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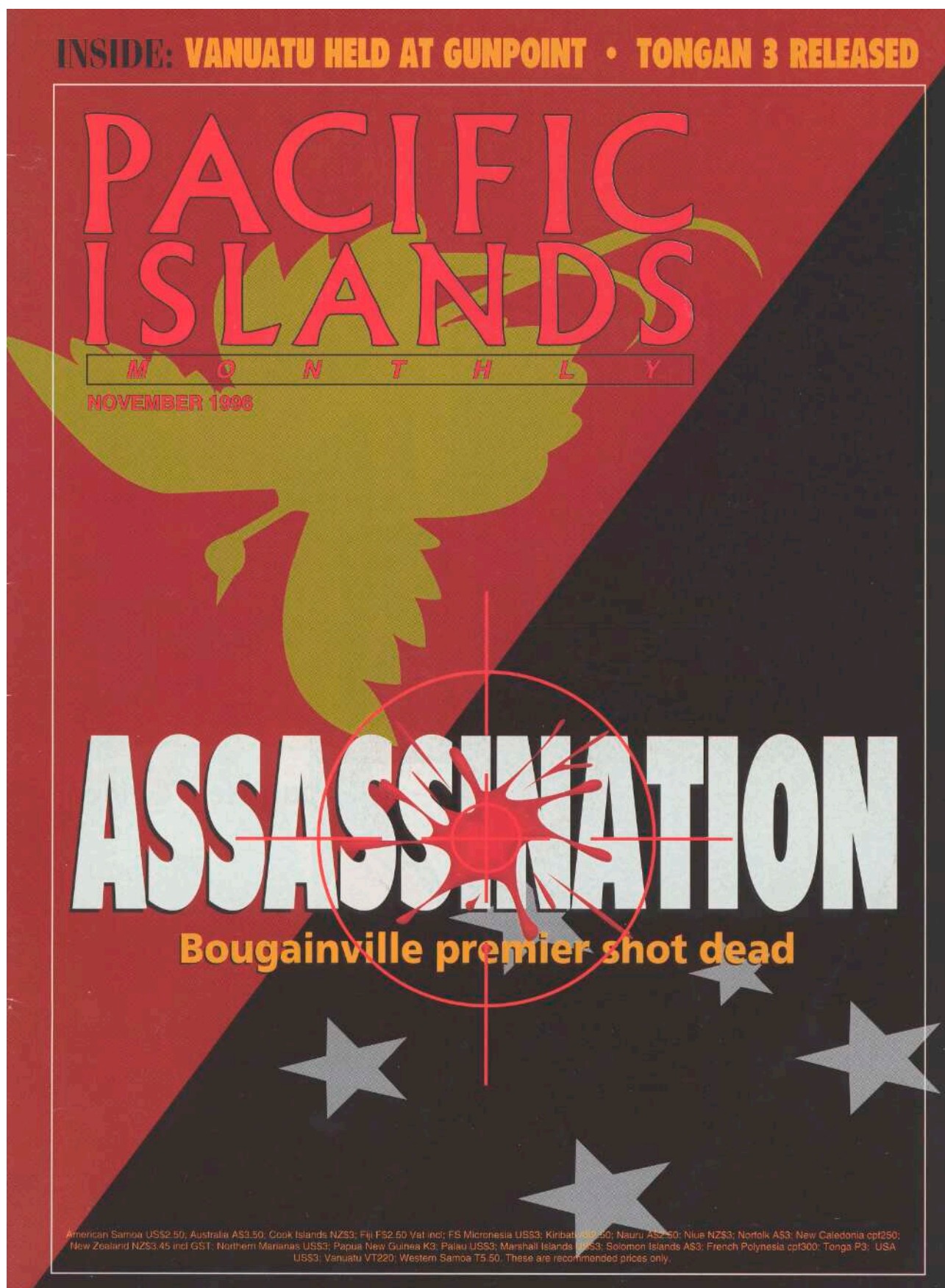
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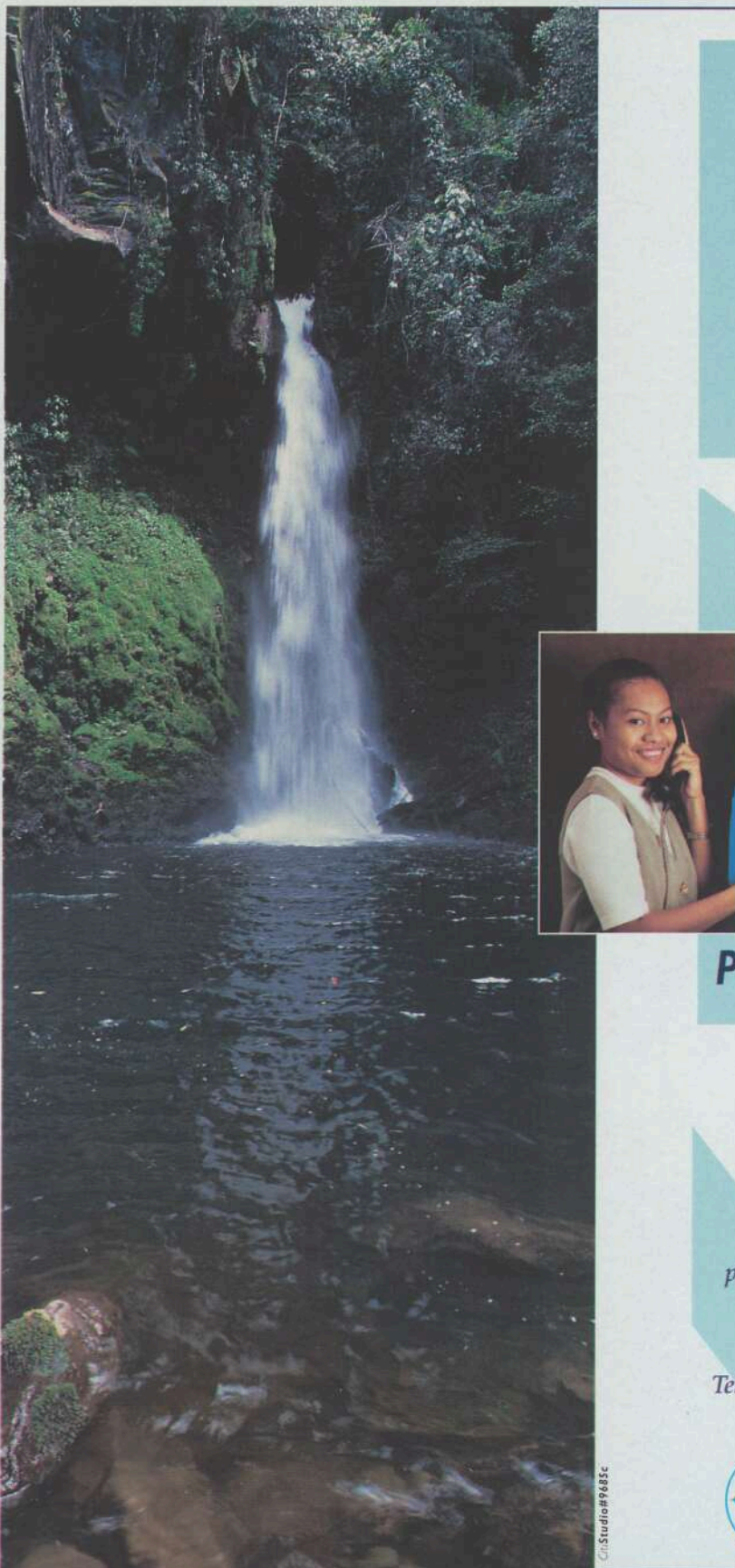
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PACIFIC ISLANDS

M O N T H L Y

Vol. 66 No. 11

THE NEWS MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 1996

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COVER: Shock and disbelief follow the assassination of Bougainville Premier Theodore Miriung, who opposed the BRA's campaign of violence and was a "thorn in the side of the central government"

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LETTERS

No link between radiation and 'jellyfish babies'

Dear Sir

In "An American legacy" (*PIM* September, 1996) there are repeated references to "heretofore unheard of conditions such as 'jelly-fish babies'". Unfortunately, the author missed a good opportunity to enlighten the public on the subject of gestational trophoblastic diseases (GTDs) like the hydatidiform mole (HM) which is certainly not "unheard of" if you happen to be a medical doctor, though perhaps not under its colloquial name.

This omission may well be intentional, since mystery certainly adds to fear, especially if World Health Organisation and other statistics on the disease are excluded.

The most comprehensive report on the subject is WHO's 83-page *Technical Report No 692*, but other reports are available in journals such as *Obstetric Gynecology and Epidemiologic Reviews*.

Worldwide statistics show that the highest incidences of HM are in the coun-

tries of Indonesia, Iran, Taiwan, Nigeria and Mexico, none of which have anything to do with nuclear weapons testing or nuclear energy, while the lowest rates are those of Europe and the caucasian population of North America, which includes countries such as France, which gets nearly all its electricity from nuclear power.

Typical HM rates range from one to 10 incidences per 1000 pregnancies, with the higher risk rates being associated with women over 35 at the time of delivery. The risk for women aged over 50 is some 200 times greater than for those aged 20-35.

Other risk factors identified with far less certainty include cosmetics (red lipstick) and chemicals used in textile, printing and the chemical industries, as well as alcoholism, viral or parasitic infections, herbal medicines and long-term oral contraceptive use.

HMs have been known since long before the discovery of nuclear radiation. Radiation exposure has never been linked to an increased risk of HM, not among Japanese A-bomb survivors, not in the Marshall Islands, and not in the Ukrainian and Byelorussian areas contaminated by the Chernobyl explosion.

Fear mongering may win entertainment and news media prizes but it won't

win you any kudos in the world of medicine and public health education.

Jaro Franta
Quebec
Canada

Meat and violence

Dear Sir

I passed through Nadi Airport from New Zealand to Hawaii and picked up the June issue of *Pacific Islands Monthly*. I was really saddened to see that you gave such a feature to McDonald's.

This is a company which has built its profits on the backs of billions of slaughtered animals.

There is a direct correlation between violence and the eating of meat that has been known for centuries.

Why does a country like Fiji want to add violence to its peaceful world?

I hope the Fijian people do not support this product. It is in their best interests.

Stephen Brandit
Honolulu
Hawaii

OPINION



ALFRED
SASAKO

Pacific centre lifts region's hopes of increasing Japanese investment

By the time you are reading this column, the Pacific Islands Centre located in the heart of Tokyo would have opened its doors for business. The official opening of the centre on October 14 signaled the beginning of a new era in the Japan-Forum Island Countries (FICs) partnership on which many on both sides hope for enormous economic spin-offs.

It's a marriage of sorts. As in many lasting marriages, the period of courtship was long. But once both sides had reached an agreement for a feasibility study in mid-1994, like a proposed marriage, everything else after the engagement was a mere formality.

At least for the next six months it will be an interesting wait-and-see period as the three Japanese staff of the Pacific Islands Centre launch a massive publicity awareness campaign targeting the Japanese business community. The idea is to "sell" FICs as a potential investment and tourism destination for the Japanese business community.

For FICs, their interest in the set-up has been confirmed in a number of studies conducted into the viability of the partnership. According to one study, FICs can expect "considerable flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)" as a direct result of the Pacific Islands Centre in Japan.

The centre opened its doors for business on October 1, with the official opening two weeks later by the chairman of the South Pacific Forum and president of the Republic of Marshall Islands Amata Kabua.

Secretary-general Jeremia Tabai and senior officials from both sides also attended the ceremony held on the ground floor of the Akasaka Twin Tower complex – the premises of the centre.

Funding for the centre was provided by the Japanese government following a fea-

sibility study which found that there were scopes for and mutual spin-offs from expanding FICs-Japan links. This is especially in the area of trade, investment and tourism. The study has found that "the FICs, while facing a range of constraints in relation to FDI, nonetheless have considerable prospects for expanding FDI inflows".

According to published figures, Japan is the largest Asian investor in FICs, injecting some \$US620 million in 450 investment portfolios in the South Pacific since 1951.

These are mainly wood chips, forestry, fisheries, retail/wholesale, real estate (tourism), service industries, oil and Liquidified Natural Gas (LNG).

It says that because FICs "are well endowed with natural resources" which are in high international demand, there are potentials for expansion in these areas.

The study also said that the Pacific region has "governments which are increasingly focused on improving investment regimes".

"The establishment of permanent representation for the South Pacific region in Japan is the most effective conduit to increase Fiji-Japan trade, investment and tourism linkages which would contribute substantially to private-sector expansion and sustainable economic development in the South Pacific," the study found.

Japan's overseas development assistance or aid to the Pacific Island Countries is huge by anyone's standard.

For instance, in 1992 Japan's ODA to Island member countries of the South Pacific Forum accounted for 22 per cent, or \$US159.55 million, of the total aid flow to the region. That year, the region received \$US838.7 million in total overseas aid. Much of this was at bilateral level with the multilateral component accounting for \$US116.2 million. Based

on these figures, Japan now ranks second after Australia on the donor table of the FICs.

Prospects for increased trade with Japan are high. For instance, already the two-way trade between the FICs and Japan is valued at \$US1.4 billion.

At present Japan is the largest market for Island exports, accounting for 30 per cent of total FIC exports. FICs export more than 400 products, but the study found that taking the FICs as a group, "there are a further 320 products which have the potential to be developed as export industries – an average of 27 products per FIC."

The study found that "considerable potential exists for the further development of natural resources for export – integrated with sustainable development principles".

At the same time, it said that there are considerable opportunities to improve trade performance – "the challenge is to ensure opportunities are identified and exploited in a truly competitive fashion".

Trade between Japan and FICs is dominated almost entirely by commodities such as wood, sugar, non-ferrous ores, oil, fish, vegetables and coconut products.

"Considerable potential exists for processing and value adding in which Japan could play a major role, particularly through joint ventures."

In tourism, the findings were the same. Average annual tourism growth rate is projected around 5.7 per cent with over one million arrivals in the region by 2000. It says that Japan is among the new tourism market that is already making substantial contribution "but real potential is considerable and still to be exploited".

The study has concluded that "prospects for continued growth of tourist arrival from Europe and Japan in the medium term are excellent". ■

The great Australian barrier ... of racism



The usual political wisdom would suggest that a politician with just a few months in parliament, no political party to back her up and no possibility of controlling the balance of power would have little influence in the big debates of the nation. If she went on to use her maiden speech to call on the federal government to abolish its policy of multiculturalism, review its immigration policy because she feared Australia was "in danger of being swamped by Asians", reduce payments to Aborigines because they are not the most disadvantaged group in Australia and "cease all foreign aid immediately", it would be tempting to dismiss her as something of a loon.

