying "the sky is falling down". □



MARY ANN CHANG PHOTOGRAPHY

Saiki: winning team.

## French interest

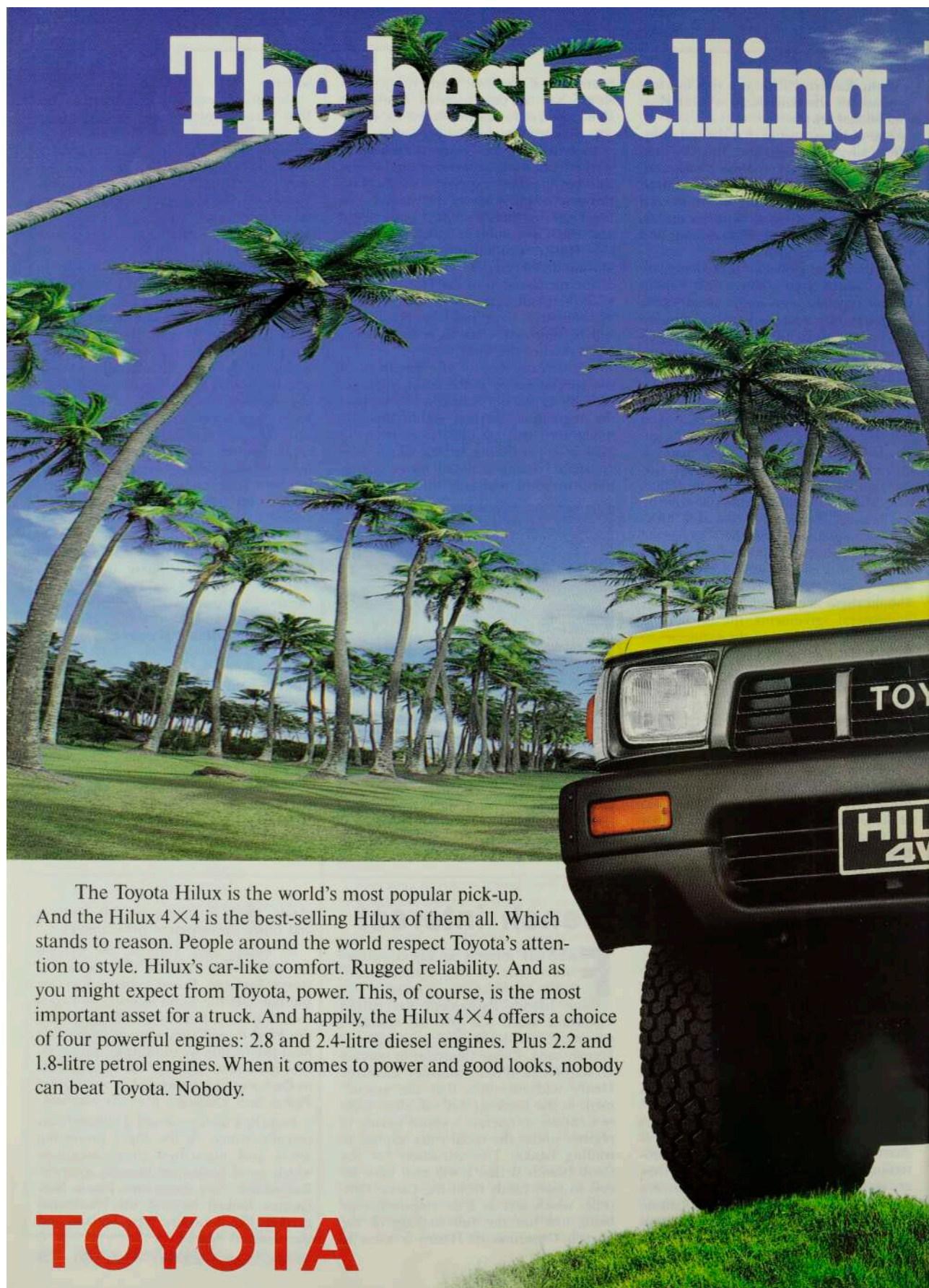
**F**RENCH interest in island nations other than its own colonial territories continues to increase.

Cook Islands Parliament has passed legislation which will give the country's monetary board the ability to allow a French bank, Caisse Centrale, to operate in Rarotonga. Prime Minister Geoffrey Henry told members that the amendment to the Banking Act will allow Caisse Centrale to operate without having to register under the usual rules applied to trading banks. The attraction for the Cook Islands is that it will now have access to loan funds from the Caisse Centrale, which acts as a development type bank and has the full backing of the French Government. Henry is keen to

obtain more financing for his housing and other development programmes.

In Papua New Guinea, the French Government is to assist the Copra Research Institute. Board general manager Joe Bae said the copra industry in Papua New Guinea has captured the interest of the French, and they wanted to develop local production by funding all programmes next year. He said the government in Paris was also interested in sponsoring Papua New Guineans to study overseas.

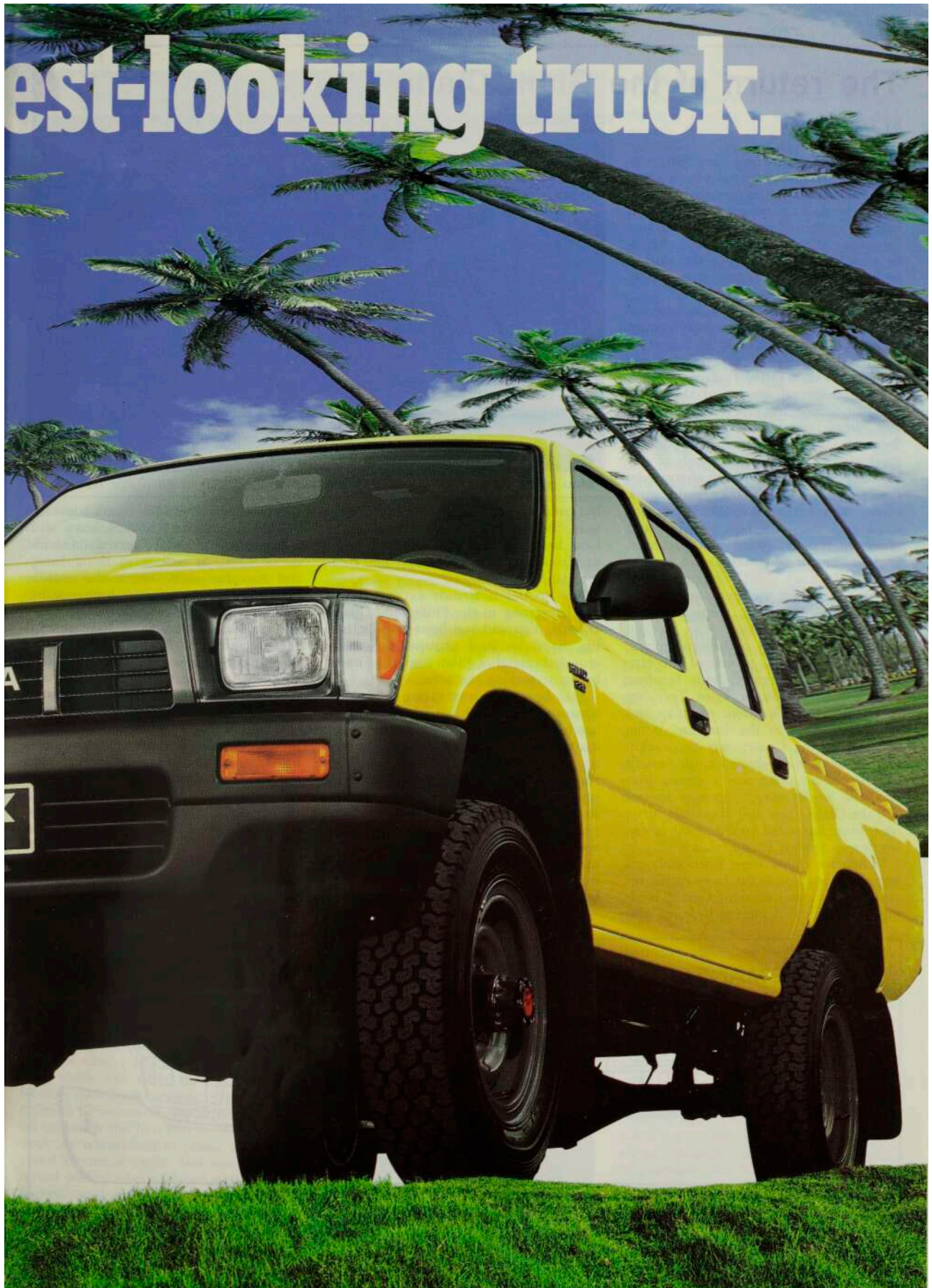
French scientist Gerald Duhamel has recently visited all the copra producing areas and identified those locations which need improved farming systems. Bae added: "It's about time Papua New Guinea looked beyond the traditional markets like Australia, New Zealand and the United States." □

A photograph of a yellow and black Toyota Hilux 4x4 pickup truck parked on a grassy hill. The truck is angled towards the left, showing its front and side. The background is a lush tropical landscape with many tall palm trees under a clear blue sky. The text 'The best-selling, 1' is visible at the top of the image, partially cut off. The Toyota logo and 'HILUX 4x4' are visible on the front of the truck.

# The best-selling, 1

The Toyota Hilux is the world's most popular pick-up. And the Hilux 4×4 is the best-selling Hilux of them all. Which stands to reason. People around the world respect Toyota's attention to style. Hilux's car-like comfort. Rugged reliability. And as you might expect from Toyota, power. This, of course, is the most important asset for a truck. And happily, the Hilux 4×4 offers a choice of four powerful engines: 2.8 and 2.4-litre diesel engines. Plus 2.2 and 1.8-litre petrol engines. When it comes to power and good looks, nobody can beat Toyota. Nobody.

# TOYOTA



BUSINESS

# The return of the Giant Clam

By David North

**T**HE goals: To help feed burgeoning island populations with a nutritious yet inexpensive protein, while creating an export industry with virtually unlimited potential. The means: By sowing the reefs of the tropical Pacific with seeds that produce the world's largest, and one of its tastiest and most sought after, mollusks.

Though it sounds fanciful, an internationally-funded marine research team based in the Republic of Palau believes it has developed a way to achieve those goals with a clam called *Tridacna derasa*.

One of several species of the Giant Clam of fishing legends and Hollywood lore, *derasa* can grow as large as four-feet wide and weigh up to 500 pounds, producing as much as 20 pounds of edible meat. It all starts with an almost microscopic larvae that, thanks to the work of the Micronesian Mariculture Demonstration Center, can now be bred and raised in the controlled and protected environment of fibreglass tanks, cement pools and grassy ponds, shipped by air as five-centimetre seedlings and grown to maturity in sunny, tropical climes without food or fertilizer.

The clam hatchery is the centrepiece, and most successful, project of the center, which was created with funding from the United States Trust Territory Government, the Republic of Palau and the Department of the Interior. While the aim of the Center was to develop and promote mariculture for the benefit of Micronesia, there was a strong preservation undercurrent because species like the Giant Clam and Hawksbill turtle have been harvested to the point of extinction in several Pacific islands.

"*Tridacna* clams were historically an important seafood in the Indo-Pacific region," said Center director Gerald Heslinga, a 35-year-old marine biologist who



Palau giant clams: not an overnight success.

has been with the project from its inception. "But in many areas natural stocks have been reduced to biological or economic extinction by subsistence and commercial harvesting."

The species is already extinct due to overharvesting in the Philippines, Guam, Ponape, Yap and was becoming increasingly hard to find around the overcrowded capital of Palau until the Center began restocking the area.

But beyond preservation and local consumption, Heslinga sees the clam hatchery project as a demonstration that mariculture farming is an export industry perfectly suited to islands, like Micronesia, which, in many cases, lack land, investment capital and high-tech resources, but abound in warm, nutrient rich, relatively shallow reef and lagoon waters. Moreover, the islands' ample human and cultural resources can easily integrate the clam mariculture into their traditional marine harvesting industry.

A huge market already exists in Japan

and Okinawa, where the clam's adductor muscle is regarded as a delicacy and aphrodisiac and usually served ala sashimi or sushi, as well as in Hong Kong and San Francisco, where the muscle and other meat go into high quality salads, soups and stews. Current demand in East Asia is in excess of 300 tonnes a year, according to Heslinga. There is an estimated need for 30,000 of the clams annually in Okinawa, and perhaps ten times that for Japan. Taiwan reportedly imports 200 tonnes a year.

While Palau, the United States Commerce and Interior Departments continue to be the mainstay of funding through the National Marine Fisheries Service and Hawaii Sea Grant Program, the Center, largely on the basis of its successful clam hatchery, has now taken on more of a regional character, and is receiving funding from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, Canada and other nations.