But Pauline Hanson, a feisty fish and chip shop owner from the city of Ipswich, west of Brisbane, is a force to be reckoned with. She has given the racist undercurrent in Australia a strong and uncompromising voice and added a dangerous element to the immigration debate at a time when Australia's immigration programme has been revealed as having a catastrophic lack of public confidence. In the month after Hanson's speech, Prime Minister John Howard, whose ruling Liberal Party expelled Hanson just before the last election for her attacks on welfare payments to Aborigines, was notable for his failure to openly reject her views despite mounting pressure to do so. Howard argued that he was not going to define his views and values by reference to the speeches of others, claiming that to do so would be "devaluing the office of prime minister".

He rightly supported Hanson's right to express her view but showed no leadership on the race issue. Two weeks into the debate he used a speech to the Queensland Liberal Party to trumpet what he regards as the lifting of an atmosphere of "political correctness" imposed by the former Keating government.

"One of the great changes that has come over Australia in the last six months," Howard told the Liberals in Brisbane, "is that people do feel able to speak out a little more freely and more openly about what they feel. In a sense, the pall of censorship on certain issues has been lifted."

Polls in early October showed Hanson had become a rallying point for those with racist views. Liberal backbenchers were warning of a growing backlash against their constituents of Asian descent and complained that some had been spat on in the street and had their houses attacked. Opposition leader Kim Beazley called on Howard to "exercise leadership on this issue and state clearly and unequivocally that ... (Hanson's) views on racial issues are hurtful to a great many Australians".

Only then did Howard respond. "I will always denounce racial intolerance. I will always defend the non-discriminatory character of Australia's immigration policy," he said, but again

failed to specifically reject Hanson's views. Historian Henry Reynolds believes Howard's delay in stating his views on race and immigration issues has brought the race into play as a political issue for the first time in decades. In doing so, he has opened a Pandora's box which Australians will have to live with for many years to come. In a piece in *The Australian*, Reynolds illuminated some of the background to Howard's stand. He pointed out that polling in the leadup to the last election had made Liberal leaders aware of widespread dissatisfaction with the Keating government on issues such as immigration, indigenous rights and engagement with Asia, all of which Labor had championed, and that they had been spectacularly successful in coming up with a message which appealed to this dissatisfaction. Now in government, it is still unclear how far the Liberals will be prepared to go to maintain the support of those voters, especially when it appears they may be a majority in many marginal seats.

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PACIFIC ISLANDS MONTHLY – NOVEMBER 1996 7

OPINION

In her speech to parliament, Hanson ranged over wide areas of policy. Of Asians she said, "They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate." On Aborigines: "Along with millions of Australians, I am fed up to the back teeth with the inequalities that are being promoted by the government and paid for by the taxpayer under the assumption that Aborigines are the most disadvantaged people in Australia. I am fed up with being told 'this is our land'. Well where the hell do I go? I was born here and so were my parents and children. I draw the line when I am told I must pay and continue paying for something that happened 200 years ago."

Hanson also called for a year's compulsory national service for men and women when they turn 18, for a review of Australia's membership of the United Nations and demanded an end to foreign aid so the money saved could be spent at home on job creation.

While Hanson is stirring the political cauldron, Howard's weaknesses are being revealed. One of those appears to be the fact that he seems not yet to have defined for himself the exact nature of modern Australian society or the manner in which we should be presenting ourselves in the wider Asian region. In speeches in Jakarta in September, he surprised his audiences with a rather defensive sentiment (stressing that Australia does not "claim to be Asian" and that it would "yield to nobody" in asserting the strength of its distinctive history, culture and political traditions) while at the same time failing to go on and articulate a vision for Australia's crucial bilateral alliance with its northern neighbour. Despite the enormous economic and cultural benefits from Australia's immigration programme, a recent research suggests public support is almost non-existent. A *Newspoll* showed 71 per cent believed the current intake – a comparatively small 74,000 – is too high and another survey by Monash University suggested nearly 90 per cent oppose further Asian immigration. Another *Herald AGB McNair Poll* at the beginning of last month found 48 per cent of its just over 2000 respondents supported Hanson's views. ■



Economic reforms finally a reality

With severe financial crises in the Cook Islands, Nauru and Chuk in the Federated States of Micronesia, and letters of credit scams in the Cooks, Vanuatu and the Marshall Islands, 1996 has not been a good year for Pacific Island Countries. But the news was not all bad on the financial and economic front.

There were, in fact, some encouraging signs that global winds of change are being felt in the Islands and that real, if tentative, moves towards long overdue economic reforms are at last under way.

This year's South Pacific Forum meeting in Majuro indicated a greater awareness of the part of all Pacific Island leaders that they have to bite the reform bullet sooner rather than later if their nations are to survive in the increasingly competitive global economy.

They may be understandably reluctant because there are some very tough and painful decisions to be made but, simply put, they have no alternative. There is less international aid money around and the strings attached to it in the shape of "help for those who help themselves" are getting tighter. International organisations such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and International Monetary Fund are increasingly demanding that the price of continued aid is willingness to shoulder the burden of reform and move backward economies in the direction of the 21st Century. The European Union, which gives the Pacific more aid on a per capita basis than Africa and the Caribbean Island states, is taking a long hard look at the Lome Convention, whose current programmes expire in the Year 2000.

And trade margins of preference like those offered by the SPARTECA agreement, which once offered a comfort zone, are dwindling as New Zealand and

Australia move in the global free trade direction.

High tariffs, import protection, bloated public services and the like all belong to a bygone age. The world has moved on and the Pacific can no longer remain immune from the trends of reform, as painful as they may be. New Zealand is well aware of the pain ahead for the tiny Island states, having endured a decade of reform itself after recognising that it could not go on living beyond its means in the illusion of a South Pacific paradise untouched by global economic progress.

For much of that decade the Island states ignored what was happening on their doorstep, despite the very clear writing on the wall. Even at last year's Forum in Madang, their leaders spent only about 10 minutes discussing economic reform.

It was a different story this year at Majuro, with an extended debate on the issues and clear recognition of the need for tariff reform, investment transparency and the development of a vibrant private sector. The latter will inevitably require privatisation of state assets and reducing the size and cost of the public service (often the only large employer), a bullet only tiny Niue, Western Samoa and now the Cook Islands have really bitten on so far. The Forum leaders acknowledged the need to "respond to global economic changes (for example WTO and APEC developments) and in particular increasing trade liberalisation, which will progressively make preferential trading arrangements (including SPARTECA) and the Lome Convention) less relevant".

Acknowledging that economic reform and development are "so important for the future benefit of their peoples", Forum leaders agreed their economic and finance ministers should meet annually from the next year "to cover the breadth of economic issues".

They will report to the Forum, ensuring that economic trends remain high on the leaders' future agendas – as they must if the momentum to reform is to be maintained. One of the most encouraging signs is the readiness of some Island countries, including Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, to follow Fiji in joining the World Trade Organisation.

There will be huge compliance costs – PICs cannot join the WTO while maintaining their existing high tariff structure, which is well out of kilter with the global trend towards lower import duties. This won't be easy, for government revenue in most Island states depends on import taxes. But the New Zealand experience has shown that, to lift international competitiveness and encourage exports, it is necessary to reduce import protection. There is no alternative. The fact is protected industries are not competitive and high tariffs are a disincentive to foreign investors.

PNG showed the way – and the size of the task – this year, cutting import duties on products like canned mackerel from 100 per cent to 55 per cent and pork and barracuda from 75 per cent to 40 per cent. It has agreed on a five-year time frame to cut 40 per cent protective duties on cement, beef and lamb as part of its WTO membership deal. Economic reform does not begin and end with cutting tariffs, of course. Even harder decisions lie ahead – like taxation. The PIC governments will, at some time in the future, have to look at increasing their revenue from sources other than import duties. This will inevitably involve more consideration of controversial consumption taxes.

There are no illusions in Wellington of the scope of the problem. With the exception of Papua New Guinea and Fiji, if managed really well, there are probably no PICs that could be self-sustaining without foreign aid and overseas remittances. But there is much they can do to improve their economies, given the political will and the ability to explain the need for change to their peoples.

Hopefully, 1996 will go down as an historic turning point in the tortuous path towards economic reform throughout the Pacific.



Stirring up the band

September 1996 was an important month in the calendar of women from the Pacific's French territories. It was a time of awareness-raising and integration as they met for the first time with their Melanesian counterparts in New Caledonia's Northern Province of Pouembout to discuss strategies to ensure their inclusion in the development planning processes of their countries and territories.

Strongly emerging from discussions was the lack of female participation in national politics and in private and customary life' including the way women's status is determined by their reproductive roles and the oppressive nature of customs and traditions.

Culture, custom and tradition have long been used as excuses for female oppression. However, it is now becoming increasingly evident that accepted aspects of today's culture were not necessarily accepted in the days of the Pacific's foremothers and forefathers.

The changing roles of Pacific men and women was also an issue of debate at the meeting, particularly in light of women's increasing visibility in the paid workforce and the need to share child-rearing and household chores.

Clearly evident was the desire to see a change in the perceptions of traditional male/female roles established centuries ago, as was the need for Pacific people to adopt aspects of culture and tradition which allow for progression and not oppression.

Another prominent feature of the week's programme was the need for efficient follow-up action at local and national levels of the recommendations of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China, in September 1995.

And one year after the pomp, pageantry and colour that was Beijing, Pacific women, through the Pacific Women's Resource Bureau (PWRB), also assessed the results of Beijing and action plans at local levels.

For many activists in the global women's movement, Beijing has become the metaphor for transformation. And while not totally perfect, the Global Platform for Action (GPA) adopted by 189 UN member states is the strongest holistic statement on equality, development and peace to emerge from any gathering of the world's nations.

It is this road map that both international and regional governments and non government organisations are looking forward as a guide for addressing the concerns of women, men and children at local levels.

As Belkla Abzug, president of the Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO), told the international press after governments had figuratively signed on the dotted line in Beijing: "This (the GPA) is a contract with the world's women; it may not be legally binding – but it is politically binding."

In the latest update on international action following Beijing, a publication produced by WEDO entitled *Beyond Promises: Governments in Motion One Year After The Beijing Women's Conference* states: "All too often we assess actions that appear to be one step forward, two back, given the economic climate of the day. In better cases, we can point to two steps forward, one back. But this is the rhythm of dancing and why governments in motion are better bets than those which are not."

It says whether one seeks a steady drumbeat, a hot samba, steamy salsa or formal minuet, governments must not

OPINION

waltz around the toughest provisions in the platform.

And it leaves it up to individuals to decide whether governments are merely going through the motions or doing a serious tango.

At the Pouembout workshop Melanesian delegates reported widespread information dissemination on the results of the Beijing conference through public forums, workshops, newsletters and attempts to mainstream women and gender concerns. Delegates agreed the onus was now on both Pacific Island governments and non-government organisations to ensure that the concerns of Beijing were implemented locally.

Pacific Island governments have in the main declared Beijing as the event which set the basis for the development of women, men and families towards the Year 2000.

Many Pacific Island Countries have put into place processes for developing a national policy on women symbolising a milestone commitment by governments as none of them had a specific national policy on women prior to Beijing.

Francophone delegates expressed some disappointment at their lack of participation at Beijing but appreciated the opportunity to hear post-Beijing progress reports from their Melanesian counterparts. Land ownership and legal literacy were other issues of concern and calls were made for better protection of women under common law.

Vanuatu poet and activist Grace Molisa said: "Women make decisions on behalf of their families everyday but are seldom found in political or public life. Women must begin to take a stand using the knowledge and power with which they were born. Power is not something women should wait for – they must utilise existing structures to gain recognition."

The prevalence and increasing incidence of domestic violence in the Islands was another issue discussed at length, particularly in light of New Caledonia's recognition of both the common and customary law systems of such conflict resolution. Again, the myths surrounding acts of violence and its excuses remained the same but the discussion allowed the women to take stock of their national situations and appreciate their commonalities

despite differing legal systems and their matriarchal and patriarchal societies.

The issue of inconsistent sentencing of rape and violence offenders in Melanesian countries was raised as was the problem in Wallis and Futuna of a family's honour being paramount over a sexually abused child's trauma.

New Caledonia reported that women in a tribal situation do not immediately report an act of violence to police and first seek a solution through customary means. Clan elders are invited to hear and attempt to solve the problem. Women usually approach the police as a last resort or if there is dissatisfaction with the way the matter has been handled by customary law.

Kanak women agreed it was necessary to reconcile both their customary and modern roles and stated women's seeking of common law to resolve a domestic dispute was not an indication of the failure of customary structures but illustrated the need for them to become better adapted to a changing society.

In addition, calls were made for the establishment of effective structures to deal with the issue of gender violence in the Pacific and the need to consider violence as a development and human rights concern was strongly stressed. Among recommendations to deal with gender violence were the challenging of cultural and religious values justifying the act; the need for customary leaders to become more involved in solving acts of violence programmes dealing with violence against women; that gender training be conducted for public officers such as the judiciary, police, medical staff and other decision-makers; that research and data be compiled to document the extent of violence against women in the community to assist lobbying for law reforms; and that a regional mechanism be established to monitor the status of Pacific women. But what needs to be borne in mind is that the large and interlinked world of so-called "women's issues" makes it difficult to discern where to focus and what to exclude. The global and local women's movement has reached unprecedented levels of activism, strength and influence. Beijing gave the world the words – now it is time for the world to stir up the band and get serious about its tango. ■

France ratifies protocols to SPNFZ Treaty

By Bernadette Hussein

France has finally ratified the Protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. It had signed the protocols in Fiji six months ago but did not ratify it until September 20.

Many feel that France's readmission as a post-Forum dialogue partner may have been one of the reasons why the protocols were ratified just a week after the South Pacific Forum meeting in Majuro in early September.

France's new ambassador to Fiji, Michel Jolivet, handed the instrument of ratification signed by President Jacques Chirac to the treaty's depository, Secretary-General of the South Pacific Forum Ieremia Tabai. Both Tabai and Jolivet expressed the hope that this demonstration by France of its commitment to end testing would be an encouragement to all nations to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as soon as possible and finally bring the nuclear testing era to an end. France had signed the protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Raratonga, on March 25 this year, along with the United Kingdom and the United States. The treaty renounces nuclear explosive devices, prevents their stationing within the SPNFZ and guards against testing and the dumping of nuclear waste in the region. Under Article Three (a) of the treaty, each party agreed not to manufacture or acquire, possess or have control over any nuclear explosive device by any means anywhere inside or outside the SPNFZ. The treaty's three protocols state that: France, the UK and US undertake to apply the basic provisions of the treaty to their territories in the zone; nuclear explosive devices not be used against any party to the treaty; and there be no nuclear testing in the zone. The other two nuclear powers, China and Russia, have also signed and ratified the protocols toward a nuclear-free South Pacific. ■

The end of the nuclear age?



Michel Jolivet (left) and Ieremia Tabai with the protocols to the SPNFZ Treaty in Suva, Fiji, on September 20
Picture: Bernadette Hussain

By Ian Williams

On September 10 the United Nations General Assembly marked the end of an era in human history that future generations will find difficult to understand. Its adoption of the nuclear Test Ban Treaty put a final seal on the 2000-plus nuclear explosions that had taken place since 1945. As Australia's UN ambassador, Richard Butler, put it, the resolution adopting the Test Ban Treaty meant the "international community established the international norm that there would be no nuclear explosions".

Some Pacific nations thought that Canberra's response to last year's resumption of French nuclear testing in the region had been muted for reasons of Australia's diplomatic and economic self-interest. But no one can fault Australia's successful initiative in rescuing the Test Ban Treaty from diplomatic deadlock in Geneva, where the years-long test ban treaty negotiations had failed to obtain the consensus it needed under the rules. India had refused to go along with the final text.

In response to India's opposition, Canberra assembled 126 co-sponsors to bring the issue back to the UN. In addition to the work of Butler, Canberra's envoys across the globe canvassed the capitals to get sponsorship. It does not demean their effort to mention that the all-out diplomatic push did no harm to the country's

bid for one of the two Security Council seats where it is in competition with Portugal and Sweden.

The draft treaty provided that to come into effect, it should be ratified by the 44 states, including India, which the International Atomic Energy Authority identified as states with a potential nuclear capability. India objected on the grounds that it was discriminatory to be singled out in this way and because there was no significant progress towards disarmament by the nuclear states.

"If you want security, if you want peace, the only way to do it is the security that all of us will get through the elimination of nuclear weapons. And we do not believe that by measures that actually take the focus away from the elimination of nuclear weapons we are doing any service to humanity as such," declared India's representative, Prakash Shah.

While many people sympathised with India's position in general terms, very few thought that their objections were worth sacrificing the chance of a test ban. Many also suspected that behind India's lofty principles were domestic realities – a shaky coalition government in New Delhi that could be outflanked on nationalist grounds by the opposition. In the end, India could only get tiny Bhutan and Libya to back its stand when, on September 10, at a historical reconvened UNGA meeting, the nations of the world

voted overwhelmingly to stop nuclear tests of all kinds. While there was argument about the precise legal effect, Butler referred to the first articles of the treaty: "It's not quite tablets of stone, but it's as near as it gets in international law." And although not a perfect solution since, for the time being, the mechanisms for monitoring the test ban cannot come into effect, it represents a major breakthrough for the region. As Ambassador Neroni Slade of Samoa put it: "For half a century there have been far too many nuclear test explosions in the Pacific. There won't be anymore." For once the ritual of signing the treaty gave it added significance. On the first day the treaty was open for signature, September 23, all five nuclear states signed, including President Bill Clinton for the US. As we were going to Press, Samoa was the 110th or so state whose prime minister or foreign minister affixed his signature, making it an unprecedentedly popular piece of political theatre. Many of the states declared that they considered their signature legally binding, regardless of whether India ratifies as required in the treaty, so the effect for the Pacific is clear – no country that is able to test nuclear explosions in the Pacific is going to.

The treaty outlines elaborate regimes of monitoring, including a worldwide network of seismic, radiation and acoustic monitoring stations, to ensure compliance. However, this cannot be set up until the treaty is ratified by all 44 potential nuclear states, including India.

New Zealander Professor Roger Clark, who was on Samoa's legal team at the World Court, points out that apart from the tremendous moral pressure on signatories and non-signatories alike, there is provision in the draft treaty for it to be adapted after three years, so even if India still holds out, the signatories can implement its provisions regardless. He points out there will be pressure during the rest of this session of the UNGA to ensure the World Court decision on the illegality of nuclear weapons is taken into account, which may bring India on board.

"The challenge now is the disarmament negotiations," he concludes, which can only be helped by the test ban. ■

HEALTH

Case Study I

She was 19, he was 25. They were both from staunch religious families. She was two months pregnant and was so scared she couldn't eat or sleep for days before making up her mind. She would see a woman in the village known for making up the *vairakau* Maori medicine for pregnancies and end her misery. The woman gave her the ingredients: a thick, pastey solution which she had to drink three times a day. After the first day her guilt was so strong she changed her mind and threw the rest of the drink away. She gave birth to a healthy boy and says when he is older she will tell him - if only to help her ease the guilt she still carries with her for almost going through with the abortion.

Case Study II

She was 25, married with two daughters and a son given up as a feeding child to her family back in Rarotonga. Both she and her partner were between jobs and struggling to pay rent when she found out she was a few months pregnant. She had heard of other girls 'in trouble' getting free advice and abortions from a clinic in Epsom and asked a cousin to go with her. Her husband was strongly against the idea, swearing he would kick her out of the house if she went through with it. After counselling sessions she decided to have the abortion and asked her cousin to drop her off and pick her up after a morning stay at the centre. Protesters outside gave her 'right to life' pamphlets and showed her horrible photos of aborted fetuses as she entered the clinic. A month later she found out her husband was having an affair with another woman who was heavily pregnant. She kicked him out of the house. Today she says she made the right choice.

ABORTION

*Bottling up the issue ...
Lisa Williams reports on
attitudes to sex education
and the resulting problems
in the Cook Islands*

Picture: Asaeli Lave

It's a three-syllable word unspoken in polite conversation, and ignored in the Cook Islands medical jargon. In the Cook Islands, abortions are illegal – but not unheard of.

At a national conference on the status and rights of Cook Islands women in October and at another on reproductive health and the family the month before, abortion remained on the list of unspeakable topics, still belonging to the realm of secrets Cook Islands women will never share with their mothers.

Local doctors won't go near the topic, unless it's off the record and there's no-one around.

Yet they admit it is happening.

Cook Islands women – most of them young, still in school and with next to no knowledge of birth control – are begging them for abortions.

Their tears and woeful faces don't cut them much slack – the doctors are too busy reminding them it's a crime against the state to perform the procedure.

You can count the number performed in the national hospital based in Rarotonga in any given year on either hand. The "terminating of pregnancy", or TOP, procedure is done only when pregnancy is the result of incest or rape.

But doctors – and the wider community – in a country that is so small the coconut wireless is a fierce supplier of stories to the local media, have heard whispers of TOPs being done as D and C's, the dilate and curettage procedure which doesn't need the approval of a medical panel, yet can essentially be a TOP if the pregnancy is in the early stages.

But they also deny anything to do with that practice.

"Is it happening here?" is the response from the acting head for health about the policy on abortion in the Cook Islands.

With Health Minister Dr Joe Williams and his secretary, Dr Roro Daniel, overseas, it lies with Sister Ngapoko Short to repeat the official line that TOPs are illegal.

It is safer for all to discuss why there are so many teenage pregnancies or multiple boom-boom-boom pregnancies. In a country where birth control is free, no one seems to be getting the message out on planning families.

Down at Avarua town's major pharmacy, one of two in the Cooks, staff sell pregnancy kits in three varieties – and turn away the frequent requests for 'abortion drugs' from teenagers freaking out over being pregnant.

"They come in here crying and stressed out," says one employee. "I have to feel sorry for them because they are so misinformed and scared."

Most of the teenagers don't seem to believe that the morning-after pill, which has to be taken within 72 hours of intercourse, is not an abortion pill. Most of them are finding out too late about birth control – and as a result experts on family planning can see the Cooks problem lies in an education, health and social system that is still playing catchup with children having children.

Overseas, while both sides of the abortion argument take up their stance with a passion, the battle for doctors and the health system on the home front is trying to make "the Christian nation" understand it's OK to talk to your kids about The Pill ... or The Condom.

"I find it so hard to believe that our culture comes up with a relaxed attitude to songs about sex, or finds it funny to sing these songs," says one young woman, "but we can't use the words to get the message across; everyone is just so shy when it comes to the topic."

Many parents – and teachers – oppose the teaching of sex education in Cook Islands schools. Talks from public health nurses about contraception and what happens when boy (biblically) knows girl are few and far between.

When it comes to abortion, it's considered widely that there is no argument over what to do when life begins, planned or not.

"You have the baby," says one young mother. "You have it, give it away to someone else, or decide to keep it and struggle on anyway. Because you have to."

But also an issue is that in the Cooks' tiny, 20,000 and dropping population, abortion is not as unheard of as its decision makers might like to pretend.

So long as the topic is kept out of polite conversation and medical professionals aren't involved, women – and children who want to end their pregnan-

Case Study III

She was 16 and in her School Certificate year. He was a couple of years older and working. She refused to believe she was pregnant, even when she bought the test kit and it showed blue. Her parents would kill her. She cried for days, half from fear, half from regret, at not using the birth control pills her older cousin had tried to force on her.

She asked around, bought a 40-ounce bottle of rum and drank it straight, gulping glass after glass with aspirins ... one-two-three, until she finished a whole pack. She squeezed lemon juice down her throat until it felt raw.

Nothing happened.

She asked around again and received a packet of some brown powder which she had to mix into a drink and finish.

Nothing happened.

She dropped out of school without completing School Cert and had the baby.

Case Study IV

She was 20 and already had two children. Her first child was born four months after she completed School Certificate. The second was explained to her as a "gift from god" when she got pregnant on M/D contraceptive (the loop) and was refused an abortion. She eventually moved to Auckland where she found out she was three months pregnant again and her partner wasn't interested in supporting another child.

She went to the abortion clinic in Epsom and agreed to counselling. The following day she was admitted and met another Cook Islander coming out of the theatre as she was going in.

They pretended not to know each other.

HEALTH

Case Study V

She was 26. Her partner was 18. She didn't tell him because she thought he wouldn't want to know she was two months pregnant and she knew they were about to finish anyway.

She asked friends about how to "get rid of it" but the advice was mixed. In the end she took the advice of one who told her to go the Auckland clinic and "do it safely - and quietly".

She borrowed the money for her airfare. A year later, she's still paying it back and is no longer with her partner.

cies - are gulping down all manner of hideous potions and poison alcohol to do the deed. If the tough massaging of the lower stomach doesn't work, they swallow a range of concoctions in the hope of purging their wombs.

Some opt to pay out thousands of dollars for the return airfare to New Zealand. They fly out for a week or two, heading for the hygiene and certainty of a clinical termination of pregnancy costing around \$US544, with counselling before and after the operation. If it looks like only those who can afford can get - that's because it is that way. But why doesn't the health service provide a service that Cook Islands women are doing for themselves bush-doctor style, or seeking overseas if they have the cash?

The abortion issue in the Cooks, as it must be across the rest of the Pacific, is a political football. Voters who go to church and see God's hand in everything do not take kindly to a state-condoned pregnancy termination service. And in the Cook Islands, like other 'traditional' Pacific Islands governments, there is no hard line differentiating church and state.

Whether Cook Islands women should have access at all to the termination procedure is a tough question for a country dogged by financial problems so big it pushes any other issue into trivia-land.

Until the answer comes, the Cook Island women who tell their stories here will continue to share one thing in common:

They will never tell their mothers. ■

Laughter ... the best medicine



A clown with a Down Syndrome child Pictures courtesy of the Humour Foundation

By Liz Thompson

At the Royal Hobart Hospital someone who looks like a doctor but has curly green hair and a bowler hat on his head is pulling an orange plastic chicken from one of the 15 pockets in his white pharmacist's coat. The man is Jean Paul Bell, a mime artist of 25 years standing, and today he is a clown working to bring a smile to the faces of hospitalised children.

Jean Paul Bell is part of the Humour Foundation Hospitals Programme, recently established in Australia by a team of three - Peter Barker, the general manager, Dr Peter Spitzer (MBBS) the medical director, and Bell, the programme director. When setting up, the Humour Foundation invited Andre Pule, head of the Theodora Foundation, a similar project in Switzerland, to conduct a pilot programme at a few Sydney hospitals.

How SPD can help you ride the surf, taste a Salty Dog and share a Black Russian. It's no Bullshot!



— SCOTCH BREEZE —

1 shot (20 ml) of Czarina Imperial Vodka, 1 shot (20 ml) of Scotch Whisky, 1 shot (20 ml) of Cranberry Juice, 1 shot (20 ml) of Lemon Juice, 1 shot (20 ml) of Simple Syrup.
Pour Czarina Vodka, whisky, fruit juices and Cinnamon over ice in shaker. Shake until frosty. Strain into glass. Garnish with cherries. Serve with straws.



— RUMBOY —

1 shot (20 ml) of Czarina Imperial Vodka, 1 shot (20 ml) of Rum, 1 shot (20 ml) of Cranberry Juice, 1 shot (20 ml) of Lemon Juice, 1 shot (20 ml) of Simple Syrup.
Dissolve bouillon cube in hot water. Add a squeeze of lemon and the Czarina Vodka and stir briskly. Pour over ice in tumbler, frosted with salt and lemon. Add a knot of lemon peel. (Gouty White Rum may be substituted for Czarina Vodka and cranberry juice for rum to frost glass.)



— BLACK RUSSIAN —

1 shot (20 ml) Czarina Vodka, 1 shot (20 ml) Kahlula, 1 shot (20 ml) Pineapple Juice, 1 shot (20 ml) Simple Syrup over ice-filled glass.



— SPICY SODA —

1 shot (20 ml) Czarina Imperial Vodka, 1 shot (20 ml) Spicy Soda, 1 shot (20 ml) Cranberry Juice, 1 shot (20 ml) Lemon Juice, 1 shot (20 ml) Simple Syrup.
Pour Czarina Vodka over ice cubes, cranberry juice, salt and lemon juice to frost glass. Wedge of lemon.
Pour Czarina Vodka over ice cubes, cranberry juice, salt and lemon juice to frost glass. Wedge of lemon.

Four great cocktails
with SPD's Czarina Vodka



South Pacific
Distilleries Limited



HEALTH

Language was a bit of a problem but Bell teamed up with him for what was a very successful day. It was this which confirmed the team's feeling that it would be beneficial to establish a formal programme.