It has not been an overnight success

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## BUSINESS



Giants can weigh up to 500 pounds.

for the Center, which began in 1973 with some old Japanese buildings in Malakal Harbour. Though it sits in the midst of Palau's tropical reef ecosystem, which scientists have designated one of the seven marine wonders of the world, there were many years of frustration and false trails. Typhoons and tropical storms have damaged the facility, power outages and equipment breakdowns cost time and money. A few steps forward were often followed by a step or two back.

But after several years of research, the effort began to gain momentum. "Of the seven species of Giant Clam examined in Palau, *Tridacna derasa* was found to combine the best biological attributes for farming," said Heslinga. Among those were the species' resistance to disease, adaptability and ability to develop with little management. "*Derasa* cohorts have been raised to full sexual maturity at five years of age, and produced second generation cohorts, giving us independence from wild stocks and making it possible to engage in selective breeding," said Heslinga.

The marvellous mollusks feed off the algae that cling to their tissue. Through photosynthesis the algae transform sunlight into sugar which provides the major nutrient for the clam. Heslinga calculates the Center has bred over a million clam seeds and more than 50 tons of biomass. Seedlings, spawned from brood clams in Center tanks, are kept in saltwater tanks for the first two to three years, then are transferred to plastic trays, covered by metal cages, laid out in protected ponds, where Center staff in scuba gear tend and regularly check on the clams during the gestation period.

Clam sold as seeds can range from six

months old (about the size of a finger tip), to mature seed about the size of a soccer ball. These can be used by other nations to rebuild the species by producing brood clams, which in turn produce more seed.

An elaborate process prepares the seeds for air shipment. First they are hand scrubbed and washed in chlorinated fresh water before they are placed in a quarantine. For at least a month, the seedlings are held in a bath of one micron of seawater that has been filtered and sterilized with ultraviolet light. The quarantine procedures were recommended by the South Pacific Commission and are based on specifications developed by Australia's James Cook University.

More than 15 nations in the Pacific have imported the Center's clam seed and planted them on their reefs. Among those are Australia, Japan, the Philippines, Western Samoa, American Samoa, Cook Islands, Tuvalu, Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands



A worker measures clams underwater.

and Hawaii.

"Ocean-based cultivation of giant clams is proving to be technically and socially feasible in some very remote Pacific island settings where other kinds of marine and land farming are impractical," said Heslinga. "Yap State (in the FSM) has implemented a clam production that enables more than 40 villages to begin subtidal giant clam gardens using seed from Palau," said Heslinga, who estimated there are at least 100 clam gardens/hatcheries now in place in these islands.

To disseminate the clam growing techniques, the Center has developed a 30-day short course, entitled *Introduction to Giant Clam Mariculture*.

"The course is offered on a continuous basis throughout the year and features hands-on experience with all aspects of clam culture, from spawning and larval rearing to ocean culture and broodstock management," said the Harvard and University of Hawaii-educated Heslinga. The Center has trained personnel for more than a dozen Pacific islands who are using Palau's seeds.

A new and unsuspected market has also developed for commercial and private aquariums. "The potential size of this market is not known, but the current demand exceeds the Center's available supply," said Heslinga, who has already filled aquarium orders through Hawaii to the United States mainland, England and West Germany. "Opportunities exist for other hatcheries in the region to begin supplying aquarium markets."

The most productive of the 10 worldwide facilities providing clam seeds, the Center earned US\$50,000 in clam sales in 1989. The seedlings are sold for \$1 a piece and usually air freighted in 1000 seed quantities. 150 air shipments to 17 nations and states have already been made.

Like the all purpose coconut palm, every part of the clam appears to have local marketable value. The shells, for example, whose curved lips have been used throughout the Pacific for ages in a traditional adze heads, today are used for shell jewellery, dishes, planters, soap holders or just as island decorative pieces.

Other Center projects include a trochus hatchery, which is in the early stages of development, producing millions of larvae for dissemination in Palau and eventually to other Pacific locations. Like the clam, trochus has been a traditional marine harvest with the meat serving as a protein source and the shell sold to Japanese and Taiwanese button and jewellery makers. But the trochus also has suffered from overharvesting throughout the region.

The Hawksbill turtle, along with the

## TRADE WINDS

Green turtle, are on the endangered species list, and the Center has been developing a hatchery to help restock the island. The shell of the Hawksbill is especially prized because it fetches high prices as wall ornaments and for shell jewellery. The project has started with 100 Hawksbill hatchlings found on one of Palau's Rock Islands. These produced several thousand eggs, and more than two thousand six-month-old hatchlings have been released on the beaches where they were found. About 650 have been tagged to provide greater insight into the biology of the turtles. One tagged specimen was found on Guam, 800 miles northeast of Palau.

The Hawksbill were induced to breed in captivity through the development of raceways — long rectangular pools with one sandy end where the turtles could "come ashore" to lay its eggs, much like they do in the wild. Protected from predators and poachers, the eggs can be hatched and the hatchlings raised until they are able to fend for themselves. Hesling also is exploring with the Palau government the idea of designating an island in Palau's world famous Rock Islands lagoon for a Hawksbill sanctuary. The Center also works with milkfish and mullet fish, common in-shore species of the Indo-Pacific region, breeding them in tanks and seeding them to local fish farmers for pond aquaculture.

Hesling feels that 10 years of research and breeding are finally beginning to pay dividends. Proceeds from sales and greater institutional and foundation interest have enabled the Center to quadruple its capacity over the past few years and he sees continued growth ahead. His goal is no less than the creation of a significant regional industry.

Growing island populations lead to intensified harvesting of traditional stocks, while increasing pressure from East Asian commercial fleets deplete off-shore fisheries. Mariculture and aquaculture, which now account for less than 10 per cent of the region's marine resources, may soon be called on to assume a much larger role in providing an inexpensive, low-technology way of producing nutritious food for the islands' populations as well as the Asian urban markets. □

### Retrenchments in Highlands

MORE than 1000 public servants in the five Highland provinces (Western Highlands, Chimbu, Eastern Highlands, Enga and Southern Highlands) are to lose their jobs due to cost-cutting programmes instigated by the national government. Most of the officers will be those classified as currently unattached or redundant, or those in non-essential positions.

## VANUATU

### Vanuatu for beef scheme

TOP agricultural officials from the South Pacific Commission member countries have designated Vanuatu as the base for a regional project on producing meat for export. The meeting in Tahiti was told the project will provide training in marketing skills and the provision of improved cattle to smallholders in island countries. The long-term aim is to have more smallholders producing beef on a commercial basis.

### Logging begins on Malekula

A TAIWANESE company, Tsiensou (Vanuatu) Enterprise Co. is about to begin logging timber on the island of Malekula. Heavy equipment and about 50 workers from Taiwan were expected to arrive in late April, with about 200 people to be employed locally. The company has signed a 40-year agreement to log and process timber in the country.

### Fruit processing not viable

A STUDY to see whether local fruit processing would be viable in linkage with the Vanuatu tourism has concluded the economies of the proposal were not sufficiently attractive. The Tourism Council of the South Pacific study showed that while conditions on Efate, Tanna and the southern islands were ideally suited to growing guava, mangoes, pawpaw, passionfruit, citrus fruit and pineapples, there was insufficient local demand in the tourism sector and any new products would have to compete against highly aggressive marketing from imported brands.

### More Australian aid sought

VANUATU'S Foreign Affairs Secretary Nikenike Vurobaravu is leading a delegation to Canberra to seek further Australian aid. The team was then to be joined in Wellington by Foreign Minister Donald Kalpokas for similar talks with the New Zealand Government. □

## KIRIBATI

### Korea makes new fish treaty

SOUTH Korea has agreed to a new fishing agreement with Kiribati after talks held recently in Guam. The Korean Deep Sea Fisheries Association will pay US\$960,000 so that 113 boats can fish with longlines in Kiribati's exclusive economic zone in the current year. The Koreans also agreed to increase the number of Kiribati nationals working on their vessels.

### Recruiting stops for Nauru

FAILURE by the Nauru Government to renew the three-year agreement under which Kiribati nationals are recruited for the phosphate island has led to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Labour on Tarawa to stop recruiting work. The Nauru Phosphate Commission has asked for more workers, but the Kiribati authorities say it would be unfair to send their nationals without proper arrangements between the two countries. Of the 8000 people on Nauru, nearly 3000 are phosphate workers from Kiribati, Tuvalu and other islands.

### Slipway plan criticised

PLANS by the Kiribati Government to build a slipway on Tarawa to take ships up to 300 tonnes have been criticised by the manager of the Betio Shipyard, Horishi Yakoda. He argues that a bigger slipway, capable of handling 600 tonne ships, is needed, a project which would cost US\$20 million. Building a larger slipway would allow the yard to repair a much wider range of vessels, and thus make more profit and remove the operation from the need for government support, he said.

### Fish ponds to be built

KIRIBATI is to develop fish ponds on its outer islands, growing milk fish which are used as bait for tuna. The US\$60,000 project is funded by Japanese aid and will go ahead as soon as the necessary machinery arrives in the country. □

## AMERICAN SAMOA

### Taro smuggling probe

FEARS that American Samoa is being used as a taro smuggling trans-shipment point between Western Samoan exporters and their foreign customers had led to the United States territory setting up a monitoring watch on the trade. Western Samoa imposed a ban on exporting taro following Cyclone Ofa in order to conserve local food supplies, and the government there acted for several large taro shipments were air freighted out of Apia to New Zealand and Hawaii.

### Harbour is dying

PAGO PAGO Harbour will biologically die if nothing is done to reduce pollution, according to a consultants' study just released. It said more waste is being dumped in the harbour than its ecosystem can deal with — more than half of that waste comes from the two large fish canneries in Pago Pago. □

## SPECIAL REPORT

ASAELI LAVE



*Island bound: a small cutter links Fiji's capital Suva and the country's scattered islands.*

### • COVER STORIES

# Bridging the islands

Towards the end of the 20th century, the Pacific Islands are carving their names in the transport industry **Robin Bromby** reports.

**T**HE Pacific transport scene has not confirmed the worst fears of the pessimists, but has instead seemed to turn itself around. There are, of course, still major problems as outlined in the following reports — from the parlous state of inter-island shipping, the immense logistical problems of developing countries where roading systems are such that access to the interior is severely limited, to the problems small airlines (such as Air Nauru) face trying to cut themselves a niche and profitable market. In shipping, the Pacific Forum Line

continues to thrive, but constantly faces the intrusion of bigger predators on its more lucrative routes.

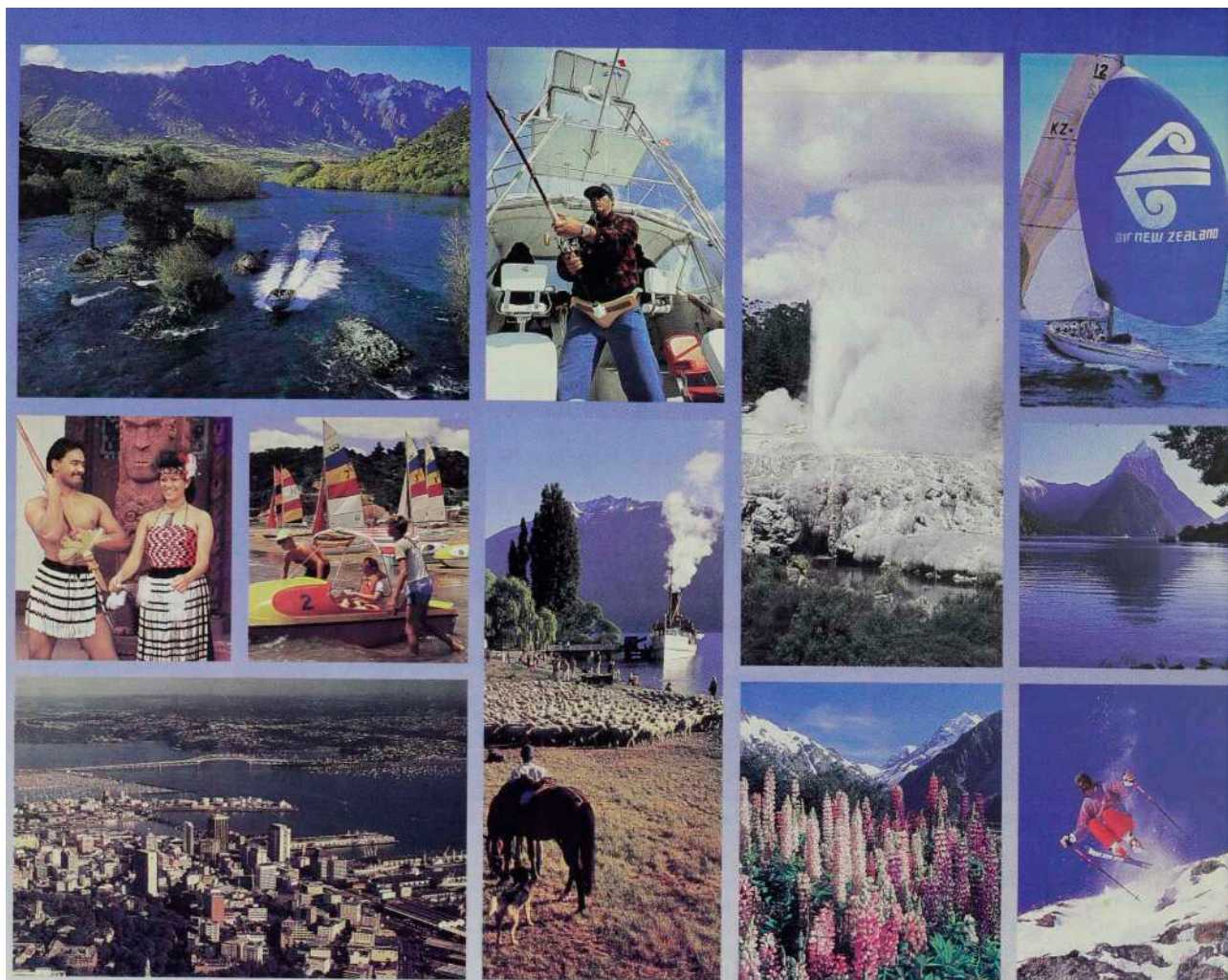
Transport links run by outsiders have generally been tailored to the operators' rather than the Pacific clients' needs. Airline links tend to radiate out from the major metropolitan companies; services from such places as Sydney, Auckland or Honolulu to most of the Pacific island capitals are regular and frequent (although in the case of the smaller countries these often revolve around seven-day tour packages rather than con-