Humour therapy in hospitals is already an international success. The Theodora Foundation runs clown doctor programmes in Europe, Brazil, South Africa and Russia. Clini Clowns work in Austrian hospitals. The Humour Project and The Clown Care Unit of The Big Apple Circus are just two of the long-running programmes in the United States. Despite overseas acknowledgment of the importance of humour in hospitals, the Humour Foundation's Hospital Programme is the first of its kind in Australia.

Inspirational and incredibly sensible in its philosophical approach, the foundation advocates humour, not only as a way of making hospital patients more relaxed and comfortable but also as making contribution to the actual healing process. "International research," says Barker, "has shown that laughter has physiological and psychological benefits, it has a positive effect on the heart rate and blood pressure, it reduces pain and relaxes the muscles. Laughter reduces stress and helps maintain a positive outlook."

Jack Thompson, one of the foundation's patrons, adds, "The specially trained performers of the foundation will bring to Australian hospitals the simple truth that the ability to embrace life, love, laughter is synonymous with healing."

Watching the clowns at work amongst the staff and patients at The Royal Hobart Hospital in Tasmania, recently traumatised by the terrible Port Arthur massacre, there can be little doubt that laughter is certainly a potent medicine. The clowns move amongst the young children's beds conducting a humour diagnosis. They check people's funny bones. Humour breath is tested with a magic wand that collapses and resurrects itself at the end of the diagnosis. They give massages, blow bubbles, make magic, tell stories. Of course, tact is required and there are times it is not appropriate to perform. The Americans refer to it as AT&T (Appropriate Tact and Timing) and the Humour Foundation employs this as a



There's no fun in medicine but there's a lot of medicine in fun

major consideration. The clowns are not street performers, says Barker. "They are professional performers who have received training in psychology and medical practices, their training is very rigorous. For this reason, the programme development takes a lot of time and is quite an expensive proposition." The foundation is a non-profit organisation dependent on donations. "At this stage," says Barker, "we get paid for our work in smiles." The pilot project in Tasmania was extremely successful and the foundation is hoping to establish a programme in Sydney. "There is much hope for this exciting new approach to the psychiatry area," says Barker. "Some psychiatrists would like to see the clown programmes used as a delivery medium for psychological feel-good phrases, uplifting expressions to make people feel good about their situation or render an upside to their confinement." In the longer term there is hope that the notion of bringing laughter to the bedside will be capitalised upon by actual practitioners themselves. "In the US," Barker points out, "it's not common for a practitioner in the children's wards to put

a rubber nose on his face for the day." This, he suggests, is particularly exciting even though clowns parody the medical delivery in the hope of making patients feel easier and more comfortable with it. One of the ideal culminations of the work of such organisations would be the skilled use of humour in the hands of doctors.

As well as bringing laughter to patients through direct contact, the foundation hopes to help hospitals establish 'humour rooms' in which resources such as books, props, audio tapes and videotapes are available to maintain doses of laughter. The foundation also offers seminars to healthcare professionals in using humour in patient care and for self care to help deal with working in stressful environments. The long-term hope of the foundation is a national programme working in partnership with doctors and nurses and therapists towards patient recovery or palliative care.

The content will be distinctly Australian, homegrown, drawing on, what Barker considers, "Australians' intrinsic ability to laugh at themselves". Quoting Jack Thompson, he adds, "As Australians, we quite often refer to our unique heritage in terms of our sense of humour. We value the ability to laugh together in the face of misfortune, to see the funny side of our lives and the liberating irreverence when we can see the light of ourselves."

It's quite possible, adds Lise Barker, Peter's partner and designer of many of the clowns' wonderful costumes, that this idea could be adopted in other Pacific countries. "Perhaps these nations could incorporate their own culturally appropriate ideas into the therapy concept. They might adapt a programme ... having storytellers participate, recounting myths, legends and contemporary tales, or drawing on elements of traditional performance."

Unfortunately, humour is often not taken seriously enough. In the medical world it remains difficult to secure financial support and the Humour Foundation's Hospital Programme remains dependent on the support of corporations and individuals in Australia. "Which is," says Bell "to develop a rapport with patients, families and staff to become partners in healing. If humour is the best medicine, we need to start administering doses in hospital now."

PNG's guns-for-drugs trade gains momentum

Reports by Sam Vulum

More marijuana producers are opting to accept guns in exchange for drugs than money in what is reported to be an increasing trend in the illegal drug trade between Papua New Guinea and Australia in recent months.

Although there is no statistics available to prove what is now referred to as the "drugs-for-guns trade", government authorities, especially in PNG, have strongly indicated that this appears to be the situation following changes to gun rules in Australia and PNG's June imposition of the ban on the sale and issue of new firearms licences.

In an interview with ABC's PNG correspondent, Sean Dorney, in Port Moresby Police Commissioner Bob Nenta indicated that this was a "big worry".

"Although we've not made any big breakthrough in guns coming into this country, the feeling has always been there



Crushed marijuana is found packed in a bag
Pictures: Sam Vulum

... We know for a fact that drugs have gone across the other side. We've had guns coming into the country.

"In fact, on the border, in the Western

Province, we've had some successful arrests of people coming in with guns but not on a very large scale, mainly perhaps because of the big coastline. We have no ways of keeping constant surveillance," Nenta told the ABC.

The National Narcotics Bureau also cited the increasing trend in marijuana trade in the Western Province and the Sanduan Province.

A senior bureau officer said earlier this year that they had established PNG as a transit point for drugs and weapons, especially with the guns-for-drugs trade.

He said because of inadequate information, law enforcement agencies could only make an "educated guess" on the extent of the problem.

"But we know for a fact that drugs and weapons have been getting through. We can also say that PNG is a transit point but we have yet to substantiate this information," he said.

The problem is further highlighted in excerpts of a report by the National

Former drug supplier goes public with past

Perhaps his activities and reputation were not significant enough to match those of the Cali cocaine cartel kingpin of Columbia or the opium warlord of Burma but, in his own small way, he was a key player in one of the many marijuana-smuggling operations between Papua New Guinea and Australia reported in recent years.

From Heganofi in the Eastern Highlands – a province reputed to be a leading supplier of marijuana – the man, who preferred not to use his name for security reasons, has now given up his past life after being imprisoned twice for his activities.

Police busted the operation in 1992 and arrested the supplier and two expatriate acquaintances. One of the expatriates is still serving time in a PNG prison while the other has been placed on good behaviour bond and has returned to Australia.

The supplier has found employment and has been living a quiet life since his release from prison in 1993. However, disturbed by the increasing marijuana problems, he decided to go public.

Youths take marijuana to give them courage and confidence to carry out illegal acts such as robberies and other criminal activities, he said, expressing concern at the new trend in the

marijuana business. Marijuana is no longer sold for mere cash but also for guns which are used in tribal fighting in the highlands.

The supplier began his activities in Heganofi in 1989 after learning of the huge sums of money other villagers were making by selling marijuana.

He planted his first batch of marijuana between vegetables, harvesting them after three weeks.

He dried the leaves and prepared them for sale. Through friends, he was able to establish contact with the two expatriate buyers in Port Moresby.

The man packed the dried marijuana in one-kilogram shopping bags and made his way to Port Moresby for his first sale. He sold the bags for K250 (\$US175). This began what was to become regular trips to the capital for the next three years.

He estimates that he made more than K1 million (\$US712,000) before he was caught.

Before travelling to Port Moresby, he would ensure someone was at the airport to pick him up, after which he would try and head straight for the buyers, dropping off the drugs and collecting the money.

DRUGS



Cultivating marijuana plants

Intelligence Organisation (NIO) published on the front page of the *Post Courier* in August.

The report said that more firearms, especially shotguns, are getting into PNG through the guns-for-drugs trade.

Many are falling into the hands of criminals and adding to the law and order problem in the country.

The report said that both PNG and Australia are affected and Australia is concerned over the influx of PNG drugs.

There has been a marked increase in the trade in recent years involving big-time criminals from Australia, especially along the Torres Strait/Western Province border. The brief says that in June 1994, drugs valued at K3 million (\$US2.3 million) were seized and 11 people (10 from Australia and a PNG soldier) were arrested in a joint operation, known as Operation Afghan, which prevent the criminals from importing cannabis into Australia by boat and light aircraft.

According to an Australian Associated Press report in February, three people were convicted for their involvement in the racket.

AAP reported in August that the ringleaders of the failed plan to import \$7

million of cannabis lost their appeals against 10-year jail sentences.

Another incident, not cited in the NIO brief, was reported in 1995. According to newspaper reports, a major police operation in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province, resulted in the arrest of several people. Two public servants were charged for conspiring with another partner who was previously arrested in connection with the export of 200 kilograms of cannabis to Australia.

Several people, including three commercial pilots, were arrested in Adelaide, South Australia, in connection with the conspiracy and one light aircraft was seized in Queensland by the Australian Federal Police.

Recently on September 4, the *Post-Courier* once again reported a former Papua New Guinean politician was charged in a Cairn magistrates court for importing and supplying cannabis.

The former provincial politician from Western Highlands province was charged after a joint Queensland and Federal Police and Australian Customs patrol found 3.5 kilogram from cannabis and a suitcase containing \$US1180 in \$50 notes aboard three boats moored off Tudu Island

— halfway between the tip of Cape York Peninsula and Papua New Guinea on August 29.

Four Papua New Guinea fishermen were charged with being knowingly concerned with the importation of cannabis and an Australian was charged with supplying cannabis.

The NIO brief goes on to say that the trade generally involves shotguns, handguns and .22 rifles although there have been a few instances of military-type weapons.

It says the recent fourth Australia/PNG cross-border conference in Goroka which focused on the arms-and-drugs trade, was told that there was an urgent need for better surveillance.

It was generally agreed that military weapons were not a major part of the trade, but this could change as a result of the new gun laws being imposed throughout Australia.

The NIO brief says problems are encountered in trying to overcome traffic, not the least being the vast area to be covered and the traditional cross border links, now often abused in pursuit of this trade.

A severe lack of customs officials and surveillance equipment further hinders the work of the authorities. The brief says the trade is very lucrative. PNG cannabis fetches huge prices in Australia and illicit weapons are similarly expensive in PNG.

For instance, it says one firearm in PNG can be sold for thousands of kina. In Australia, it can be exchanged for 40kg of cannabis which would have street value of K200,000 (US140,000).

It adds that drug abuse generally is on the increase. Admissions to Port Moresby General Hospital over cannabis misuse have risen from five in 1990 to 27 in 1995. According to police, there were 382 drug related arrests, 339 of them in the NCD in 1995. ■

He would then check in to a hotel, count the cash and book himself on a flight out of Port Moresby the next day. He doesn't know what was usually done with the marijuana afterwards but, on one occasion, he recalls one of the buyers telling him that about 200 bags had been safely stacked away waiting to be transported out of the country. The operation was professionally organised with the supplier having contacts all over the New Guinea mainland. In Port Moresby, he had a good number of followers, who acted as security guards every time he was in town.

The man said that in his heyday, he travelled around with a lot of money. To display his wealth at that time, he folded newspaper pages into bundles and shoved them into his pockets.

However, all that money is now gone.

He is back to where he started from after using the little savings he had. Some of the money he collected, he distributed to other villagers who he had helped to sell marijuana. Some used the money to open up small tradestores, some bought vehicles and some spent it on feasts. ■

Finance ministers wined, dined ... and lectured

By David North

The Islands' finance ministers gathered in Washington with their peers from around the world in September for a menu of:

- a little direct investment;
- some useful technical assistance; and
- several gentle lectures on how to run their countries' finances.

The occasion was the annual meeting of the governors of the World Bank; a round of high policy and splendid parties for the participants, but regarded as a headache by most Washingtonians as the assembled rental limousines from up and down the East Coast clustered for what the *Washington Post* described as the yearly gold-plated traffic jam.

The most useful part of the proceedings was a two-day regional session for the Island members of the World Bank; Fiji, FSM, Kiribati, PNG, the Marshalls, the Solomons, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Western Samoa. (Nauru, Tuvalu and Palau are not members). The World Bank runs a tight, if elegant, ship. The Islands' finance ministers were assembled in a hotel conference room at 9am one Sunday morning for a briefing on financial policy trends around the world, and how not to run one's nation into bankruptcy.

For the most part, things went smoothly, as the beautiful people of the World Bank staff are good at what they do; they are bright, hard-working, cosmopolitan, polylingual, gracious, slim and well dressed.

But the advice on expenditure reductions, from one staffer with a British accent, must have grated the ears of the Kiribati delegation as she, twice, referred to the nation as "Kir-i-ba-tee".

The messages on how-to-run-your-governments' finances were gentle, well documented, illustrated with slides ... and numerous. The basic advice: hold down expenditures, do not raise taxes, spend more on health and education than on subsidising state-run enterprises (like those champion money-losers, national air-

lines), and restrict the size of your bureaucracy. On the last point, one of the staff speakers had a scatter diagram – from which the names of nations had thoughtfully been erased – which showed the direct, negative correlation between civil servants' salaries and corruption. The lower the general pattern of wages, the higher the incidence of corruption – so lay off some of the less useful people, and pay the ones you keep enough to assure efficiency and to discourage theft of public funds. (The bank takes its own advice – its people are the best paid public servants in a comparatively affluent city, and there are never any scandals at the bank.)

Another diagram showed the relationship between bureaucratic efficiency (measured in a complex way) and national growth; the more efficient the bureaucrats, the more growth. Bank officials said that there was enough governmental efficiency to stimulate economic growth. "They are doing some of the basic things right – such as investment in education – and that makes a difference."

Not all the slides were scrubbed free of identifiers. One paper distributed to the delegates showed the debt level of the World Bank's Island members, with the Marshalls and Western Samoa leading the list by a wide margin. (See chart). The measure used was the size of the external debt divided by annual gross domestic product, the sum of all goods and services produced within each country.

The Marshalls' huge debt does not reflect a lack of outside funding, given the scores of millions of Compact and nuclear claims dollars that the US has poured into those islands, it reflects a spend-thrift policy that has just barely begun to change. (Shortly before the Washington meetings, the RMI finance minister, Rueben Zachrais, had announced what for the Marshalls is an austere budget of \$US84,780,000 for the fiscal year starting October 1, compared to \$US91,700,000 for the prior year. The most numerous job cutbacks hit powerless women, some 181

cooks for the outer island schools.)

In Washington, the World Bank offered another measure of fiscal sturdiness, or lack thereof, and that is the amount of a nation's overseas financial reserves as compared to the volume of imports. Kiribati, with overseas reserves equalling 8.2 months of imports may not rank high on a global scale, but it is the best in the Islands, followed by Vanuatu with 7.5 months worth of reserves. At the bottom is the Marshalls, with its reserves equalling exactly three days of imports.

There was something of a schoolroom atmosphere about parts of these sessions – an elegant graduate school, to be sure. For example, one of the World Bank staff handed out grades on the level of investor-friendliness of Island nation policies. With a range from a low of 1 to a high of 5, he noted a general lack of sufficient investor-orientation as he gave out these grades:

FSM 1.7
W. Samoa 2.1
Marshalls 2.1
Fiji 2.3
Solomons 2.5
Vanuatu 2.5
Cook's 2.6
Niue 2.7
Kiribati 2.8

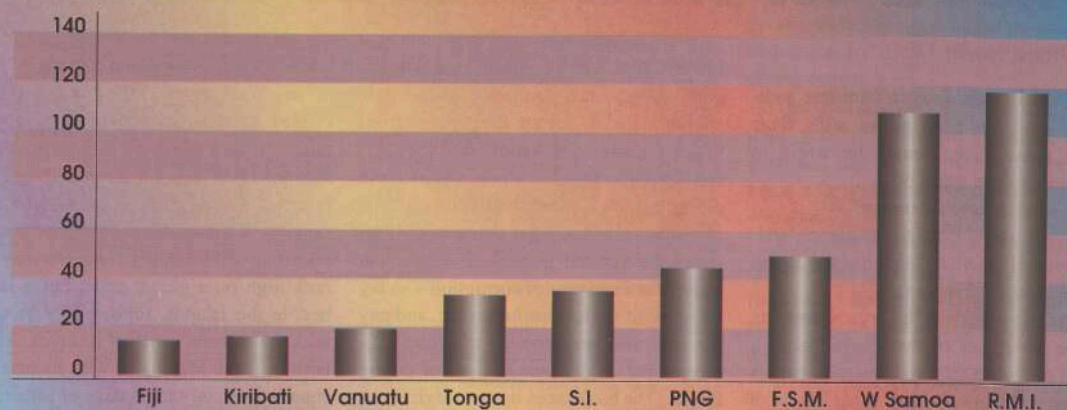
Does a government policy of insisting on a decent minimum wage for its workers give that government a low score? Probably, but no one asked.

The most encouraging aspect of the Island meetings was the report on the five-year-old, Sydney-based South Pacific Project Facility (SPPF) managed by Richard Pearson. SPPF analyses private-sector business proposals in the Islands, and then, seeks partial overseas funding for those it thinks are viable. Most of these funds come from sources other than the World Bank itself.

During the first phase of SPPF operations, it secured funding for 25 projects, 23 of which are still in operation. Of those now working, 10 are in Fiji, four are in

ECONOMY

External Debt as percentage of gross domestic product



*Source: World Bank *Graphics: James Ramoku

Tonga, three each in Vanuatu and PNG, and one each in FSM, Niue, and Western Samoa. In the course of these discussions, it was mentioned that the overwhelming majority of business schemes proposed are rejected as impracticable, and that one of the World Bank-assisted projects took two and a half years between the idea and the opening for business.

"I'm not an expert, but isn't that a long time?" asked Berenado Vunibobo, Fiji's minister of finance and economic development. Bank staff replied that these things did take time, and that many of the delays took place before and after the period in which the bank was active.

Tonga's finance minister, Tutoatsi Fakafanua, supported his colleague's concerns, adding that his country was pleased

with the general direction of the bank's activities. Western Samoa's minister of finance, Tuilaepa S Malielegaoi, who was presiding over the session, said that perhaps the high percentage of culled-out proposals suggests that the bank should provide more technical assistance in the initial formation of the proposals, and there was general agreement that this would be useful.

On financial scams

While finance ministers are notoriously close-mouthed with journalists about their work, one question asked during coffee breaks always elicited enthusiastic and detailed responses: "How did your nation manage to avoid the financial scams that

have victimised Nauru, the Cooks, Vanuatu and the Marshalls?"

The first statement was always: "It's not that the crooks didn't come to see us", which is then followed by a discussion of how their schemes are identified as questionable. A portrait of the perpetrators emerged from a conversation with Kaburoro Ruaia, acting secretary of Kiribati's ministry of finance. He agreed with my suggestion that most were white males, adding they were often Australians, who usually showed up wearing a suit and tie while everyone else on the Island was in more suitable tropical attire.

"We probably are in the second tier of targets," Ruaia said. "But they do come to see us. They talk fast, and they move in and out of the country quickly."



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Earlier, a senior World Bank staffer when asked what the bank was doing to try to head off such schemes said: "You can't help someone who does not want help. Often there is so little political stability they sense that they have only six months to do whatever it is they want to do." In Kiribati, in contrast, the finance minister (who was at the meetings) in Beniamina Tinga; he has held that position for two years, and prior to that he served seven years as the ministry's permanent secretary. He also serves, currently, as a member of the national legislature.

Fiji has some defence mechanisms in place to avoid being defrauded, Lionel Yee, chief executive of Fiji's National Provident Fund, suggested. He said that shady businessmen have a long list of dishonest tricks, in addition to the letters of guarantee and the prime bank notes that have been used against the four nations mentioned earlier.

His typology included those who want to pay too little for an Island asset – some of the overseas operators of fishing vessels, for example. Then there are those, in manufacturing, who bring in overvalued machinery from overseas as their part of an investment, and then profit illicitly from the cash invested in the enterprise by other investors.

He mentioned a third category, sometimes encountered in the resort industry.

"The shady operator sees a hotel operating at a loss, and he tells the owner that, for a fee, he will bring in a strong, successful manager who will rescue the operation. The manager, in turn, gets his hands on the cash flow, and then disappears, leaving the owner with a failed hotel, and none of the recent cash flow."

"It's not that we don't take chances," said Tonga's Fakafanua, citing his country's successful venture in satellites, "but we have a set of bureaucrats who check everything out before decisions are made. These guys (the con men) don't want to stick around for a long process."

After a heady week of intellectual stimulation and sociability, rubbing elbows with some of the biggest names in world finance, the ministers flew back to their respective Islands and to their day-to-day chores of keeping their governments afloat. ■

Cooks govt faces up to foreign ownership

... but what do the people want?

By Lisa Williams

"No, I don't want foreigners to own our airports," said one major landowner, a traditional paramount chief, when the Cook Islands government announced its plans. "Everyone – the Asians, you name it – will be coming into the country. And before you know it, the mafia will be here."

It wasn't news by the time the Cook Islands Prime Minister decided to announce government was to sell its assets: it made sense – to some.

And while the country facing financial crisis goes through an identity shock as its people take up the debate on "selling out to foreigners", there is one fact that stands out – like the hundreds of public servants who lost their jobs, it's not politically nice but, hey ... there is just no other way.

"If there were Cook Islanders with the money we'd have no problem with that at all," said Prime Minister and finance man Sir Geoffrey Henry on letting the 'crown jewels' go.

"But our situation is the people with money aren't living in the country. The ones with the money are, in fact, living overseas ... and that just makes assets sales a more difficult exercise."

But despite the mammoth task of doing a public relations job on the theme, "the Cook Islands will always belong to Cook Islanders". Sir Geoffrey's determination to sell has been welcomed by a business community straining for evidence of more reforms after months had passed since the prime minister made the first painful cuts to the state workforce.

Sir Geoffrey, and the close-knit bunch of official experts who number crunch and spin solutions day and night in a bid to save the Cooks economy, is adamant the whole process of selling state assets will work.

"We're not selling assets unless the buyer or developer pays attention to equity as well," he says when asked how Cook

Islanders will remain part of the process even if they don't have the money.

Defining that equity, as well as tackling the thorny issue of whether crown lands taken for the good of the people now have to be surrendered because of their "commercialisation", is part of the comeback from the Cook Islanders looking government in the eye on the issue.

And so the consultation, which has swept in on the wave of economic reforms, continues.

How will selling up government assets worth \$US87 million save the country from economic ruin? Private ownership, predicts Sir Geoffrey, will bring in additional investments of up to \$US38million beyond the year 2000, add \$US8.7 million to the gross domestic product, create an extra \$US2.4 million in tax revenues, and get employment figures up by 11 per cent – enough to keep all school leavers working.

Despite the urgency everyone admits the sales are going to take time – only the hotels are actually on the market, everything else is still the subject of information papers. Still, Sir Geoffrey has the commercial bank managers of the Westpac and ANZ bank outlets in the country on his side, as well as the business sector and heads of the marine, offshore, tourism and agriculture industries.

These are industries government has targeted for growth and investment to keep Cook Islanders working – and in the Cook Islands.

Predictions on who gets what are rife. First to jump on the bandwagon will be the private sector in the Cooks, led by a group of canny businessmen (the gender is literal) who have survived government after government and have either the money or/and the contacts to make first bid for whatever state business they want.

But there is a small problem – and it isn't just that figures are fine on paper and when making presentations but often

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don't present reality as it will eventuate.

The PM now has to take his plan to the *tangata rikiriki*. The problem is the little people have always felt left out and resentful of the whole reform process. Last to feel the trickle-down benefits of the coming sales, they will also be the last to understand, explains an official.

"Do you want to try explaining the interest margin from banking economic growth figures to a bunch of *tangata rikiriki*?" he asks. "You've got to be able to understand what's going on – it will be tough for the prime minister because he has to do the numbers and economic theory, and once he starts doing that he starts losing people."

The PM's problem so far is he has been explaining the same numbers the same way to different types of audiences, with a nod-nod reaction beginning with his departmental heads that steadily decreases by the time he reaches the village meetings.

Another problem, which will actually make government look more action-like than it may want to be, is the urgency of the asset sales.

There is no money in the coffers, not unless you call a couple of grand when someone checked at one stage big bickies, and for a government that still pays welfare up to \$US480,000 per month and its workers \$US550,000 in monthly totals, that's nowhere near what's needed.

Take the local media. In a Press conference that served as an impromptu briefing and interview session, local journalists were told they would get copies of figures and documents whipped on and off an overhead projector – then staggered when later informed that the documents were too sensitive to be given to them.

With the job of reporting what they had just been told, they pushed for copies – and were finally given eight pages of a 28-page report.

No problem, say the ever-positive officials.

"At the end of the day, if people start seeing the hotel is sold – boom! They're going to see change and confidence," promises one. So why not try public floats so more of the public can afford a little sense of ownership? Or offer local employees shares?

"I think it's because we really have no



Sir Geoffrey Henry ... adamant the process of selling state assets will work Picture: Michael Field

time to contemplate all that," says one member of parliament, "there's just no time." Development Bank went up – because the bank has long faced criticism that it wasn't doing anything for development anyway.

But like others, he is keen to see the intentions on equity kept. Until then, like the former public servants surviving on the false economy of three months' grace in "Transition" funded by New Zealand aid, the reality of having to sell up state assets will not set in.

"That's the thing with us locals here. It doesn't sink in until it's action," comes the prediction. "You can talk all you want but it won't sink in until they feel it. They either have a job or are making more money. They have got to see it. To talk

abstract things – forget it."

But while Sir Geoffrey begins the sales pitch to the *tangata rikiriki*, literally the "little people", who only tend to take on power during election campaigns, officials close to his task realise what a tough job he has.

"Emotionally we all want to see ownership by Cook Islanders – I want to see that too," says one observer. "But when you crunch the numbers and think about it intellectually, it doesn't make sense at all. There's so much crossflow of money and investment more and more now, it's becoming less and less important what country you're in.

"Everybody's moving international now – if you're not up with that game you're out of the picture and what we're

saying now is we want to be part of the game and that's what we're doing."

But do Cook Islanders have the savvy and knowledge of the rules to stay at the winning edge? Economists would think so.

How does Sir Geoffrey and his FEM team know they've made the right choice? Banks guaranteed up to \$US13.8 million of Cook Islands money which shifted overseas two years ago will come back as those who took it out make their bids.

The private sector has never been so pleased with the government.

"There's a big urgency for the asset sales," admits the optimist. "We're under the gun right now to sell these things. Anyone can see it."

Jobs, a couple of thousand of them, will be needed for those coming off the high of being paid for three months in Transition. Not even the sale of the Akitua resort, the crown in the tourism jewel that is Aitutaki, will make much of a difference. The big dollars making a significant difference will come when government closes on the Rarotongan sale (soon) or

the Sheraton (eventually).

"The Sheraton is the biggest," comes the official observer-style comment. "Once we sell the Sheraton, it's going to show everyone here confidence and credibility. The Rarotongan (sale) will happen first and sneak up on people but everyone's waiting for the Sheraton."

"You know why the United States kicks ass economically? Because they say to everyone, 'If you want to do business, *aere mai, aere mai konei, taviviki*' (welcome, come here, hurry). They say that to the whole world, and that's why they're number one."

Closer to home, Fiji is another economic tiger, for pretty much the same reason – "because everything goes, they want to do business".

Social, racial and religious problems are the other side of the coin that is investment in Fiji but, like New Zealand, the South Pacific nation is enjoying the prosperity foreign dollars bring. But those bemoaning the impending reality of foreign ownership can take heart from New Zealand neighbours contemplating the

same picture. Sure, Winston Peters' whole New Zealand First philosophy has directly resulted from a growing antipathy and resentment that Kiwis are having the land bought from under their feet by Asians, "but the bottom line is everyone has money in their pockets", comments the same official. "That's just the way it's going in the world now too. With money and with people, the borders are starting to come down."

"It's becoming this international economy where it doesn't matter who you are and where you're from. If you want to do business let's do business – the hell with the rest of it."

"All of us emotionally want our own people to own. The prime minister knows that too. But at the same time he says, 'You got the money, come play the game.' But the bottom line is nobody has the money to play," says one number-cruncher. "If it's a local group and foreign group and everything the same he'll pick the local group. No question about it. But it's not going to happen. Sorry, that's just the way it is." ■

New Caledonia's nickel rush

By David North

A strong demand for stainless steel in Asia, a corporate disappointment regarding an ice-shrouded minefield in Labrador, the slowed flows of Russian exports and the politics of independence have all brought something like a nickel rush to New Caledonia.

World nickel prices are strong, thanks to demand for nickel to use in stainless steel in Asia and elsewhere, with the recent price on the London Metal Exchange coming to better than \$US3.34 a pound, up more than 11 per cent since *Pacific Islands Monthly* last wrote on nickel (in December, 1994.)

One reason for the stronger price is that increasing world demand has absorbed the formerly depressing massive nickel exports from Russia, the world's leading producer. Russia, given its sick economy, was happy to sell the metal at any price. Earlier, when Russia was part of the USSR, the Soviet military had used a lot of nickel in building weapons, so

exports were inhibited; those exports soared when the communists lost power.