venience for business travellers). But try and get from Apia to Honiara, Port Vila to Tonga, or Niue to anywhere, and it involves circuitous and expensive travel. If the profit is not there, the foreign company will not be considerate of local needs — such a situation led to Ansett withdrawing from Vanuatu and from the Cook Islands International Airways run from Rarotonga to Auckland, as did Air Nauru from its servicing of Niue, when there was no financial incentive.

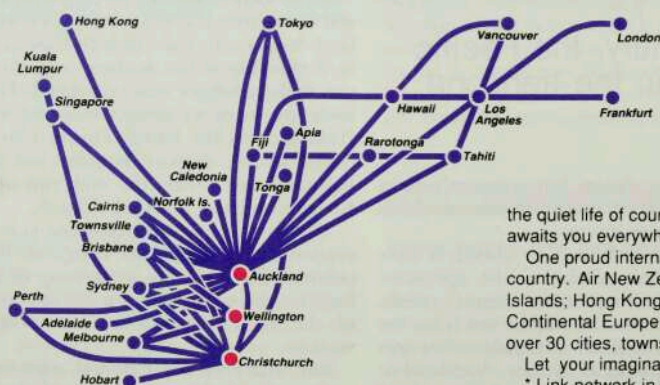
So as with shipping; foreign operators will home into the Sydney-Suva or Auckland-Suva route but will withdraw quickly if the ship is not making a profit, or can make a bigger one elsewhere. These lines are keen to siphon business away from such as the Pacific Forum Line on these heavy density routes, but will happily leave Forum the milk run up to Kiribati and the Marshall Islands.

The prominence of expatriate-run operations was an obvious hangover from colonial days, but the weakening of that hold on the transportation infrastructure of the Pacific Islands is continuing to weaken.

But whatever the national aspirations and needs of the small states of the region, they face inherent problems: low export volumes mean that containers bringing in consumer goods and food are often shipped out empty. Countries



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## SPECIAL REPORT

## COVER STORIES

can get the foreign aid to lengthen runways or buy a jet aircraft, but that means little if the hotels and other infrastructure is not in place to accommodate the extra number of tourists, or the frills are not there or too expensive — as was the case in Vanuatu when tourists found the country's duty-free shopping no cheaper than ordinary retail outlets at home.

Historically, transport links have been at their best when keeping them thus has been in the interests of the metropolitan powers or colonial companies. Burns Philp was a good example of this, although the Germans (who ruled New Guinea, Nauru, the Caroline Islands and Western Samoa until 1914) took it to the extreme, with trade being monopolised by German companies — German-registered ships operating in the South Pacific were second only in number to vessels sailing under British colours.

While the colonial powers gave earnest attention to what were then mainly shipping links — the whole purpose of colonies being to link them to the metropolitan powers — internal communications were another matter. Roads were not built unless they were essential, such as to plantations. Even now many of the states have an underdeveloped road system; recently land-owners in a part of the Solomon Islands agreed to a forestry project mainly because it involved the Taiwanese company building a network of roads through their area.

The one nation that does

have a major internal transport problem is Papua New Guinea. Its forbidding terrain has inhibited land transport. A railway system would be prohibitively expensive, and even good all-weather road-linking the country on a large scale is many years away. Fortunately for Papua New Guinea, the rich mineral and oil finds have been of a scale to justify the use of helicopters and aircraft to transport people and equipment.

In this survey of the state of Pacific transport, many of the same old problems keep coming up: the lack of resources so that ships and aircraft cannot be repaired if they break down in the island countries; wharves and airports are often inadequate and there is a continuing problem with air traffic control.

The bind in which micro-economies find themselves is agonisingly simple. Economic growth depends largely on good and efficient transport links —

which can be sustained only by economic growth.

The island states must, however difficult the task, continue working towards the development and expansion of their own transport systems. That is the only means by which they can control their communications with the outside world and their main markets. It was not possible to establish an aviation equivalent of the Pacific Forum Line, but the countries could go a long way toward such a concept by pooling their rights and interlining.

There is a tendency in many of the islands to blame the expatriate for economic problems, to resent companies which make and repatriate profits. This can take a petty form, such as problems airline operators have had renewing work permits for foreign staff members in Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea; or it can lead to foreign businessmen being forced to pull out.



Vital link: Tuvalu's Nivaga II loads supplies at the capital Funafuti for the outlying islands.

## Solomons flies the big jet

**P**ASSENGERS travelling through the south-west Pacific will soon be seeing a new airline livery at several airports — Solomon Airlines is going international with its own 737-200 jet aircraft. Starting in June, the carrier will be operating out of Honiara to Australia, New Zealand, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

This explosion of growth comes just three years after the government took control of the airline, then known as Solair, by buying out the 51 per cent interest held by Papua New Guinea-based businessman Dennis Buchanan. Ultimate control passed to the body now known as the Investment Corporation of Solomon Islands, which comes under the responsibility of the Minister of Finance. The new chiefs at Solair found themselves with an airline equipped with four

small planes, S\$1000 in paid-up capital and substantial debts. The whole operation was badly undercapitalised.

What propelled Solomon Airlines into this new expansionary phase was the decision by Air Pacific to sell its 737; the Fiji carrier is buying a 767, regarded as too big for the available traffic out of Honiara. The replacement 737-200 which the Honiara-based company is taking delivery of in June is being leased from the International Lease Finance Corporation of California for a period of between two and three years. Solomon has 18 local cabin crew, who will receive their final training in Auckland (and Air New Zealand will also be responsible for maintaining the aeroplane). Expatriate pilots, mostly from New Zealand, will be recruited to fly the 737.

The new schedule calls for two weekly

flights to Brisbane with one extending to Sydney; one flight to Port Moresby; one to Port Vila, and one a week (possibly two) to Nadi in Fiji. The airline will also fly once a week to Auckland, either from Nadi or Port Vila and fifth freedom rights between either of those airports and Auckland are still subject to negotiation at the time of writing.

While this might all seem a risky commercial enterprise, Solomons is actually taking over existing business — either flights currently operated by Air Pacific or Air Niugini. The flight to Auckland is being taken from Air Nauru — and therein lies a problem. Air Nauru has not been charging market fares for its service out of Auckland, instead it has been cutting rates to fill seats. Solomon Airlines will be charging standard fares, and is hoping that there will not be too much of a negative reaction to the end of what was formerly a seriously uneconomic operation. □

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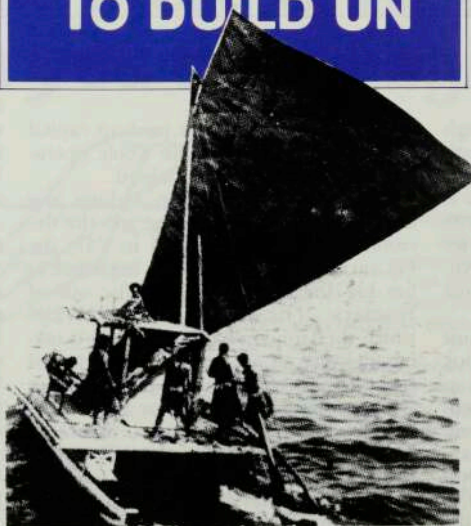
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## SPECIAL REPORT

## COVER STORIES

## Forum Line shows how things can work

**T**HAT things can be made to work and enormous problems overcome in the Pacific Islands is demonstrated by the Pacific Forum Line. When it began operating in 1978, the line was seriously under-capitalised, it chartered what turned out to be unsuitable vessels and made some sobering financial losses in the early years. But since then, Pacific Forum has pulled itself together and turned things around, and has been in the black for almost five years. Most importantly, it offers services which are tailored to the needs of the Forum countries, provides reliability in shipping to the smaller ports and keeps its freight rates as low as feasible — which in turn has stopped other shipping lines from inflating their own rates too often (although, in turn, the line is vulnerable to private operators slashing their own rates to win business away from the Forum ships).

Something which is often overlooked about Pacific Forum Line is that it is the result of a successful regional co-operation. It helps, of course, that the Forum countries are small and there are no competing realpolitik egos, but nevertheless the line is doing what was intended: providing a much-needed service and not losing money.

It may also be a sign of its success that other companies are increasing their services. For example, Blue Star is doubling its calls at Tonga and extending its services to Apia, while the Japanese line Inter-Pacific is to include Nuku'alofa in its schedule.

So, while Pacific Forum has been a pioneering force, the region may be subject to changes in world shipping patterns. The main container routes of the world offer little scope for further penetration (and could constrict if there is a turndown in world business activity, which is a possibility for 1991), while air-freight capacity has grown rapidly in recent years and is highly competitive for top-value merchandise.

There is, therefore, a good deal of excess capacity in world shipping, and many companies are now looking for growth in serving developing countries and are prepared to fight for a share of smaller cargo totals. In the Pacific, this means that Japanese, Taiwanese, Hong Kong and other Asian shipping companies will be looking at ways they can supplement the higher volumes on the major trans-Pacific routes.

Three years ago the Forum Line found that it was facing intense competition from the larger container lines on the Australia-Fiji route, the most lucrative run in the South Pacific. Ships



Forum Line services the islands: not losing money.

travelling to North America had to make only a comparatively minor detour to call at Suva. Now the recovery of the Fiji economy since the military coups in 1987 has made the country an even more attractive prospect. On the Auckland-Suva run, five shipping lines are currently slugging it out for the available cargo. It remains open to question whether this level of activity is sustainable in the long term.