These long-term trends – spiced by a strong dash of Island politics – have apparently created a rush for nickel-mining properties in New Caledonia, according to a phone call from the usually unflappable US civil servant who keeps track of nickel developments worldwide for the US Department of Interior.

The expert, other sources and the world's mining publications, recounted half a dozen new regional nickel developments mostly in New Caledonia, but others in Papua New Guinea and in Indonesia's Irian Jaya.

Another out-of-region factor stimulating the competition for nickel ore in the South Pacific was the recent loss by one Canadian mining giant, Falconbridge, in a bidding contest with another Canadian giant, International Nickel Company (Inco). A small exploring firm, which had neither the capital nor the resources to actually operate a mine, had found a rich

lode of nickel and other ores in a remote part of oft-frozen Labrador in Northern Canada; it put its stake up for bids and, after a long battle, Inco beat Falconbridge: the latter is now trying to even the score on the other side of the globe.

According to the trade publication, *The Tex Report*, Falconbridge had joined a smaller French mining firm, Societe Minerale Sud Pacifique (SMSP); the two companies, in turn, have entered into an informal alliance with the Kanak independence party, FLNKS. The two firms have announced a feasibility study regarding a potential major mine in New Caledonia's Northern District.

Meanwhile the big daddy of French nickel mining, Societe Le Nickel (SLN), similarly has announced plans to develop nickel mines in the Tiebaghy section of the Northern District. As the writer for *The Tex Report* puts it:

"...the area as an object to be developed as announced by SMSP is located in the

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A view of Noumea harbour with a nickel smelter on the right

Tiebaghy area possessed by SLN where is unintentionally the same area as that projected by SLN. Therefore, it is interested to see the consequence."

It will be interested to see the consequences. We suspect that the writer is Japanese, as the article translates the value of Pacific francs into yen and Japan has a fierce need for the metal and none of its own.

The writer continues: "This exceptional occurrence ... has included an inside of a political nature. The struggle between Independent Party and Conservative Party, which has been symbolised in the inhabitants' voting on the independence of New Caledonia scheduled in 1998, has deeply rooted and therefore the development in the Northern District is also a political matter."

SLN, which has been working in New Caledonia for over a century, is presumably allied with the conservative faction, the pro-French RPCR. It has brought much capital and much high-technology to its nickel mine at Nepoui, 250 kilometres northwest of Noumea. (See "Mine of the future" *PIM*, August 1994.)

It makes sense, from everyone's viewpoint in New Caledonia, that investment is going into the Kanak-controlled, low-income Northern District, as opposed to the RPCR-controlled Southern District,

which includes Noumea, and a substantial, largely well-off French population.

For the conservatives, it is useful to bring a little prosperity and, presumably, prosperity-induced calm to the Kanak-ruled Northern District. For the pro-independence group, investment in the Northern District will produce jobs and, hopefully, some economic justice for the Kanaks.

Why the two political groupings are backing different and rival mining claims is not reported by *The Tex Report* but, presumably, the outsiders (Falconbridge and SMSP) are perceived by the Kanaks as more likely to produce a kind of economic development useful to the Kanaks than the insiders (SLN).

Meanwhile Inco, not resting on its Labrador laurels, has worked out an 85 per cent – 15 per cent deal with the French government to determine the feasibility of developing the Goro nickel property in New Caledonia. Inco says this is a potentially rich mine or, in the words of the geologists: "The Goro project includes extensive deposits consisting of nickeliferrous laterites with currently identified reserves of 165 million tons grading 1.6 per cent nickel and 0.16 per cent nickel cobalt [which is about nine times as valuable as nickel]. These reserves are capable of supporting a major long-term nickel-

mining operation."

Yet another New Caledonia nickel deal was reported in September by *South Sea Digest*. Brisbane-based QNI announced that it had signed an agreement with Societe des Mines de la Tontouta (SMT) to develop a site formerly owned by SMT alone on the Bogota Peninsula. The Australian firm will pay the French one \$US28 million over 15 years, with QNI holding 67 per cent interest in the joint venture and SMT the other 33 per cent.

The Australians said that they would invest another \$US32 million in the site and expected to secure "around one million wet tons of limonitic ore annually". (Nickel ore is sometimes mixed with water and moved through large pipes or slurries as a technique to transport it efficiently over rough terrain.)

New Caledonia is the world's third largest producer of nickel ore, following Russia and Canada. Its ore, according to David Stanley's *South Pacific Handbook*, is "high grade, being free of arsenic although the presence of asbestos has been linked to a high lung-cancer rates among the miners".

So a Kanak getting a job as a miner is experiencing a mixed blessing.

The nickel fever is not confined to New Caledonia. In PNG there were reports that Highlands Gold Ltd, a major player in the area, was thinking about looking around for a joint-venture partner with experience in nickel mining (not Highland's long suit). The conversation would revolve around Highland's 65 per cent-owned Ramu nickel-cobalt project in PNG.

This project is expected to produce 32,500 tons of nickel and 2770 tons of cobalt a year at a cost of less than \$US1 a pound.

If these calculations are approximately correct, and with nickel and cobalt at anything like current prices, this would present Highland, if you will pardon the expression, with a golden opportunity.

Finally, the huge Australian firm, Broken Hill Propriety (BHP), has signed a joint venture with the Indonesian government's mining company, PT Aneka Tambang, to conduct a feasibility study into the development of the nickel deposits on Gag Island, just off the Western tip of Irian Jaya. ■

Sign of the times?



Free at last after 26 days in prison (from left) Moala, 'Akau'ola and Pohiva.

Reports by Michael Field

Two Tongan journalists and a member of parliament have achieved the rare distinction of being declared "prisoners of conscience" by the human rights organisation Amnesty International after being held 26 days in a maximum security prison.

Tongan government spokeswoman Eseta Fusitu'a declared it was "media terrorism" and Tongan Police Minister Clive Edwards said the three had wanted to become "political martyrs" and the kingdom's Legislative Assembly obliged.

On September 20 the assembly found *Taimi o Tonga* editor Kalafi Moala, deputy editor Filokalafi 'Akau'ola and people's representative 'Akilisi Pohiva in contempt of parliament and imprisoned them for 30 days.

On October 14, less than a week before they were to be released, a New Zealand lawyer, Barry Wilson, won their freedom when Chief Justice Nigel Hampton, ruled the detentions had been unconstitutional and illegal.

"For 26 days we have been held in jail illegally," Moala said on October 14, just after coming out of jail. "When I heard the judgment I wept because we had spent 26 days in jail as innocent people. I never felt guilty."

Tonga's 30-seat assembly is controlled by King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV who appoints to life terms the 12-strong cabi-

net which sits in the house without election. Thirty noble titles are entitled to vote for nine noble representatives. Tonga's 100,000 commoners (*kainangaefonua*, which literally translates as "eaters of the soil") elect another nine people's representatives.

This saga began at the Atlanta Olympics where boxer Paea Wolfgramm won a silver medal. Among the team of Tongan officials was Justice Minister Tevita Tupou who had the permission of cabinet to go but not of assembly Speaker Noble Fusitu'a.

Pohiva, who has tried unsuccessfully to impeach other ministers, wrote a motion asking for the impeachment of Tupou.

Before he submitted his motion, he gave the contents to *Taimi*, an Auckland-based independent weekly, which published details hours before they were released in parliament. Contempt proceedings were launched for, as Fusitu'a said, prior publication was an offence.

"The *Times* published falsely that the minister was being impeached," she said the day after the men went to prison. "The fact is that up until this day there is no impeachment."

Parliament's outrage was selective.

Two weeks earlier, *Matangi Tonga* magazine ran this: "The people who are elected in Tonga are those who cannot be used for anything else, they have been

sacked from their jobs and they are going into the house in order to make a living."

It was the unchallenged statement of the king. *Taimi's* offence was to be the first with the news. On September 30 the assembly voted to begin impeachment

Extracts from the constitution of Tonga

4. There shall be but one law in Tonga for chiefs and commoners, for Europeans and Tongans. No laws shall be enacted for one class and not for another class but the law shall be the same for all the people of this land.

7. It shall be lawful for all people to speak, write and print their opinions and no law shall ever be enacted to restrict this liberty. There shall be freedom of speech and of the Press forever but nothing in this clause shall be held to outweigh the law of slander or the laws for the protection of the king and the royal family.

70. If anyone shall speak or act disrespectfully in the presence of the Legislative Assembly it shall be lawful to imprison him for 30 days and whoever shall publish any libel on the Legislative Assembly, or threaten any member or his property, or rescue any person whose arrest has been ordered by the Legislative Assembly, may be imprisoned for not exceeding 30 days.

MEDIA FREEDOM

Letter from inside

Authorities denied journalist Kalafi Moala any paper to write on, but he found a way to get a message to his family in New Zealand.

"I'm not allowed paper in here but I'm using toilet paper to write you. I'm OK even though I'm locked up in maximum security. Filo also. Tell ... we're being treated like criminals – murderers and rapists....

"Anyway, please check on my desk, I left envelopes there – some bills that need to be paid...

"It looks like we will be here for the 30 days....

"Here – we are not allowed anything in – just a change of clothes, soap, tooth brush, tooth pastes and bedding. No books, no paper, just a Bible....

"Don't worry! It's all part of the job. Much good will come out of this later."

proceedings against Tupou. People's representative Masao Paasi was appointed prosecutor. It will not, however, come up for debate until June next year. Pohiva, Moala and 'Akau'ola were dragged before the assembly. For 'Akau'ola, the business was familiar. In March police raided the *Taimi* office and arrested him along with a couple of men who had written letters to the paper. In Tonga it is an offence to make civil servants – with the exception of government labourers – angry. Edwards was angry and consequently 'Akou'ola was held in jail for 24 hours. The two letter writers stayed in for five days on an 18-month good behaviour bond.

The assembly hearing went all day and into the night. Moala had a good idea of what was coming, saying that in Tongan custom if such high authority figures called somebody before them it was automatically assumed those called were in the wrong. Custom demanded that they

Tonga – PINA's stumbling block

Tonga could be the rock upon which the 22-year-old Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) finally founders.

Most of the world's media associations condemned the jailing of two journalists – except the Tonga News Association (TNA) and the Tongan members of PINA.

TNA executive Pesi Fonua in a statement condemned PINA for trying to get the men out jail.

"It is difficult to reverse the parliament's decision because it was a decision of a majority of the members of the house, comprising the cabinet ministers, the chiefs and the representatives of the people. So, in a way, it is representative of the wishes of the people," Fonua said.

PINA has had a miserable year. When *Taimi o Tonga* deputy editor Filokalafi 'Akau'ola was arrested, held in custody and eventually convicted of angering Police Minister Clive Edwards, PINA did nothing.

Coincidentally, PINA's annual meeting this year was in Tonga and when Edwards banned Agence France-Presse correspondent and PINA member Michael Field from entering Tonga, PINA president Monica Miller called for the government to change its mind.

But the rest of PINA found it hard to agree with her.

The latest jailing saw Miller incensed and she despatched PINA secretariat Nina Ratulele with a personal appeal to King

Tau'fa'ahau Tupou II asking for the men's release.

PINA executive director Tavake Fusimalohi is also general manager of government-owned Radio Tonga.

In 1993, Moala had been the only Tongan member of PINA to vote against Fusimalohi renewing his director's term.

With Moala in jail, Fusimalohi went on record to say Moala had a weird personality.

Fusimalohi said the jailing of the journalists was simply a matter of law.

"Are journalists above the law, are journalists an elite that the law should not touch?" he asked.

Perceiving Miller's comments as a personal attack, he quit PINA.

"I have always maintained that Press freedom and professional standards are inseparable, I cannot promote one and ignore the other."

Miller said she was sad that Fusimalohi had quit but the issue of media freedom remained.

She said some PINA members believed the "current situation in Tonga is the gravest assault on Press freedom in the Pacific since the Fiji coups" and added she was concerned "over the lack of action in Tonga on behalf of the jailed journalists, including silence from TNA."

"I have no doubt that PINA will survive," she said.

As this happened PINA was struggling to survive as aid donors backed away from the organisation.

should apologise, but the three had not.

"We have said we did not do anything wrong. That might have made things worse," Moala said. To the question "whether the accused were guilty or not guilty of contempt of the house" the vote was 19 to two. The seven ministers and eight nobles present voted guilty. Four of the people's representatives voted guilty while two voted not guilty.

There were two more motions; to send the three to jail for 30 days, or for 15. They voted on the harsher sentence first which passed 10 to eight. Edwards and Prime Minister Baron Vaea were among those abstaining. Seven of the nobles voted for the punishment while seven peo-

ple's representatives voted against 30 days but asked for shorter terms. The decision came shortly after midnight and all three were taken quickly to the police cells.

'Akau'ola was plainly shocked: "The decision has been made and I have to take it – they have the power and the authority." Pohiva didn't go to jail but to hospital instead, suffering from an asthma attack.

On September 25 the prisoners sought the first of three writs of *habeas corpus*. These are ancient traditions of common law, literally requiring in Latin for the plaintiffs to "produce the body" or, in this case, to have the three brought before the court so that the legality of their detention could be examined. Acting Chief Justice

History repeats itself

Locking up the politically prickly is not new to the Kingdom of Tonga – it happened in 1883 under King George Tupou I and the one-time missionary Premier Shirley Baker.

The king and Baker devised the constitution and in the process removed rights and privileges from chiefs and nobles and European traders, including one Robert Hanslip.

They drew up a petition to Britain's Queen Victoria seeking Baker's removal from Tonga.

Charges of causing unrest were brought against Hanslip and the petitioners but British Governor Sir Arthur Gordon found the charges unproven.

Hanslip published a newspaper, *Niu Vakai* (Look-out Coconut), but was barred from reporting on the Legislative Assembly when they passed a libel law imposing imprisonment if the offence was "libel of anyone who holds a high position".

Then 14 petitioners were tried for the new crime and 12 were sentenced to five years' imprisonment while two were given two years' labour for the government.

Britain sent a man-of-war to Tonga to demand the release of the men.

Baker issued a full pardon – and had the wit to leave Tonga himself. ■

John Lewis declined saying parliament was "entitled to absolute privilege over its internal proceedings".

It was back to the grubby Hu'atolifoli maximum security prison. No paper, no

books except the *Bible*, no visitors except close family. A second attempt was also rebuffed before the New Zealand branch of the Commonwealth Press Union decided the issue could not be left at that and sent lawyer Barry Wilson to mount a new bid, this time before Hampton.

After lengthy hearings, Hampton ruled that their 30-day jail sentence imposed by the assembly on September 20 had been illegal. He ruled that the three had, in effect, been denied the due process of law guaranteed in the constitution.

"It is tremendous news," Wilson said. "It means the Press will be able to operate in Tonga with a little bit more security..."

Pohiva said Hampton had done the right thing in freeing him.

"It is a lesson for the leaders – they didn't follow the law – they should have done the right thing."

He had no regrets.

"I was confident that what I did was not wrong. I felt I did my job in telling people what was happening in parliament and this was something that was in the interests of the public."

Moala said the issue was bigger than just him and the other two.

"To me, the lesson is that they just cannot, on a whim, on an emotional reaction, grab somebody off the street and put them in jail..."

"To be thrown into prison unjustly – that was a first – and people are beginning to ask questions."

The jailing attracted international media protest which Edwards regarded as unfortunate, but he added he could do nothing about it.

"The news media in the past have not been reasonable to Tonga and I have no

reason to believe they will change."

Fusitu'a said freedom of the Press had always been a reality in Tonga and what was behind the jailing was poor journalism. "The newspaper has been able to malign people and the people have had no comeback. This is not an issue of Press freedom, it is Moala's illegal use of the freedom of the Press."

She condemned the overseas media for not checking with the Tongan government on the facts of the case.

"Despite this most regrettable reality of media terrorism against Tonga, we are still hopeful that reputable media services ... will one day ask for the facts, and will one day publish them."

Ironically, the release of the two senior men of the weekly failed to make it in time for that week's edition. It had gone to press in New Zealand with a lead story on the price of pumpkin exports.

But Moala was delighted that the paper had continued while they were in jail.

"They thought they had silenced the newspaper, but it continued." ■

The writer of this piece, Michael Field, is Agence France-Presse's South Pacific correspondent. In August Tongan Police Minister Clive Edwards refused to grant Field an entry permit to attend the Pacific Islands News Association conference. He said Field had made insulting remarks about King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV although he was unable to produce any evidence. Field has strongly denied making such remarks. Edwards has also said Field had broken Tongan law and would be arrested if admitted.

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POLITICS

State of limbo

Election results cast New Zealand into uncertain future

By Atama Raganivatu

New Zealand faces weeks, or possibly months, of uncertainty after its General Election on October 12 failed to provide any party with a clear majority.

The ruling National Party won 44 seats, the opposition Labour Party 37, New Zealand First 17, Alliance 13, ACT 8 and United 1. A union between the left-leaning Alliance and Labour would seem logical while National, ACT and United have sufficient in common for a reasonably smooth marriage of the right. The bugbear though is the centrist New Zealand First which, at the time of writing, has given no indication of which grouping it feels most comfortable with.

When it became clear that any coalition could only govern with the support of New Zealand First, its leader, Winston Peters, gave a statesman-like speech pledging he would act responsibly, with the nation's welfare alone in mind, and pleaded for patience while a deal was being cobbled together.

There will be much soul-searching within New Zealand First ranks before a decision is made. Peters himself is a former National member of parliament as is his chief strategist. However, much of New Zealand First's support comes from Maori (it made a clean sweep of the five seats reserved purely for them) and a National-ACT-United-New Zealand First coalition would find little favour in Maoridom.

Also, Peters had, only several occasions before the election, stated vehemently that he would not enter into a coalition with National if Prime Minister Jim Bolger continued as its leader and several other prominent leaders remained in the cabinet.

Peters' credibility will be immeasurably harmed should he now keep him in power. The possibility of National dumping the King Country farmer to accommo-

date Peters can be all but discounted as a National Party caucus devoid of Bolger and his supporters would offer few people with the credentials for positions of responsibility.

Peters will also be aware that the only obvious conclusion to be drawn by the election was that Kiwis no longer want Bolger as their prime minister. What they could not determine was who should succeed him.

The likeliest scenario then is that New Zealand First will, when it realises that the public has become intolerant of the uncertainty it is causing and when it has wrung as many concessions as possible from Labour and Alliance by maintaining the threat of an accommodation with National, enter into a formal coalition with the two socialist parties.

Another possibility is that New Zealand First will not officially enter into any arrangement other than promise to support a Labour-Alliance government in votes of confidence for the duration of the next parliament.

The New Zealand public could have spared themselves the perplexity they are now experiencing by not opting for an MMP (Mixed Member Proportional) form of government in a referendum three years ago.

Under the old first-past-the-post system, the status quo would almost certainly have been maintained with Bolger leading a minority government, propped up by the support of United and ACT.

Much of MMP's appeal was derived from its success in Germany, where the Christian Democrat Party and its long-term coalition partner, the Free Democrats, have supplied stable government for many years. Only time will tell if the system can provide New Zealand with similar solidity.

But New Zealand's Pacific Islands community has every reason to view MMP positively – at least for the time being. It delivered them three MPs whereas previously they only had the one.

Labour's Taito Phillip Field has been joined by Samoan compatriot and fellow party member Mark Gosche, as well as



Anae Arthur Anae. Anae, who represents the National Party, is of both Samoan and Chinese heritage. The trio have already formed an unofficial pact to place the interests of their community above all else.

Just one day after the election, Field stated: "The Pacific Islands population can be proud of having three MPs. There will definitely be co-operation amongst us to help the needs of our people. One of the reasons why I supported MMP was because it would provide us with greater



Bolger (above) and Field (facing page) ... two players in New Zealand's uncertain political future

representation in parliament. I am confident that the three of us together work for the advancement of Pacific Islands people."

Anae added: "The National Party has long been perceived as not being a party for Pacific Islands people, so I am particularly grateful for the help of those who worked to get me into parliament. We now have a voice in the National Party, which has historically been the party of the government. I have always stated that it is extremely important that we have voices in both major parties."

The words of Field and Anae were echoed by veteran Samoan political correspondent Lualemana Tino Pareira of Radio New Zealand. He enthused: "We should be very pleased about the outcome of this election. Politics for minority groups depends so much upon access to those in power and we now have much greater access. Pacific Islands interest groups can now advocate in an intimate way and form links with people in power. MMP has also given our people a much greater feeling that their vote really counts. The electorates with large Pacific Islands populations suggest that about 90 per cent of us voted – that's a far higher

percentage than ever before.

Although voting figures for racial groups have not been itemised, it seems likely that Pacific Islands people opted overwhelmingly for the Labour Party, despite the appeals of community sporting icons Peter Fatialofa, Frank Bunce and Paea Wolfgramm (for the Alliance) and Michael Jones and Eroni Clarke (for the Christian Coalition).

The Alliance lost half of the support it gained at the election three years ago and the Christian Coalition failed to gain the five per cent of the vote required for a seat in parliament. The Christians had hoped to capture the imaginations of voters in the predominantly church-going Pacific Islander constituency of Mangere, with their emphasis on family values and literal interpretation of the *Bible*.

However, the coalition's social policies are similar to those of the Christian Right which dominates the Republican Party in the United States and have no more appeal to the Tongan and Samoan Methodists of south Auckland than they do to the black Baptists of South Carolina.

Field gained more than three times the amount of votes cast for his nearest rival at Mangere and delivered nearly as many

for Labour's party vote in the constituency. Under New Zealand's MMP system, the 65 constituencies spread throughout the country each produce one MP and the rest – 55 of them – are decided through the party vote, to which all electors contribute.

The latter ultimately establishes the percentage of MPs each party can claim in parliament, with list MPs, who were chosen by their parties and ranked several months earlier, 'topping up' the electorate winners until all seats are filled. Both Anae and Gosche are listed MPs.

A coalition led by labour would certainly be welcomed by the majority of New Zealand's Pacific Islanders because of its campaign promises to improve the public health and education systems, increasing overseas aid and alleviating unemployment.

However, they will be concerned by what level of influence New Zealand First can finally exert as one of Peters' major platforms has been a large reduction in immigration.

While all of New Zealand waits intently for coalition talks to conclude, the Pacific Islands community may be more anxious than most. ■



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POLITICS

Wages of corruption



Leiatua ... accused of paying \$US16 to secure vote Picture: Chris Peteru

By Chris Peteru

The Western Samoa Supreme Court rulings that cost a cabinet minister, a party leader and three government members of parliament their jobs, was not unexpected.

In fact, shady political dealings are so common in the 49-seat parliament, a sense of indifference now fills a public vacuum once inhabited by feelings of dissatisfaction about the whole situation. To many Samoans, it was yet another chapter that questioned the political ethics of the Human Rights Protection Party which has ruled the country since the mid-80s, and politicians in general.

Eighteen petitions were filed in court following the April elections. By the time the cases went to hearing, the number had been culled to 11 – all but one petition involving a government member.

Although the HRPP – which stayed tight-lipped throughout – may have come out of the affair with another loss of credibility, it seems the alternatives to their sometimes warped electioneering are little better.

The first to the dole queue was Labour Party leader Toleapaalii Toesulusulu, who narrowly won a bitterly contested nomination and his party's seat in parliament. His campaign included a much-publicised commitment to stamping out alleged government corruption. Describing himself as a "future prime minister of Samoa" and

"Moses leading his people to the promised land", it may have been a divine revelation that led the brash Toleapaalii to quit on several bribery charges.

Showing the lines between political correctness and survival are truly blurred, he even applied to join the same government he had earlier enthusiastically denounced. Not surprisingly, his application to join was abruptly quashed.

"Toleapaalii anticipated an unfavourable settlement and he decided to resign," said Chief Justice Tiavaasue Falefatu Sapolu.

Post and Telecommunications Minister Tolo Leiatua saw the exit door for a whole lot less than the thousands of dollars other candidates threw in to buy votes. A villager testified that the former minister had given him \$US16, the equivalent of a week's wages, to secure his vote. Tolo's lawyer's argument that the money was for medical treatment for the man's family did not hold up, with the chief justice pointing to the evidence against Tolo as overwhelming.

The other three HRPP MPs were also nailed for handing out small sums of money, liquor and, in one instance – for those influenced by their stomachs rather than their heads – a roadside barbecue a sausage throw from the voting booths.

The five guilty verdicts created a record for cases involving the Islands' leading citizens since independence and

Westminster-style democracy arrived 34 years earlier.

Being struck out in court means none of the fallen MPs are now eligible to run in by-elections. Already, two more HRPP candidates, in Siumu and Falealili on the main island of Upolu island districts, have replaced the ousted members.

In another twist, 16 families banished from Vailoa village for not following a village council order to vote against the government, had their case upheld by the Lands and Titles Court. Nine of the clans disputed their chiefs' rights to do so under the controversial Village Fono Act. Some lawyers say the Fono Act is a poorly thought out law, giving village leaders collectively too much power to do as they see fit.

As news of the swinging voters leaked, the council gave each clan notice to pack and leave immediately. Bench members agreed with the disenfranchised families, saying it was not a "sin" for a person to vote exercising his or her own rights.

Equally, "it was an injustice to force a voter to exercise his or her right otherwise". The chiefs were ordered to ensure the families a peaceful return.

While justice may have been seen to be done, the eerie feeling remains that, but for peculiar petition regulations, the five fallen MPs could easily have been joined by dozens more.

As the Electoral Act now stands, only MPs who secured less than half the total number of votes in their constituency can be taken to court on charges of relating to any crooked election plays.

Even so, the illegal and longstanding practice of giving out cash, goods and favours to influence heads of families or individual voters is as common as coconuts.

Deputy Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele has said he firmly believes that money is not a necessity to winning a seat in parliament.

In a country that is near to perfecting political greed, the biggest failing of the dumped MPs is that they were caught handing it out. ■

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS FEATURE

It's in the bag...

Atlas Australia releases first-of-its-kind mobile version of the satellite communications briefcase



Atlas communications ... inland or at sea

A new communications tool which can be used on marine vessels as well as on land has been released by STN Atlas Australia with the support of Telstra Corporation Limited. The product is a mobile version of the Satcom-M satellite communications briefcase and is the first of its kind in the world.

Sophisticated mechanical interlocking devices are used to activate marine software installed in the briefcase, enabling it to lock onto the marine-tracking antenna on a vessel.

The antenna has been adapted and installed with new software so that it becomes a simple extension to the briefcase. The result – a portable office that offers satellite telephone, fax and data facilities while the vessel is moving. Once the mechanical interlocks are disconnected, the briefcase resumes using the usual land antenna located in its lid, and can be taken back to shore for typical land application. The Atlas mobile briefcase took six months to develop. After trial, the terminal

was seen as a major step forward in reliable and cost-effective communications. Telstra says that the development of the briefcase was an example of Australian engineers developing a product to suit Australia's geographic needs. They say that although they have offered a marine version of Satcom-M, the below-deck electronics that tap into the antenna have always been fixed. The dual usage of the Atlas mobile briefcase means people need to buy only one terminal for both applications. The potential applications for the mobile briefcase are extensive. It is not restricted to marine use, but can also be used on board trucks and trains which are equipped with a similar tracking antenna. Telstra views the new mobile terminal as an innovative development that complements its existing Satcom-M satellite communications service. The briefcases offer customers access to cost-effective and reliable satellite communications both in and out of Australia.

They are highly portable because of

their light weight and yet sturdy enough to cope with rugged conditions. With the briefcase now adding the benefit of working in marine applications, Telstra expects the demand to rise considerably. It was in 1993 that Atlas Elektronik business operations started in Australia with its majority-owned subsidiary, Atlas Elektronik (Australia) Pty Limited. During this period, Australia has benefitted from many innovations in Atlas Elektronik marine, defence and electronics technology.

From Sydney, Australia, Atlas Elektronik conducts its operations across Australasia and South-East Asia. It is one of three global regional centres outside Atlas Elektronik's European operations, the other two being New York in America and Tokyo in North Asia.

The Atlas Werke name first appeared in 1911 but the company under its original identity goes back to 1902. It established its reputation by providing maritime services to Europe's great shipping companies and the German navy. The technical department set up in 1905 for hydroacoustics is still an active part of the company. The Atlas Elektronik group has grown rapidly over the last decade. Expansion in non-military business has been the main sector of growth. One of the main factors behind the growth and success of the company has been the consistent and systematic expansion of strategic research and development capacity.

These resources are directed towards future-oriented technologies. ■



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TELECOMMUNICATIONS FEATURE

Tait system improves safety at sea

More lives are likely to be saved at sea thanks to a new radio communications system by Tait Electronics. The Western Samoan fishing industry is adopting this multi-channel system, which is expected to be operational before the end of the year. It will initially be used by 100 fishing boats off the coast of Western Samoa. The fishermen will be able to use a marine distress channel in emergencies.