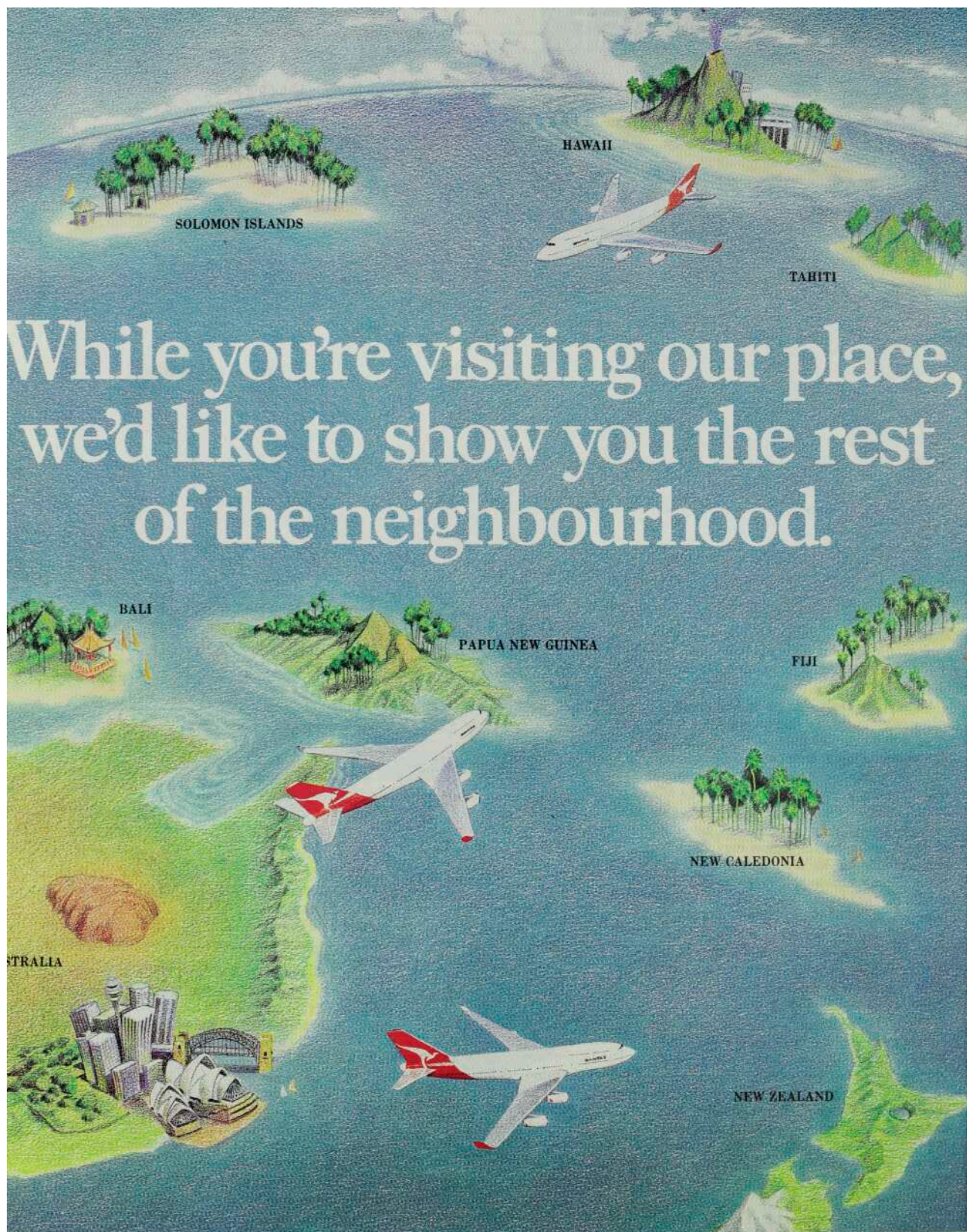
Pacific Forum Line is structured as a limited liability private company, the shareholders being the governments of Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Western Samoa.

The line operates four ships *Forum Samoa* runs from Auckland through Lautoka, Suva, Apia, Pago Pago and Nuku'alofa. *Forum New Zealand II* runs from three New Zealand ports — Lyttelton, Napier and Auckland — on a round trip which includes Brisbane, Port

Moresby, Lae and Honiara. *Fua Kavenaga's* operations connects the Australian ports of Sydney and Brisbane with Lautoka, Suva, Apia, Pago Pago and Nuku'alofa. The routes which include Apia offer trans-shipment to Rarotonga.

Forum took a commercial risk last year by extending its operations to Majuro, in the Marshall Islands. Previously, a chartered conventional vessel had provided a four-weekly feeder service out of Suva to Tuvalu and Kiribati, an operation financed as aid by the Australian and New Zealand governments. To take advantage of growing trade links between Micronesia and the South Pacific, Forum last year time-chartered the ship now known as *Forum Micronesia*. Initially it plied from Auckland to Suva, thence to Funafuti, Tarawa and Majuro.

But the line's assistant general manager, Jeff Scott, said that the service was poorly supported by Australian and New Zealand exporters. The service proved not to be viable. The result was a deci-



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## SPECIAL REPORT

## COVER STORIES

sion to base the run out of Suva — Fiji companies were consigning reasonable amounts of cargo northwards — and reduced the round-trip time from 34 days to 25 days maximum, so allowing more trips per year.

The run is still not profitable, with Australia and New Zealand covering the income shortfall. About 65 per cent of the cargo consigned out of Suva (the total of which includes goods transhipped from Sydney or Auckland) goes to Tarawa, with about 20 per cent to Majuro and 15 per cent Funafuti. There are, of course, variations — such as recently when large consignments of cement were shipped from Suva to Majuro.

One of the drawbacks to the service has been the inadequate business for the ship on its southward voyage back to Suva. There is some inter-island cargo, as well as one-off consignments such as coral or a container-load of coconuts from Kiribati to Auckland as a trial shipment (and which, due to poor packing at Tarawa, arrived in a rat-infested condition).

But the intention is to stick with the service, and the support from the Australian and New Zealand governments means that Forum can persevere — and, as it has shown in the past, patience is an essential quality when trying to foster commercial development in the Pacific islands. On the other hand, Pacific Forum Line has deleted Noumea from its routes because of the number of ships from other lines calling there en route from Australia; there was no point offering excess capacity.

It plans to expand the New Zealand-Australia-Papua New Guinea business with the acquisition of a new ship this year for that service, a move that Scott expects will put Forum back in the red for a couple of years while the vessel's cost is absorbed into the books. "If we don't provide frequency on the Australia-Papua New Guinea route, we won't retain our market share," he said.

Forum is watching its competition carefully, such as the new services to places such as Tonga and Western Samoa by Japanese and other major lines. There is also a new service between Fiji and Tonga.

"I don't believe there is enough business for all the lines — someone is going to lose out," said Scott. He argues that companies which undercut freight rates will end up degrading the quality of service around the Pacific ports. But he is not too worried about the new competitors and how they affect Pacific Forum. "After 11 years, we're seen as the market leaders. We have customer loyalty — they realise that some of the non-dedicated operators are here today, gone tomorrow. We've got a good base of loyal supporters." □



Air Pacific (middle, bottom) at Nadi Airport: lost more money on Project America.

## Power but no glory

**F**OR an example of how not to go about building a transport system in the South Pacific, look no further than Air Nauru. Its history exemplifies the dangers faced by underdeveloped countries which think that a national airline is a sign of political manhood.

Nauru, with only 8000 people but loads of money from phosphate royalties, tried to do it in style. It equipped with Boeing 737 jets, then sent them off in all directions. By 1985, Air Nauru's destination roster was an impressive one: Singapore, Manila, Hong Kong, Taipei, Okinawa, Kagoshima, Guam, Koror, Saipan, Truk, Ponape, Majuro, Honolulu, Tarawa, Papeete, Rarotonga, Niue, Nadi, Suva, Nuku'alofa, Port Vila, Honiara, Auckland, Noumea, Sydney and Melbourne.

How much Air Nauru lost no one outside the government on Nauru itself knows, but it has been estimated in the several millions. Similarly, the government-owned shipping line is another hole through which money continues to pour.

The crunch for the airline was the decision by the New Zealand civil aviation authorities to withdraw its air certification on safety grounds after most of its more experienced pilots went on strike, a decision promptly followed by the Australian authorities.

Air Nauru is back in the air, but with a highly circumscribed network: just

Tarawa, Honiara, Fiji, Noumea, Auckland, Sydney and Melbourne. The government had come to the realisation that it could no longer afford to keep pouring funds into the operation.

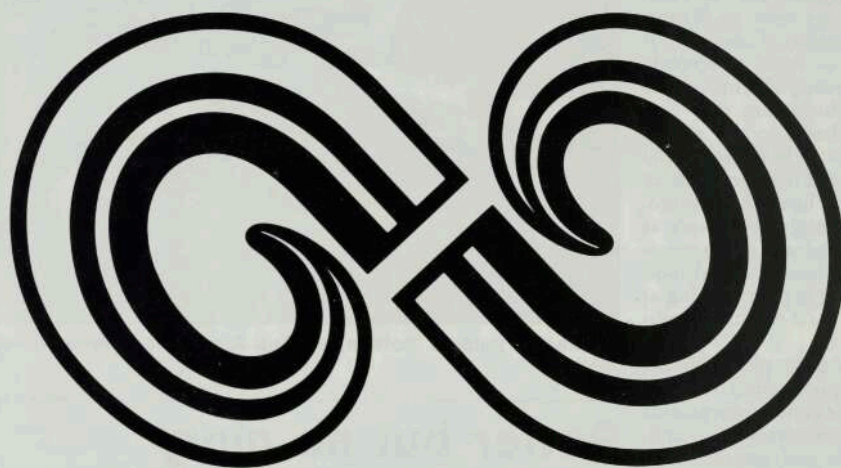
The story is a prime example of how regional airlines need to tailor their plans to the rather harsh economic realities of flying long distances between countries with extremely small populations.

On the other hand, the island states have to bite the bullet.

They cannot leave control of their communications to outsiders. Apart from passengers, there is an acute shortage of cargo capacity on many sectors. Air Marshall Islands, which used a 748 jet prop on the Nadi-Funafuti-Tarawa-Majuro route has often had to off-load even priority items such as mail in order to devote the permitted weight to passenger demand. With the major carriers flying the long-distance trunk routes, there will always been preference given to freight booked for the entire journey; better to carry a pallet in the hold all the way from Sydney to Los Angeles than use the space only so far as Nadi or Pago Pago, especially when there might not be any cargo available for pick-up at an island stop-over.

With flights to the islands, there is heavy demand for carriage of fresh and perishable food to the markets in Sydney and Auckland (and, increasingly, Honolulu and Los Angeles) — this is space

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the island exporters must be sure of if the consignments are not going to rot before space in the hold is found.

Without guaranteed regularity, a whole marketing exercise can collapse. And most airline schedules are designed to suit passenger traffic. Two years ago, for example, the only flights out of Port Vila to Sydney operated at the weekends, having been designed around the seven-day holiday package.

But in order to win freight business for their own airlines, agents have to be appointed in the major metropolitan

markets. Often this has turned out to be the national carrier of the country concerned — which was flying the same route as the Pacific airline and therefore in direct competition. Weighbills could be so constructed, when a consignment went first by a large airline and then transferred to a regional carrier, so the former received the lion's share of the cargo charges.

The island states of the Pacific have a limited number of products for export and they are largely price-takers. They are — or, at least, have been — transport takers.

And the regional carriers, such as Air

Tungaru, Air Pacific or Polynesian Airlines, while they have grown, have not done so in proportion to the overall increase in air traffic around the islands.

Airports are still of widely varying standard, but there have been considerable improvements in the last few years. Apia's runway can now take 747 and DC10 aircraft, aid money allowed Tonga to plan extensions that would see jumps land at Nuku'alofa, while work is now under way on building a longer runway at Port Vila. Even Niue, which was hit badly by Air Nauru's withdrawal of its

much-valued jet services, is to have light-land is trying to attract a jet carrier to call there as part of its service, and offering 24-hour availability clearly increases the options.

The major regional carrier, Air Pacific, is now firmly established even though there is a mood in Fiji to bite the hand (Qantas) largely responsible for putting the airline back on its feet. Now it is sharing a 747 with Qantas on the Australian run, and tightened its schedules around the network, but in 1983 it showed how terribly wrong things could go.

That year Air Pacific leased a DC10 and launched Project America, with three flights a week out of Nadi to Honolulu. The company was already losing money and the failure of the new service to attract sufficient passengers had the effect of doubling the airline's loss to F\$10 million in 1984, and F\$11 million in 1985.

Other airlines have considered expanding: Ansett Australia, through its operational control of Polynesian Airlines, toyed with plans of equipping the Western Samoan carrier with Airbuses and utilising its rights to land at Honolulu, but that plan seems not to have gone anywhere. Further north, Kiribati's Air Tungaru is still waiting to get its planned 737 service between Honolulu-Christmas Island-Tarawa up and running after having to upgrade Canton Island airport as an emergency strip.

The one question mark is Hawaiian. Three years ago it entered the region with a hiss and a roar, expanding its network. Then it became saddled with aircraft problems and earned some notoriety for frequent late-running. Now the airline has new owners, and ones with the capital to expand. Already it is seeking a third weekly flight into Tonga, and also wants to increase frequency out of Sydney. □



Hawaiian Airlines: there's money for expansion.



Air Marshall Islands HS748 at Nadi, Fiji: deal with Hawaiian Airlines.

## The hope of the small airlines

**W**Henever you talk about transport in the South Pacific — and aviation in particular — the same old problem keeps coming up: how to develop national organisations, in this case airlines, which are more than picking up the crumbs from the major operators.

Fortunately, it is possible to report that

some progress has been made even in the two years since *Pacific Islands Monthly* last published a special report on transport in the region. Then we discussed a paper delivered at a conference in Hobart in mid-1988 by Dr Christopher Kissling, a fellow in human geography at the Australian National University's Research School in Pacific

Studies.

Dr Kissling's theme was that one of the most useful contributions Australia and New Zealand could make to South Pacific development would be to allow island airlines to fly with full traffic rights across the Tasman Sea, the most lucrative aviation sector in the region and one largely dominated by Air New Zealand and Qantas. While these carriers have fifth-freedom rights in the islands (which allow them to, say, pick up passengers in Fiji or Tahiti to take them to North America), most Pacific airlines have only terminating rights in the two developed countries.

There is still a long way to go before, for example, Solomon Airlines can fly to Brisbane, pick up passengers there and continue on to Wellington; or Papua New Guinea's national airline operate Port Moresby-Sydney-Christchurch; or Polynesian Airlines having all rights on an Apia-Auckland-Melbourne service. Dr Kissling's argument was that tourism is one of the few sectors of island economies with substantial growth prospects, and unless the small nations of the South Pacific themselves control aviation and tourist infrastructure, much of the



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**Air Niugini: sharing with Qantas.**

money spent by tourists will not stay long in the island communities.

While two years ago it seemed that the major carriers were real opposition — and heavyweight opposition at that — to the small regional carriers, the situation has changed as big and small airlines have shown a growing tendency to work together. For example, Qantas is now running a joint service using a leased 737 aircraft between Honiara and Brisbane, and both share and lease an Air Niugini F28 for the Port Moresby-Cairns route.

Hawaiian Airlines allocates seats on its Rarotonga-Auckland services to Air Rarotonga (which, true, was part of the deal obtaining landing rights, but nevertheless has propelled a small domestic carrier on to the international aviation stage). Hawaiian also operates a DC-8 which flies under Air Marshall Islands' colours connecting Honolulu, Kwajalein and Majuro; and the airline is now planning a direct Honolulu-Nadi service. And Air Vanuatu is relying on its connection with Australian Airlines to maintain the economics of running its own 727 jet. Polynesian and Cook Islands International are, in reality, part of the Ansett Australia operation, and Air Pacific owes Qantas a great deal for support through tough years and still maintains joint flights on the Australia-Nadi services.

This is still a long way from allowing these carriers to grab a share of the real money-makers — the trans-Tasman routes, or even wider-ranging rights. Kissling suggested that island carriers be allowed to fly Los Angeles-Rarotonga-

Christchurch-Melbourne or Melbourne-Sydney-Auckland-Rarotonga-Los Angeles. This was a more effective way of giving small island nations an economic leg-up than many other forms of development assistance.

While this may still be years away, the possibility of an intermediate stage looks increasingly possible.

Air New Zealand's general manager for passenger sales and marketing, Tony Marks, told *Pacific Islands Monthly* that he saw the prospect of Air New Zealand and Qantas linking up with a variety of Pacific carriers to mutual advantage. "We note the aspirations of these airlines, and I don't see that they present any threat to our own markets," he said.

His argument is that the island carriers do have one major advantage: many holidaymakers prefer to begin their vacation of the airline of the country which they are visiting. Americans prefer booking with Qantas if they are visiting Australia, with Air New Zealand if going to that airline's country. While that does help the island airlines across the long-haul routes of the Pacific, from which they are now excluded, the Pacific operators have the advantage once the tourist reaches Auckland or Sydney and is moving on to the islands.

But, said Marks, head-on competition was not a possibility in the near future; sharing the traffic was more likely to succeed. "But you can't discount any possibility in the airline business," he said.

In the last couple of years, one other development has improved the chances of the island carriers building a more

wide-ranging network: the advent of the Boeing 767, which is of a size suitable to the island tourist markets but can operate on long-haul routes. At first, they were subject to 90-minute rating — that is, being a two-engined aircraft they could be no further than 90 minutes' flying time from a suitable airport, it being reasoned that that was the longest time the aircraft could fly on one engine — if the other failed — and pose no threat to passengers. Now some of the 767s are being rated for 120, 138 or 180 minutes — Air New Zealand has one of the latter, and uses it to fly Auckland-Tahiti non-stop.

In a book published several years ago, airline executive John King put the aspirations of the Pacific carriers in a nutshell. King, who had worked with Ansett, Air Vanuatu and Polynesian Airlines argued for the pooling of landing rights among the smaller carriers, and also some giving of ground by the major airlines. He asked whether Qantas would really suffer if Kiribati's Air Tungaru, for example, used the aircraft it was flying at the time on fifth-freedom rights out of Sydney to the Solomon Islands (and then on to Tarawa on its own rights): "One lonely mixed configuration B727-1000C can make but a small intrusion into the totality of Qantas operations internationally."

This happy state — from the island governments' viewpoint — is still years away from realisation. But the island carriers are becoming stronger by the year, which is an extremely positive trend after a long struggle to become established. □

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AIR NEW ZEALAND



Air New Zealand: can offer a variety of island destinations.

## Signs of change

**M**UCH of the frustration experienced by those who, in the past, have wanted to see a more rapid growth of tourism in the South Pacific islands has arisen from the fact that most of the region's promotion has been in the hands of a few major airlines — and that really means Qantas and Air New Zealand. Because, unlike regional carriers, their route network stretched out to encompass Asia, North America and Europe (where the majority of the world's tourist traffic is generated) they could tell the potential traveller about the delights of the South Seas.

The problem was that, for most of the time, the airlines concentrated on promoting their own countries. That was understandable and natural, and both Australia and New Zealand have built formidable tourist infrastructures — at least by southern Pacific standards. With these airlines, the islands tended to be an afterthought if they were promoted at all.

Now, there are signs of change, with both Qantas and Air New Zealand placing greater emphasis on the whole region as a destination for long-haul traffic. Both airlines recognise that — if people come this far — they frequently want to sample more than one destination while they are at it. When one is spending many thousands of dollars on a holiday, the cost of throwing in one or two stopovers and short detours is not a major factor.

Tony Marks, who runs passenger marketing at Air New Zealand in Auckland, said that the airline was targeting the person in Holland and Chicago who

had dreamed of visiting places such as Tahiti or the Cook Islands (especially in the northern winter) and getting them to combine a holiday on a palm tree-lined beach in the islands with a visit to Australia and/or New Zealand.

Air New Zealand can offer a variety of island destinations aboard its own aircraft: it flies to Nadi, Rarotonga, Nuku'alofa, Noumea, Apia, Papeete and Norfolk Island. The mainstay of the island routes is the Boeing 767, with the 747 used on the flights to North America which route via Fiji.

The company's research shows that a large part of New Zealand's appeal to potential tourists in North America, Europe and South-east Asia is that it is close to the Pacific Islands.

Marks said his airline was packaging a mix of destinations for the traveller. A typical one would have the European tourist fly Frankfurt-Los Angeles-Honolulu-Nadi-Auckland-Sydney. Air New Zealand was also developing through-routes to allow passengers more flexibility and to offer more destinations without having to return to Auckland in between. Thus the two weekly service out of Auckland terminating at Tonga had been supplemented by a third which then flies on to Apia. It was planned to have a 767 service to the Cook Islands then carry on to Fiji, so providing a direct link between those countries.

Air New Zealand's plan is to increase frequency of flights on Pacific Island sectors, thus giving it the edge in the region. After all, it is facing competitors which were not there a few years ago, particularly Hawaiian Airlines with its network of South Pacific services, especially the sharing of the Rarotonga-Auckland route with Air Rarotonga —

and now Hawaiian is seeking an arrangement with one of the United States carriers which fly between Sydney and Auckland to work an interlining deal so that Australians can link up with its own flights in New Zealand to the Cook Islands, a destination which will offer greater airline potential once the planned Sheraton hotel is built at Rarotonga.

In fact, the Cooks is a good example of the sort of problems which can cause trouble in serving small island nations: sometimes during the year, particularly round Christmas, large numbers of Cook Islanders return home from New Zealand. While this fills up the Air New Zealand and Hawaiian jets to the airlines' satisfaction, it hits the accommodation in Rarotonga because tourists have great difficulty booking on the much in demand flights. Having two major hotels instead of one will mean more regular airline capacity flying into Rarotonga, which should ease the congestion at Christmas time.

The many new hotels projected for Fiji should also help keep the momentum of that nation's recovery as a major tourist destination.

Fiji is in a different game from the other island states (with the exception of the French territories of New Caledonia and French Polynesia). It has a huge number of tourist hotels and an infrastructure which offers the visitor a wide range of activities.

With most other countries, it is a chicken-and-egg situation: and it perhaps behoves the major carriers in the region to show faith by giving the lead in providing the services which might encourage investors to build more hotels and resorts. The changes in engine-ratings have also helped the airline;

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it has 767s which can be three hours from an airport under the two-engine safety system, so allowing them to use the smaller jets on the long-hauls. Filling the seats on a 767 is far less a challenge than with a 747 jumbo, an important factor on low-density Pacific routes.

Air New Zealand can see itself increasing services to Fiji by a significant degree, said Marks. Nadi could soon become a mini-hub for the airline's operations in the South Pacific.

The Auckland-based carrier is also looking to step up the number of its jets passing through Papeete, thus picking up some of the traffic lost to Continental when it withdrew from the country, and from Qantas which has reduced the number of flights (although the Australian airline says that there is, in fact, greater capacity than before; Qantas has increased the number of direct Sydney-Los Angeles flights, thus removing many through-travellers who formerly travelled by way of the Sydney-Papeete-Los Angeles route).

But not just Tahiti to America: Air New Zealand, trying to read what the future will bring, expects increasing traffic out of South America, and the likelihood that continent will become the next great tourism growth area of the world. At the moment Aerolineas Argentinas flies over the South Pole to Auckland and LAN-Chile flies Santiago-Papeete, but eventually flights could originate from along the whole west coast of South America. Air New Zealand itself has periodically looked at extending its network to encompass Latin America; the current problem is lack of equipment. This aircraft shortage has hit all the major world airlines and each is forced to utilise what aeroplanes they do have on the routes where they can make the most money. Similarly, Qantas has sat on its hands in terms of new destinations in the Pacific for the same reason.

Qantas, while still focussing on Australia as the prime destination for tourists who board its aircraft, agrees that promoting the region is now an important

AIR CALEDONIE



Air Caledonie: competition.

part of its publicity campaign. As Australia captures only two per cent of the world's long-haul tourist market, there is plenty of potential for growth.

Its services to the Pacific consist of: Sydney and Brisbane to Port Moresby; a jointly-operated 737 service with Solomon Airlines running Honiara-Brisbane; Sydney to Nadi both with its own jets stopping over while on the North American service and joint services with Air Pacific; two services a week to Tahiti, and the scheduling of many of its jets via Honolulu which is a significant hub for Qantas.

"Qantas does not want to lose its focus on the Pacific," said the airline's regional director, South-west Pacific, Greg Haywood. Where the airline has decided not to run its jets — such as picking up existing rights to land at Port Vila, Vanuatu, it is because of restraints on the number of aircraft the airline has at its disposal.

Most of the airline's business in the region is tourism-based, except for the Papua New Guinea route. A few highly-motivated tourists from Europe or North America make the trip to Port Moresby, but mostly its business people or expatriate residents going back and forth to Australia. But if Papua New Guinea can solve some of its problems the high cost of moving around the country, the shortage of good accommodation and, more than anything, the serious and deteriorating law and order situation — then Haywood sees it becoming one of the most exciting tourist developments in the region. □

rocal rights and fly their own nationals in on holiday.

There have been three Air Vanuatus.

The first, founded about three years ago, was operated by Australia's Ansett Airlines; it owned 60 per cent of Air Vanuatu, the Government in Port Vila the remaining 40 per cent. The service from Australia was initially operated with either DC-9 or Boeing 737-200 aircraft. By and large, it was judged to be a reasonable success and gave the Vanuatu tourist industry its first major influx of foreign tourists, and established what continued to be a popular niche destination in the region. And it has meant that Vanuatu now has a tourism infrastructure well in advance of developments in some other small Pacific island states.

But Ansett pulled out of the deal after five years, although it continued to fly into Port Vila under its own colours using Qantas landing rights. The Vanuatu Government then looked around for someone to take over management of the national airline, even though it had no aircraft of its own. But Air Vanuatu No. 2 got nowhere: the Hong Kong company which tried to take over the operation never managed to bring it all together.

Air Vanuatu No. 3 came out of a report from accountants Coopers and Lybrand, who were commissioned by the Government to recommend what action it should take to establish its own carrier. The accountants advised that the country should find a "big brother", an airline which could provide an aircraft on a part-time basis so that Air Vanuatu was not faced with both buying a jet and keeping it operating seven days a week, a task impossible in the initial stages.

The search for the right airline narrowed down quite quickly to Australian Airlines, the government-owned domestic carrier based in Sydney. Initially it provided a 727 aircraft on charter once a week for a Sydney-Port Vila service so that Vanuatu could revive its own air operations with minimal delay.

Eventually, with A\$6 million (US\$4.56 million) in Australian aid money, Air Vanuatu was able to buy its own 727 for a total cost of US\$9.7 million. In June 1989 services were expanded to include Melbourne, then Brisbane and now Auckland. Ansett withdrew its own Vanuatu

## The end of the beginning

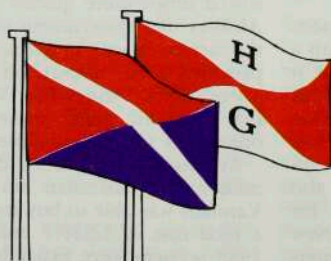
**A**IR Vanuatu is approaching the end of the beginning. The initial struggle to get itself established as an international carrier, and one with a sound infrastructure, is just about over. In the next few years the airline will be able to look further afield and, with that, enlarge Vanuatu's status as a tourist destination.

It owns its Boeing 727 jet and now serves four foreign destinations from Port Vila, Auckland, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney. The lengthening of

the landing strip at Bauerfield Airport, due for completion in 1991 along with a new terminal building, will then make it possible for 767 jets to land at Port Vila — and that means long range international hops become possible, with Asia (and Japan in particular) being the obvious first choice. The 767-capability also means potentially more competition for the small airline as Qantas and Air New Zealand could then incorporate Bauerfield as a stop on some of their Pacific routes, or Asian airlines pick up recip-

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operations about that time, the Qantas rights remaining vacant in the meanwhile.

The jet is painted in Air Vanuatu colours, but leased to Australian Airlines four days a week for use on domestic routes — which means the airliner is operating at an economic level, whereas without a lease-back it would spend expensive time sitting on the tarmac at Bauerfield. It also means that when the aircraft is out of service (which has happened only once) Australian Airlines supplies a replacement. Aircrew can also be supplied from Australian to cover sickness or leave, which means that Air Vanuatu can maintain lean staff levels. The Australian carrier has also promised to keep the Vanuatu company advised of its forward fleet planning.

Air Vanuatu takes over the aircraft at Melbourne on Saturday morning, flies it to Port Vila via Brisbane. Then it makes a return trip to Sydney, and works the Sydney-Auckland route on Sunday, returning on Sunday night to Melbourne (again by way of Brisbane). On Wednesday the aircraft is positioned by Australian in Sydney, where the Air Vanuatu crew pick it up for a return Sydney-Brisbane-Port Vila flight.

The main competition out of Australia is now Air Caledonie International; which flies via Noumea to Port Vila four times a week with a Boeing 737-300 jet. Air Pacific links Vila with Fiji.

Air New Zealand also has rights to operate into Port Vila, but has chosen not to exercise them. Air Vanuatu's Auckland service, which started in November, is still having trouble breaking out above a 50 per cent load factor so it is thought the New Zealand airline will wait and watch how the route goes before committing itself. It now acts as general sales agent in New Zealand for the Port Vila-based airline, and has undertaken to give 12 months' notice of it starting a service in opposition to Air Vanuatu.

On its Australian routes, Air Vanuatu is filling slightly over 70 per cent of its seats, which reflects on the lively publicity campaign Vanuatu waged in the market last year. Now the Government has pledged another Vt200 million (US\$1.38 million) for tourism promotion abroad, the money to be channelled through the airline.

Air Vanuatu's managing director, Peter Roberts, told *Pacific Islands Monthly* the airline was working well; after nine months, the airline has trained a cabin crew made up entirely of Vanuatu nationals, although the aircrew are either Australian or New Zealand citizens (and the aircraft remains on the Australian register, which means it has to be maintained to that country's high standards).

Roberts stayed with the airline after

being part of the Coopers & Lybrand team; he formerly spent 13 years with Qantas, working successively in planning, economics and accounting with that airline. While there he was also involved at the time Qantas had connections with Air Pacific and Air Niugini.

"By the end of this year we'll have the full infrastructure of a competent airline," said Roberts. This would include separate offices in all the foreign destination cities.

Now, he said, Vanuatu had to begin thinking about more hotel rooms. Port Vila has about 550 rooms, not all of in-

ternational standard, and these could cope with the 36,000 visitors a year now currently projected. "Next year is what concerns us," said Roberts. "Hotels are the restricting factor."

Air Vanuatu's plans include the possibility of a third weekly service to Sydney, and Asia is the next obvious area once the airport can take 767 aircraft. The easiest method to cope with the problem short-term is for the three major hotels to add more rooms, but in the longer term Vanuatu is going to have to look for new hotel players coming to town. □

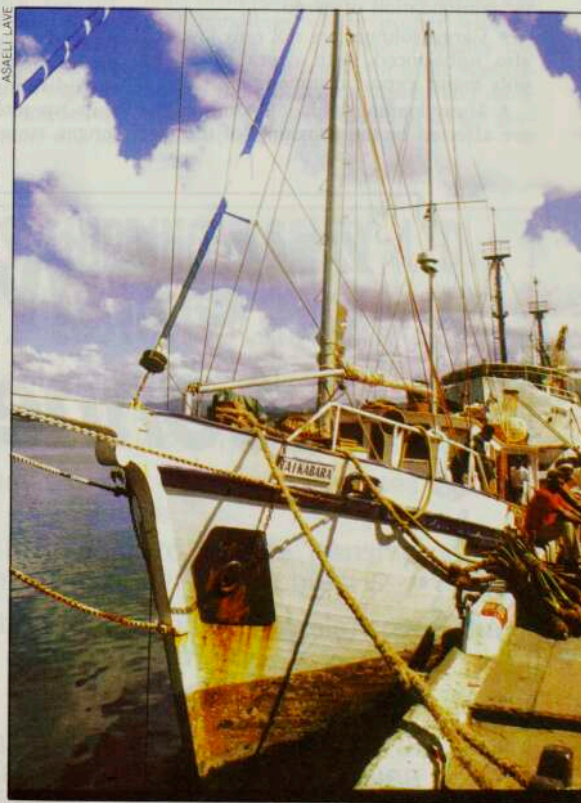
## Inter-island shipping is no plain sailing

**W**HILE the last decade has seen great leaps in both sea and air links between the island states of the Pacific and with the major neighbours on the Pacific rim, there are still enormous problems for most of the countries with internal transport. And internal transport, given that most of the countries consist of a chain of islands and road development is still at an early stage, means inter-island shipping. Low volumes over sometimes long distances pose the same problems — on a more local scale — as those faced by international transport operators in the Pacific Islands.

In recent months we have witnessed remote islanders in Tonga faced with rotting coconuts because there was no ship prepared to make the uneconomic voyage to collect the cargo; coastal shipping companies in Papua New Guinea proposing stiff rate hikes as costs skyrocket; companies disappearing from the Fiji inter-island

shipping scene, and the Cook Islands wringing its hands over how to supply the northern islands where food and supplies are constantly in danger of running low.

The increase in aviation has, in some respects, made things worse. The proliferation of domestic services (Air



**Fiji's inter-island shipping:** some companies are disappearing from the scene.

Melanesie, for example, expanded to include 27 destinations within Vanuatu; Talair covers more than 160 locations in Papua New Guinea) has meant that island people go by air whenever possible. Yet many of the inter-island shipping companies relied heavily on passenger fares to supplement the income from

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cargo. Their losing the passenger trade just makes it so much harder to keep going, or to maintain frequency of service. Even where people take boats, there are often fewer of them doing so; many of the Pacific nations are grappling with the problems of urban drift, where young nationals from the outer islands seek their fortune in the capital or a main town. Population declines in the most distant island, such as happened in Kiribati, against act to reduce the economies of scale — which were never that attractive in the first place.

Paul Gini, who specialised in transport subjects at the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation in Suva for several years, wrote a paper on the subject of domestic shipping.

- Small populations dispersed widely over many islands and are thereby time-consuming and costly to service. Lack of roading within the islands further prevents rationalisation of services by greater consolidation of cargo.

- Cargo volumes are not only low, but also unbalanced, with copra often the only major export commodity.

- Many loading and unloading points are affected by the proximity of the reef

so that ships can only anchor offshore and ferry goods and passengers to and from shore.

The container revolution made things worse by the fact that the large ocean-going ships stop at fewer ports than the old conventional vessels, which could heave-to off an island town for a few hours and take on or discharge cargo in comparatively small quantities. Shipping is now a game of fewer port calls and minimising time spent in those ports.

Gini pointed out that, with international lines making calls to fewer ports, more pressure is put on domestic shipping; more trans-shipment or feeder services must be provided. "Either costly facilities must be provided to handle containers at the destination port, or goods must be unpacked at the trans-shipment port and shipped as break-bulk cargo, this nullifying the major door-to-door benefit of containerisation," he wrote.

But — and no one can blame them — privately-owned domestic shipping companies cannot be in the business of cross-subsidisation. The remaining private ship operator in the Cook Islands no longer runs to the distant northern is-

lands, which has meant the Government stepping in and chartering vessels to do the job. And without a reliable, if not entirely regular, services outer islands lose all hope of economic development (which, in its turn, increases the pressure for islanders — especially the young — to move to the main island). Tonga's fourth Five Year Plan summed it up: "Inadequacy and irregularity of shipping services particularly in the outer islands results in large quantities of produce not reaching internal and external markets with growers not being adequately compensated."

The Cooks' situation does sum up the problem.

The Government in Rarotonga chartered the Fiji vessel *Kaunitoni*. Most vessels operating out of Rarotonga service the southern islands, where the greatest distance on a voyage is less than 300km, compared with more than 1100km to the northern islands. And several of the more distant islands have no airstrip, which means they rely entirely on sea transport for movement of both people and goods, with the trips lasting up to five days.

Several smaller ships were chartered to

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take essential supplies to the northern islands but they had inadequate cargo capacity, and the communities began reporting they were running low on supplies including diesel fuel for electricity generators.

Kiribati has similar problems. Shipping services to the country's outermost community, on Christmas Island, do not run to a regular schedule. That is acceptable for non-perishable cargo inwards, and copra outwards, but means that much of the food supplies and all the passengers have to go by air (which involves travelling by way of the Marshall Islands and Hawaii).

These far-flung countries also generate a further problem, in that the distances are so great (3200km from Tarawa to Christmas Island) that the ships must be large enough to withstand heavy ocean seas, and also have crews trained in advanced navigation techniques.

There is no simple answer. Private operators are unlikely to keep a modern fleet of ships because the money required for re-investment is not being generated, so they tend to stick with older and less fuel-efficient ships. Independence brought to power politicians

who answered to constituents, many of whom demand better shipping services (among other things), so that governments have been sensitive to these pressures. But governments tend to get landed with the uneconomic routes, and this becomes just one more drain on already strained budgets.

In order to try and solve some of these problems, the South Pacific Forum has established the South Pacific Maritime Development Plan. This scheme will seek answers to the islands' shipping questions, from evolving vessels which are suited to the trade to port management and infrastructure.

Paul Gini's paper stressed that shipping had to be considered within the entire transport framework, particularly how aircraft could be used to carry people and freight in places on uneconomic sea voyages. "Domestic shipping should be seen as part of an overall transport sector and solutions devised for the problems it now faces should fully account for constraints imposed by and the effects on other parts of that sector," he wrote. Integrated approach was all: developing container wharf facilities at one link in the transport chain will be

less efficient if the roading, storage and other requirements are not met.

Similarly, attention, too, should be paid to small-scale streamlining — such as organising copra to be assembled in one central point for collection by ships.

"It is important that new vessels that might be built do not become liabilities for the future, too expensive to operate or difficult to maintain," said Gini. While it is now a few years since this was written, the situation in the Pacific is still largely the same and the points he makes remain valid, simply because so many ships used on domestic routes are old and inefficient.

It nevertheless seems unlikely that inter-island or coastal shipping can ever become totally profitable or at least self-supporting. Many of the factors which govern the economics of the trade are immutable — the long distances, small populations, problems finding return cargos on some routes, seasonal variations in shipping space needs, inefficient port handlings where proper wharves and storage do not exist. Probably the best that can be hoped for is the elimination of the most costly aspects and minimisation of losses and the drain on government or aid funds. □

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## SPECIAL REPORT

## COVER STORIES

## Fiji seeks a better system

By Penny Gibson

**T**HE Fiji Government is to undertake a major transport sector study within the next 12 months. The study will analyse all aspects of the sector, including road, marine and air traffic, and is likely to be financed internationally and undertaken by consultants.

As well as providing data, the 12-month study will make recommendations on resolving the transport difficulties faced by travellers, particularly in rural and island areas, and increasing the efficiency of transport services.

The transport sector is fairly dynamic at present, with millions of dollars being spent on upgrading infrastructure and facilities, but there are two major areas of stagnation causing problems domestically: inter-island shipping and the bus service.

• **Air Transport:**

Air transport is a growth sector, reflecting the increased number of tourists entering the country and the increased economic activity.

Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF)

statistics show a substantial increase in cargo freighters into Nadi in the last year, largely due to the tax-free zone industry generating more traffic.

During the year, international aircraft movements averaged 16 a day through Nadi and two through Nausori. International passenger arrivals increased by 33 per cent over 1987/88, departures by 26 per cent and transit passengers by 17.8 per cent. At Nausori, international passengers dropped by about 10 per cent with a further decline expected. Domestic flights averaged 71 a day through Nadi and 37 through Nausori. Domestic passenger traffic at both Nadi and Nausori increased more than 10 per cent over 1987/88.

Some recent developments in the sector, include F\$10.5 million extensions to the airport included more administration offices and check-in counters, improved baggage reclaim, a larger restaurant and departure lounge, major renovations to and expansion of the transit lounge, Fijian decorations throughout carparking and landscaping.

Over the next five years, CAAF will

extend the Nadi Airport apron and build a new taxiway to enable parking for more domestic and international aircraft and allow one aircraft to come in as another prepares to depart. The airport can currently cater for four Boeing 747s and three 767s at any one time and the tendency for aircraft to come at the same time puts pressure on the facilities.

On-going projects include the introduction of short-circuit security television, extension of the baggage conveyor system, more VIP areas for airlines and an expanded check-in area. There are plans for an arrival duty-free shop, more office space at arrivals and a new aerobridge. Within a year CAAF will invest about F\$3 million to replace the Automatic Message Switching System, a navigation system that channels messages around the world, to comply with international standards.

CAAF began running its own Air Traffic Control Courses in November 1989, with plans for eventually catering for other regional countries. Controllers had previously been sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme to study in Asia, but when funding was substantially reduced, CAAF began its own training programme, which co-ordinates more closely with training schedules and is more relevant to local conditions.

In another major development, Fiji Air's engineering department has begun providing maintenance services to other Pacific airlines, the first being Air Tungaru, of Kiribati. The move should save smaller airlines the expense of setting up their own maintenance operations, utilise underused expertise at Nausori, and earn foreign exchange for Fiji.

• **Marine Transport:**

Marine transport covers a vast amount of traffic and cargo movement into and out of Fiji and between the islands and is a sign of the economic well-being of an economy. The Ports Authority of Fiji (PAF) and Marine Department are responsible for most traffic.

PAF has control of the three major international ports at Suva, Lautoka and Levuka. Its statistics show that the total number of vessels visiting these ports in 1989 was 960, 54 more than 1988, and 1,773,084 tonnes of cargo passed through the ports. It is making a conscious effort to generate more traffic by offering competitive rates to get shippers to use its facilities to trans-ship cargo, which will generate more income, predominantly foreign exchange.

The Suva Wharf has undergone major reconstruction over the last few years and F\$10 million is being spent on major repairs, renovations and extensions to Lautoka's Queen's Wharf. The works are necessary because of the different shipping technology from when the wharves




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## SPECIAL REPORT

## COVER STORIES

were built 30 years ago; the ships are now much larger and cargo handling has changed to containers, which require different unloading, transport and storage facilities. Both wharves also needed maintenance work to repair ravages of time, and more offices.

Inter-island shipping is one of the major issues the transport study will have to address. Fiji has a three-tier system operating for inter-island shipping: the commercial sector, the Marine Department and the Auxiliary Unit.

The Marine Department operates 40 vessels, mainly for transport of Government personnel and machinery, but also for charter to the general public. The boats also carry cargo and passengers when going to remote islands, particularly where it is not lucrative to run commercial vessels.

The military's Auxiliary Unit runs three ships, also taking personnel and cargo to the more remote areas and servicing rural populations.

According to the President of the Fiji Inter-island Shipowner's Association, Jim Smith, they all vie for cargo and passengers. He said there was a lack of rationalisation in the sector, no regular route scheduling and freight rates had remained unchanged since 1986, making it very difficult for commercial operators to maintain their viability and profitability. Many operators had gone to the wall, with Association membership falling to five from 12, five years ago. Last year 10 ships were sold.

Smith called for the shipping system to be brought into line with other countries, thus giving operators a basis on which to plan ahead, make investments to improve and expand services.

Director of Marine, Captain Sekove Cama, said operators had been offered the opportunity to regulate themselves and determine schedules earlier this year under the licensing provisions of the marine legislation, but had not yet responded. He suggested that many inter-island operators had the wrong type of ships for their purpose, which reduced profitability.

A major problem identified by both Smith and Captain Cama was the uncertainty created in the sector because unscrupulous operators edged out scheduled shipping by arriving at islands a few days earlier and "stealing" cargo and passengers.

Smith said: "If the Government is serious about tapping the potential of outer islands, development of the transport system needs to take place. When investors put a ship on, they must know they will get a return." He said Government promised action, but nothing transpired. If secure routes were established, everybody would benefit. While boats need an assured cargo to ensure viability of the

route, islanders need assurances of a regular route to ensure their produce can get to mainland markets.

Shippers are also hampered by freight rates, which haven't risen since 1986 while the cost of fuel, wages and maintenance have soared. The Prices and Incomes Board is considering the new rates.

Another uncertainty in the sector is the seasonal movement of passengers and, to a slightly lesser extent, cargo. Traffic is weak between February and June, then picks and peaks between October and January.

Passenger traffic between Viti Levu and Vanua Levu alone is 220,000 people annually, and this is expected to almost double with the completion of tarsealing of Vanua Levu's main road and major wharf developments at Savusavu and Nabouwalu on Vanua Levu this year.

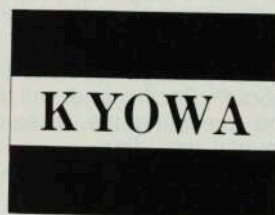
#### • Road Transport:

The Government is putting a major effort into road improvement in Fiji. The World Bank is financing the sealing of 120 km, worth \$53 million over three years and the Asian Development Bank is financing maintenance and resealing. It is expected that work will commence to upgrade the congested Ba and Sigatoka bridges on Viti Levu to double lanes.

The number of vehicles registered in 1989 was double 1988 registrations, with the trend continuing this year. The biggest increase was private vehicles, largely due to the influx of cheaper reconditioned and second-hand cars; 2176 registrations last year equalled total 1985-88 registrations. Over 1000 commercial vehicles (excluding taxi/hire cars) were registered last year compared to 2000 from 1985-88.

A major road transport issue the transport study must address is the bus system. The industry is in array, with poor services, broken down buses and overcrowding in the urban areas. According to the President of the Fiji Bus Operators' Association, Pyara Singh, who represents Fiji's 70 bus operators, this is largely due to no fare increases since 1982 and high maintenance costs.

"The whole bus industry needs an overhaul and rationalisation, but the Government has turned a blind eye to the problem." The association was seeking a 50 per cent fare increase, but has reduced its demand to 20 per cent plus further Government subsidies. Singh estimated the industry needs \$2 million from Government to make it viable and properly operational. □



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## STAMPS

## The Rundschau list

By John Hunter

**T**HE West German stamp magazine, *Michel Rundschau*, has released its survey of stamp issues of the world in 1988. This survey is an excellent indication of the developments in the stamp industry around the world.

Unfortunately the number of stamp issues for 1988 is up on the number of issues in 1987. The number is up from

9107 to 9512 stamps. Stamp collectors were beginning to take heart that the number of issues had begun to fall. However, the reversed trend seems to indicate that stamp issuing agencies are returning to the high issue rate of 1984 and 1985 when over 10,000 stamps were issued.

When one compares these numbers to 1979 when 7804 stamps were issued it shows that the agencies are out to take as

much money as possible from the collector. There is a very limited number of collectors the agencies can squeeze and when they are squeezed too much for the hard earned cent they fall away from stamp collecting in large numbers. This is happening. Rumour has it that 40 per cent of collectors have stopped collecting Australian stamps for the reason that it is getting too expensive. In fact Australia Post is soon to issue a \$20 stamp when you consider buying a corner block of 4, a first day cover and stamp pack only the rich can afford the luxury of collecting stamps.

In the Pacific it is sad to see that most authorities have increased the number of stamp issues from their 1987 number.

However congratulations must go to the Cook Islands and Tuvalu for a considerable reduction in their stamp issues. Further congratulations must go to the Pacific in 1988 as not one agency country was included in the world's fifteen top countries with the largest number of stamp issues.

The two worst countries in the world for the largest number of stamp issues in 1988 were Grenada & Grenadines 385 stamps (284 in 1987), and Guyana 383 stamps (356 in 1987).

Here are the number of stamps issued in the Pacific in 1988 compared to 1987. The countries are listed in the order of numbers of stamps issued.

| COUNTRY          | STAMPS |      |
|------------------|--------|------|
|                  | 1987   | 1988 |
| Niuafo-ou-Is     | 12     | 8    |
| Kiribati         | 15     | 10   |
| Cook Is          | 10     | 103  |
| Penrhyn          | 12     | 8    |
| Nauru            | 15     | 11   |
| Niue             | 15     | 15   |
| Tokelau Is       | 17     | 12   |
| Aitutaki         | 16     | 18   |
| Fiji             | 19     | 17   |
| Norfolk Is       | 19     | 31   |
| Pitcairn         | 16     | 16   |
| New Caledonia    | 23     | 22   |
| Papua New Guinea | 23     | 22   |
| French Polynesia | 26     | 27   |
| Vamiatu          | 25     | 42   |
| Solomon Is       | 24     | 37   |
| Palau            | 29     | 54   |
| Tonga            | 37     | 21   |
| Samoa            | 38     | 21   |
| Micronesia       | 44     | 8    |
| New Zealand      | 51     | 31   |
| Australia        | 67     | 61   |
| Tuvalu           | 78     | 169  |

The Pacific area has shown, on the whole, considerable restraint in the number of new issues. Large number of stamp issues do not mean greater profit. It usually means less profit as collectors dump the offending countries.

### Post alternative

THE British Government is having talks with the Australian transport giant TNT about setting up a rival service to the Royal Mail. The word is the Thatcher Government is looking at plans to break up the Post Office monopoly with a cheap commercial nationwide letter service. □



### TOURISM COUNCIL OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC APPOINTMENT OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Applications are invited for the position of Head of the Research and Statistics Division of the Tourism Council of the South Pacific an inter-governmental organisation of twelve island countries of the South Pacific.

The main objectives of the Council are to promote, co-ordinate, plan and implement projects and activities designed to strengthen regional co-operation in tourism development of member countries. Most funding is currently provided by the Pacific Regional Tourism Development Programme financed by the European Economic Community.

The Head of the Research and Statistics Division will report to the Director of the Tourism Council of the South Pacific and will be responsible for planning, organising and executing the research and statistics work programme of the Council including:

- collection, processing, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of statistics;
- surveys, studies and other research activities;
- advice and assistance to member countries on research and statistics;
- operation and enhancement of computer database system;
- all other research and statistics activities.

This position is restricted to nationals of the member countries\* of the TCSP. Applicants should have relevant qualifications and experience appropriate to the post and a record of achievements in tourism in the region at middle and senior level. Some familiarity with computer database operations will be an advantage.

Interested applicants are advised to obtain a copy of further particulars of the post from the Secretariat [Phone: (679) 315277; Fax: (679) 301995] before applying.

Applications should include a detailed curriculum vitae and names and addresses of three referees with whom the applicant has been associated in a professional capacity. The application must be submitted by 31 July 1990 to the Director, Tourism Council of the South Pacific, P.O. Box 13119, Suva, Fiji. Envelope should be marked "Professional Staff Application". The successful applicant is expected to take up his position preferably by 1 October 1990.

\* Member countries of TCSP are American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa.

## BOOKS

## Solving the mystery

**Easter Island, The Mystery Solved,**

by Thor Heyerdahl, published by Souvenir Press, London, UK Pounds 18.95; and "L'île de Pacques," by Pierre Loti, published by Editions Pierre-Olivier Combelles, France, FF 195.

Reviewed by Nicholas Rothwell

**T**HOR Heyerdahl's confidently-titled account of western explorers' attempts to unravel the history of Easter Island marks the culmination of a life-time of personal involvement with the Pacific's remotest, most enigmatic haven — Rapa-Nui, known by its natives by names of wild poetry: "Te-Pito-o-te-Henua", "The Navel of the World", or Mata-Kite-Rangi, "Eyes looking at heaven."

This volume races through the history of discovery and settlement, includes a brief account of Heyerdahl's pioneering 1955 expedition — the visit which gave rise to the author's captivating book *Aku-Aku* — and concludes with the findings of his triumphal return in 1986. Easter Island — *The Mystery Solved*, occupies a peculiar niche, since it mingles popular history, the author's own philosophical musings on world peace and his free-wheeling speculations about prehistoric oceanic voyages; yet at the same time, it is printed in the format of a small coffee-table book, and the photographs it contains of Easter Island's parched-green fields, the open sea stretching beyond the cliff-faces, and the restored statues gazing inland, are of startling quality and compositional beauty.

These images alone — and Easter Island is one of the rare places on this planet which seem to communicate their character freely to the camera lens — make the book worthwhile, and summon up that sense of distant, brooding divinity communicated by an earlier explorer of the Island, Katherine Routledge, who wrote in 1919: "Everywhere is the wind of heaven; round and above all are boundless sea and sky, infinite space and a great silence. The dweller there is ever listening for he knows not what, feeling unconsciously that he is in the antechamber to something yet more vast which is just beyond his ken."

Although Heyerdahl himself has inevitably become part of the modern legend of the Pacific, thanks to his *Kon-Tiki* exploits, and he has been involved with Pacific archaeology and ethnology ever since his Marquesan researchers of 1937-38, his prevailing thesis about patterns of Pacific settlement that the cultures of America played a key role in the

colonisation of Easter Island — remains controversial among more mainstream researchers in the field.

This book links the argument to the history of the study of Easter Island, for it unfolds a narrative of the invasions and arrivals of the past two centuries, balanced by an account of the author's own life and beliefs, and an exposition of his theories. He makes a persuasive case for at least some contact from South America before the arrival of Polynesians on Easter Island; among the evidence marshalled is data from pollen records, genetic examinations of the blood of today's Easter Islanders, and Heyerdahl's own interpretations of island myths and traditions.

Yet despite the considerable exuberance and skill with which this case is made, at times Heyerdahl seems so enamoured of his visions of trans-oceanic, trans-cultural journeyings that he overstates his argument, coming close to suggesting that Polynesian culture played little part in the shaping of Easter Island.

But travellers who visit both Tahitian sacred worship enclosures and Easter Island's majestic statues may sense more similarity than Heyerdahl seems willing to acknowledge between the two cultures. Indeed, this book has been savaged in scholarly reviews by critics who claim Heyerdahl's near-exclusive focus on American Indian seafaring leads him to neglect the ample evidence for Polynesian settlement, and for the links between Polynesian and Easter Island culture.

Nevertheless, Heyerdahl's basic contention that two waves of migrant populations came to Easter Island — first Americans, later Polynesians — certainly seems feasible. This twin-migration view has recently found support from a new linguistic study of the Island by Robert Langdon and Darrell Tryon, which concludes that Polynesian speakers arrived in Easter Island in the early 17th century, about a 100 years before western contact, to find it inhabited by earlier settlers, probably from South America.

This, then, is the "mystery" Heyerdahl believes to have been solved by his new book; in addition, he recounts another achievement of his latest expedition, which succeeded, thanks to the ingenuity of a young Czech engineer, in managing to "walk" a giant Easter Island monolith with the aid only of ropes, and levers, so providing a model for the ancient stone-carvers' successful transportation of their enormous votive figures down the "image roads" described by Captain Cook.

At times, Heyerdahl succeeds in communicating the sheer excitement of his

decades-long involvement with the Island, and the haunting atmosphere that still exists in its crater-torn hills today. But often, his narrative becomes a detective story of his quest for evidence of trans-oceanic journeyings. Although he warns that the mythical traditions of the Easter Islanders were corrupted by their contacts with westerners, he nevertheless relies on local tales to support the claims he favours, while discounting other, contradictory pieces of evidence.

His ultimate conclusion reduces the importance of Polynesian settlement of the Island to the following: "Ethnographic evidence thus indicates that the Polynesians were indeed brought to Easter Island, either with their consent or against their will, by navigators from a more culturally developed area of ancient Peru, using either force or cunning. Maybe the 19th century Europeans were not the first to sail from Peru into the Pacific as slave raiders. History repeats itself."

A constant theme of Heyerdahl's global explorations has been the contention that cross-cultural contacts have been the hidden means of transmission of civilisation, systematically ignored by the scientific establishment. After a lifetime of unorthodox achievements, it is now Heyerdahl whose presentations of Easter Island culture will reach the common reader, while the endeavours of less-known researchers, with their differing conclusions, will remain more obscure.

Strangely, the poignant sense of place that infected *Aku-Aku* is little in evidence in these pages, swamped as they are by theory and by the internationalist concerns of the globe-trotting explorer.

Another book devoted to Easter Island, of rather different character, has just been published in Europe: the journal kept by the French Pacific author Pierre Loti, when, as a young sailor in 1872, he visited the island. Loti's text, charmingly simple yet possessed of a remarkable acuity, summons up a haunting sense of an island poised between cultures, mediating between clashing worlds — the same sense that lingers still on the Chilean-governed island today.

Loti's blurry sketches and drawings also seem to capture the essence of what survived a century ago upon the "navel of the world". Enraptured by what he found, Loti was in no haste to solve the "mystery" of the statues before his eyes. "The island", he recorded, "is dotted with tall, monstrous statues, the creations of we do not know what race — today vanished or degenerated — and its past remains an enigma."

Somehow, even Thor Heyerdahl's finely argued demystifications pale slightly before the youthful Pierre Loti's recollections of this "land half fantasy, a country of dreams." □

# A woman's champion

Naama Latasi: politician, community worker

NAAMA Maheu Latasi, Tuvalu's Minister for Health, Education and Community Services, from the constituency of Nanumea, is the first woman elected to parliament in Tuvalu. Her husband, Kamuta Latasi, is Member of Parliament for Funafuti. They have four children; two boys and two girls. Naama Latasi is a former Commissioner of Girl Guides, and a prominent worker in women's affairs. Although born in Tuvalu, she was brought up in Kiribati. A person of boundless energy, she is a champion of women's development, and a concerned and caring individual. Her appearance on the political scene marks the dawning of a new era for women in Tuvalu. Latasi is a quietly spoken but strong minded woman. She spoke to *Pacific Island Monthly's* **Diana McManus**.

*You spent your youth and early married life in Kiribati. When did you return to Tuvalu?*

My father is from Nanumea. My mother comes from Kiribati, and my husband's home island is Funafuti. I have loving and lasting memories of my childhood and youth in Kiribati and still regain great affection for the country. I returned to Tuvalu with my husband in 1975 where we were both offered jobs in the Government. However, in 1978 my husband was assigned to Fiji as Tuvalu's first Ambassador abroad. At the completion of our assignment in Fiji, my husband was offered the post of Manager of British Petroleum in Funafuti, which he continues to hold, but his passion, as always, remains in politics.

*Do you find your background and experience helpful in coping with the demands of this Ministry?*

Yes, indeed. I think I was very lucky, first of all, to have been brought up as a Girl Guide, then to serve this marvellous institution as a Commissioner until last year when I became the Minister. Guiding inspired me with a passion for service to mankind. I was involved in building up the character and developing the facilities and potential of our girls to make them into useful members of their families and communities.

My Ministry is fundamentally concerned with the development and refinement of Tuvalu's human resources and I find that the principal objectives of my portfolio beautifully conform with my background, interests and experience.

An undertaking which provides me with great satisfaction was the establishment of the Olave Kindergarten in Funafuti, which is progressing on a sound professional basis. I ventured into this project as Girl Guides Commissioner



with hardly any resources, but managed to obtain a small grant from the British Girl Guides association. We offered one of our family houses in Funafuti to accommodate the pre-school. It was, perhaps, destiny which prepared me this way and steered me to where I am today.

*How was your interest in women's affairs been developed?*

My years in Fiji provided an excellent opportunity to widen my knowledge and understanding of various movements and campaigns for the emancipation and development of women in the Pacific Region and elsewhere. And, as the wife of an Ambassador, who was also Dean of

the Diplomatic Corps, I had the opportunity to exchange views and interact with people from different parts of the world and from different levels of society.

Later I learnt a lot about women through various conferences. In 1987 I attended a three-month course in Sydney on the development of women. Since then, other conferences relating to the role of women in the Pacific have given me a broader outlook on conditions on different countries.

*How else have you been involved with women's development?*

Apart from being Minister responsible for the development of women, I continue to remain a member of the Nanumea and Funafuti women's associations which are branches of the National Women's Council of Tuvalu. One time I was Deputy President, if that's the right word . . . only for awhile. I gave that up to look after my ill father-in-law.

Three associations are generally involved with improving the quality of women's lives . . . home technology, building handicraft centres and helping women earn an income, encouraging home gardening, improvement of primary health care, sewing workshops and things like that. One of the major drawbacks was lack of resources to implement their ideas. Now, as Minister, I'm in a position to negotiate and seek assistance for such projects.

I'm also a leading member of the Kiribati Women's Association here in Funafuti. We meet monthly for mutual support and discussions.

*Do all your commitments interfere with your marriage?*

I want to say that my husband has been very, very supportive. I would not be able to do all these things without his

# PACIFIC PEOPLE

help. He has always been an understanding partner, encouraging me to fully contribute to whatever I considered worthwhile.

As Girl Guides Commissioner I often had to attend conferences abroad, leaving our small children behind. Sometimes I was away for up to three weeks and during my absence Kamuta gladly performed all the domestic chores including cooking for and feeding the children. I'm fully appreciative of him.

Indeed he has set a good example for the men of Tuvalu to follow; that is, to adopt a flexibility in roles and adjust sensibly to circumstances to allow women to pursue their useful interests, and apply their faculties fully to the welfare of their families, communities and the nation.

*Are roles changing in Tuvalu society?*

Yes, they are. Much faster than anyone can realise. There is an undercurrent of social changes and its ripples become visible every now and then. We are much more exposed to outside people and cultures, and to a variety of lifestyles and ideologies of people in this region and beyond. Socially, it's a very delicate transitional period through which Tuvalu is passing. We have to remain very firm and steadfast to keep the fabric of our society strong. We want to maintain our identity and dignity. We don't wish to develop into a synthesised society whose texture belongs nowhere.

I am a strong woman on principles, and I like to see our women take their rightful place in this changing society, but this should take place in harmony, rather than conflict with the men-folk of our nation.

*What do you regard as the woman's role in today's society?*

I must stress that our concept of women's development is not what it may be in some western cultures. We wish to raise the status, the contribution and participation of our women in national development within the perimeters of our culture and traditions.

The first and foremost duty of a woman is towards her family and community. She must apportion her time to make sure she fulfils her role as a wife and mother honourably. She should not get involved in so many activities that she neglects her own children and members of the family. It's important for women to be aware of their right to equal opportunity with men to express their opinion, and to participate in decision making and decision execution.

Women must respond sensibly to the changing economic scene of the country and acquire the skills to enable them to pursue income earning activities.

All this, of course, can only be made possible if men too understand, adapt and change as required. Above all, men

or women, we must remain strongly attached to our cultural values and practices, and never be led off the track by the thinking, values and practices of people from overseas within whom we come into contact through travel, tourism or videos.

*Do you have difficulties in your position because you are a woman?*

Not really. On the contrary, I have received commendable cooperation and assistance from the male staff. I have nothing but praise for my colleagues in Cabinet. At ministerial discussions my contributions are treated with the same respect as anyone else's. Similarly in all the committees and non-governmental organisations, I find no expression of the slightest prejudice against my gender. Despite the fact that women in our society still remain a disadvantaged group, it is certainly not on account of any prejudice against them. It is much

more and more trainers. I'd like to see a considerable increase in resources, both monetary and technical, to ensure the success of women's welfare programme at grassroots level.

Another of my serious concerns is to heighten women's awareness of their present condition and infuse them with dynamism to work towards their own betterment. I'm keen to see the infrastructure of the Women's National Council and all the women's associations strengthened. They are reliable channels of communication and can play a very valuable role in mobilising women at all levels.

*Why are you working so hard for women in particular?*

Our nation is not endowed with many natural resources. Our greatest wealth lies in our people. One of my primary objectives is to ensure that we develop our human resources to the fullest for



**A woman's champion:** Naama Latasi (middle) celebrates Kiribati's 10th anniversary of independence.

more to do with adherence to traditional roles and conventions.

*Is having more women on decision-making bodies presents a cultural threat?*

No. I don't see any threat in it at all. Our culture and society at present is like a cart with one full size wheel and the other a miniature. How can such a cart reach its destination? What I want to see is the miniature wheel being developed to full size as well, so that the cart of our national development can move smoothly and fast in order to realize the goals we have set for ourselves. Women's full participation in all our national affairs is therefore a necessity, and not a threat in any way.

*What are you doing at Government level about improving the condition of women?*

I am considering several structural changes in the women's office of my Ministry, largely to facilitate greater concentration on women's welfare programmes. We need more training program-

the benefit of the nation. As such, I have to make sure that women, who are relatively left behind in this regard, receive the extra attention due in order to catch up with the menfolk; so we can strive for the good of all.

*Cultural definition and change form a part of your portfolio. What are some developments in that area?*

We are in the process of strengthening the development of the Tuvalu language and promoting its greater use in our education system. Our national language must be given its rightful status as the first language of education. We have schemes to provide incentives for the promotion and production of literature in the Tuvaluan language.

We are also making sure that our culture is emphasised throughout the education system, so that when our youth go overseas for education and training they do not lose sight of their identity. □

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