This way, they can place individual or group calls among one another, contacting a base in Apia and placing calls through the telephone network. Phone calls will also be placed to the fishermen. The system includes 10 VHF repeaters located on the two islands, Savaii and Upolo.

Fishermen who will use Tait T3010 hand portable radios enclosed in waterproof 'aqua bags', will be able to place calls through repeaters to boats in distant fishing areas, or place 'back-to-back' calls directly to hand portables on nearby boats.

Tait Pacific Islands manager John Billows says the new system will significantly improve communications for the fishing industry, particularly in emergencies.

"Recently lives have been lost at sea and this system will provide a fast, dependable communications link when boats are in distress," Billows said.

"The Tait system was chosen because of our reputation for providing reliable wide area coverage and because Tait offers a complete solution.

"All the components, which include the base station, repeaters and hand portable radios, have been designed and manufactured to work well together."

Billows said the system was very impressive and was a cost-effective communication system for the Western Samoa fishing industry.

"We also have a very good dealer in Apia, Procamm Systems, which will be installing the system and providing the customer service.

This is a very impressive, cost-effective communications system for the Western Samoa fishing community," Billow said.

He said they were looking at the possibility of installing similar systems elsewhere in the Pacific.

Tait also has a project in Fiji it also expects to be quite successful.

It is supplying the third phase of the rural phone system. The installation of eight radio sites will enable a further 200 rural phones to be connected to the system.

It has also supplied a trunked radio system for the Fiji Police Department.

Billows said the TaitNet trunking system will replace a 30-year-old overloaded system where calls had to be placed through the operator. "With the increasing need for communications, often over rough and varied terrain, trunked mobile radio has proved an efficient and cost-effective solution."

The system interconnects with the existing Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) and the use of Tait T700 full duplex radios enables simultaneous two-way communications.

A marine system is in use in Vanuatu and other Tait radio systems can be found in Western Samoa and Tonga. Tait communication systems are widely used in the Pacific. ■

PNG to receive new telecom system next year

A new multi-million-kina projected will be launched by Port Moresby Telikom next year to provide over 55,000 telephone lines to its customers in Papua New Guinea.

The project which is expected to cost more than \$US8.4 million (K12 million), will see the installation of Israeli-made digital (computerised) telephone exchange.

This will replace analogue (mechanical) exchanges in 27 centres throughout PNG.

Telikom is carrying out the project as part of its ongoing modernisation programme to provide modern telecommunications services to majority of PNG people beyond the Year 2000.

In order to properly set up the lines and provide efficient and quality services, nine Telikom engineers and technicians have left for Israel to undergo four months of training on a new digital telephone exchange called DMS-10.

The men are William Piel, Susumi Osida, Brian Sam and Lascal Puy from the Telikom Construction Department and Jack Tomon, Panga Pawa, Lyndon Pinga, Frank Kimia and Charlie Alfred from the network operations department who are involved in the daily operation and maintenance of exchanges.

Lascal and Jack are engineers, while the rest are senior technical officers. All of them have been involved in the installation of digital exchanges throughout PNG.

They will be trained in the areas of installation, operation and maintenance of the DMS-10 with Telrad Communication and Electronic Industries Limited in Tel Aviv. These engineers will install the new exchanges to replace old analogue exchanges when they return to PNG next year.

The project will take three years to set up. There are currently 17 centres in PNG which use digital exchange.

The 27 centres which will receive the new system are Ela Beach, Gerehu, Lae, Taraka, Wau, Bulolo, Maprik, Madang, Goroka, Kunidawa, Kainantu, Mendi, Mt Hagen, Banz, Porgera, Tari, Minj, Wabag, Namatanai, Kiunga, Buka, Gusap, Arawa, Buin, Kieta, Nairovi and Panguna. ■

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS FEATURE

Linking Fiji with the world

Link up with the rest of the world with Internet. While this service has now become an integral part of communication, Fiji is slowly catching there.

With Internet just eight months old in Fiji, it has already received a large number of queries and already has over 400 customers.

These include corporate clients like the Fiji Sugar Corporation and government.

Internet is part of Telecom Fiji which recently became a separate entity after splitting with Post Fiji.

Manager Internet services Shailesh Singh said the response they received was better than what they had expected.

"From what we see it seems people are wanting to access information around the world without any problems.

"Internet is a lot easier and faster than anything else. There have been people who are interested but are not sure whether they want the service or not.

"It is like when fax machines first came out. People were not sure about its benefits and were hesitant, but now you will not find a business without a fax."

Singh feels Internet is a mass media product which can touch the lives of housewives right up to the businessman.

One organisation which has Internet and is making full use of it is the Fiji Visitors Bureau.

Information on everything from accommodation to adventurous activities can be found on the visitor information service. The Bureau said the system was very effective because they were able to get through to more people than ever before.

"They have developed it well. They are on the network and are well aware of what tourists want and are now working on those," Singh said.

But Singh feels one sector which will benefit most from the services once hooked on is the trade and investment side.

"The Internet is one of the best ways to get your message and product across to people because there are millions who are hooked on."

He said information available was wide ranging. It included everything from information on your favourite entertainer to medical and legal matters, cars, sports and much more.

"The variety is large and there is just so much information available, more than what one can ever imagine.

"It's mind-blowing, never before has there been so much information available at any one time and been so easily accessible."

Singh added that one service which was proving successful was news group, where a user could subscribe to a group where people were interested in just "one particular topic or topics of interest to you". He said Internet was tailored to different needs and if the need changed so did the information.

"People here need to adapt to that changing environment because Internet allows you to make that change."

Singh said charges in Fiji were \$12 per hour.

"There are people who look at this and think it is so expensive so what we try and tell them is that if they want they can down-

BULA Welcome to the Fiji Islands Visitor Information Service



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Fiji Visitors Bureau Suva, Fiji Islands.



The Fiji Visitors Bureau homepage on Internet

load the information they are after on a disk and take their time and read it after they have hung up."

Some of the services offered by Internet Service include the volume-based Corporate Access Service which provides for corporate customers requiring high-quality service with expectations of low to medium volume usage. These customers may also choose to register a company domain name giving their company a unique worldwide Internet identity.

Monthly rental is \$300 a month for up to 10 users, \$420 for 11-25 users, \$620 for 25 to 50 users and \$1020 for 51 to 100 users. On-line usage for volume charges for \$8/MB. Customers need a router or server to terminate the dedicated Frame Relay Circuit and a personal computer to act as their Internet server for Email. The benefits include volume-based charges so you pay for what you use. Customers can have a Local Area Network or PC permanently connected to the Internet and own Internet servers. The second service is the individual dial-up access which is offered to the general public to provide basic Internet Access. This service is available anywhere in Fiji where there is access to the domestic telephone network. Customers need a personal computer (minimum requirement: 386 with MS Windows 3.1) or an Apple Macintosh; a dial-up modem and a two-wire phone line capable of dialling 144000. The benefits of this include access to all services available on the Internet, no charges for the call, no volume charges and easily met requirements. ■

ASSASSINATION



Theodore Miriung ... "If you have a mission, you will have to accept it – even if it costs your life"
Picture: AP

Reports by Sam Vulum

Days before being elected premier of the Bougainville Transitional Government on April 10, 1995, the late Theodore Miriung – shot dead on October 12 by unknown assassins – was quoted in one newspaper report as saying: "If you have a mission, you will have to accept it – even if it costs your life." Miriung, the champion of the Bougainville peace efforts, lived up to his word.

As a former senior public servant and Bougainville Revolutionary Army man, Miriung was well versed on the positions of both sides in the conflict and his election brought about many hopes for reconciliation, compromise and eventual peace

for Bougainville.

Once, when asked about his involvement with the BRA, Miriung replied: "I am not pro BRA but pro the basic reasons why the BRA exists."

On his election, the late premier said: "We want to create more incentives for people who have hidden behind gullies of fear."

"We have to nominate those barriers and allow for meaningful reconciliation among our people and between our structures and institutions."

He said the new government needed to develop policies on previously unaddressed issues in Papua New Guinea such as amnesty and pardon.

Miriung went on to pursue his plans

Bougainville premier gunned down while dining with family

after his election generating admiration from many quarters for his professional and intelligent approach to many pressing issues despite being threatened by the BRA and interrogated by the security forces on numerous occasions.

The late premier's efforts won the hearts of many and his death has no doubt left a vacuum, which will be difficult to fill.

His death has dealt a devastating blow to the government's peace efforts. It now means that the government will have to work twice as hard to reach the level where he left off.

In one of his bold moves, Miriung forwarded a peace plan to the government pushing for:

- negotiations between the BTG and the government to lay the foundations for a political settlement for Bougainville;
- a settlement dependent on the government's willingness to give greater autonomy to Bougainville;
- acceptance by the rebel leadership of such a compromise dependent on the idea of an autonomous Bougainville being negotiated between the BTG and government;

- a compromise between the government and the BTG on the future political status of Bougainville; and

- an agreement between the government and BTG in principal on the contents of the peace strategy for a new Bougainville.

Reactions of shock and disbelief at the assassination and praise for Miriung flooded the local media days after his death from all corners of PNG and the governments of Australia and New Zealand and the United Nations.

Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan said: "Theodore Miriung was one of the great-

COVER STORIES

est defenders of Bougainville we have seen and he has been slain for no other reason than that he placed the good of his province and its people above his personal safety.

"I have met and negotiated with him many times since his election as premier. I always found him to be a very profound man, and a tough and persistent negotiator.

"He was tireless in his search for permanent peace through negotiation and reconciliation – there was nowhere he was not prepared to go, and absolutely no one he was not prepared to sit down and talk with."

Australia Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer, while expressing shock over the killing, said: "Theodore Miriung was a courageous and influential figure who dedicated himself to the pursuit of a peaceful solution to the Bougainville conflict.

"With his passing, that will become difficult to achieve."

The speaker of parliament, Sir Rabbie Namaliu, said: "I believe Theodore Miriung was one of the truly great hopes of peace and reconciliation in the troubled part of our nation.

"Perhaps the best way to honour his service and supreme sacrifice, is by redoubling all our efforts to achieve the peace which the long-suffering people of Bougainville so desperately deserve."

Bougainville MP John Momis said Miriung's death was the "most serious blow so far to the democratic principals and process of resolving the crisis".

The UN, through the UNDP resident

co-ordinator, Peter Witham, said: "Theodore Miriung was an untiring champion of peace in Bougainville and the world is a poorer place for his departure."

New Zealand Foreign Minister Don McKinnon described the killing as an outrage: "I strongly urge all those involved to redouble their efforts to renew discussions and reach a peaceful settlement."

Professor James Griffin, a former head of the University of Papua New Guinea's history department, said Miriung's influence as well as his legal expertise would be missed. "I think he'll be very difficult to replace in view of his constitutional expertise and in view of his general standing," said Dr Griffin, who had known Miriung for 28 years.

Although official details of events surrounding his death were not known then, information pieced together indicated that Premier Miriung had flown to Konga on a helicopter chartered to fly South-West Interim Authority chairman Nick Peniai from Buka.

The reports said he was having dinner with his wife and four children at about 6.30pm on Saturday, October 12, when he was gunned down by at least two assassins under cover of the darkness.

Government officials said the full round of bullets was emptied at close range to the premier. A medical examination revealed that a high-powered weapon had been used.

When this issue went to press, no one had claimed responsibility for the killing.

However, Sir Julius, who called the assassination an act of madness, has assured the nation that the government

will use its full capacity to track down the murderers and bring them to account.

Police in Bougainville have indicated they have established some leads. They did not give further details. Miriung, 55, comes from Poma village, Nasios, Kieta district.

He was educated at the Tunuru Catholic Mission and Chabai from 1960 to 1965.

He attended the St Peter Channel Ulapia seminary in 1966 to study for priesthood but left after three years, joining CRA Exploration. In 1969, he enrolled at the University of PNG, attained a law degree in 1973 and was admitted to the bar in 1974.

The Miriungs moved to Arawa in March 1976 where he ran a private practice for four months.

In the years following, he was provincial legal officer and then provincial secretary, before resigning to become PNG's chief land titles commissioner. In December 1988, he was appointed acting National Court judge.

Miriung was asked by BRA leaders in 1991 to help plan the new government (Bougainville Interim Government), but left in February 1992 after a leaders' dispute.

He was later asked to assist in what they called the Supreme National Council under the BIG working committee prior to his election as the premier.

His body was flown to Port Moresby on October 14 for embalming and returned to Bougainville on October 17.

He was laid to rest at his village on October 18. ■

Mystery surrounds shooting

While the Papua New Guinea government is tight-lipped on the circumstances surrounding the assassination of Bougainville Transitional Government Premier Theodore Miriung, at least when police investigations into the shooting are still being conducted, speculations are rife that the security forces and resistance fighters were responsible.

There has been speculation that PNG Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan is considering holding an independent inquiry into the assassination following the receipt of an investigative report on the killing.

According to sources, the report claims seven junior-ranking PNG Defence Force soldiers and a resistance fighter were

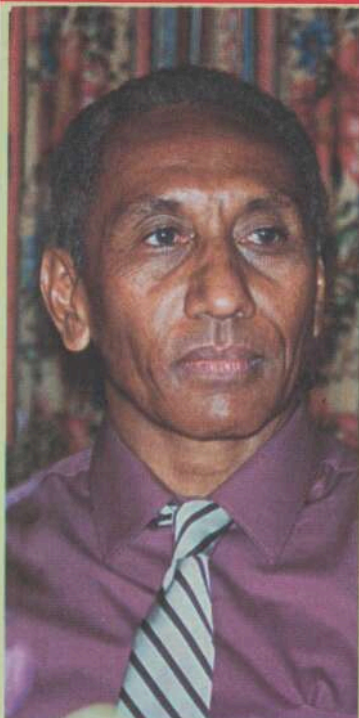
involved in the assassination. The resistance fighter, armed with a pump-action shotgun, and the soldier, armed with an M-16 rifle, shot Miriung in the back, the report alleges.

The soldiers were reportedly seen in an ambulance used by the PNGDF leaving the scene of the shooting a short time after the incident. According to an earlier report, Bougainville Revolutionary Army rebels claimed Miriung was killed by Sylvester Makau, a resistance forces commander from the Siwai area.

The rebels said Makau had used a high-powered rifle and was accompanied by two others to Kapana village.

The two allegedly provided cover while Makau carried

COVER STORIES



Sir Julius ... "Miriung was tireless in his search for permanent peace"

out the actual shooting.

Defence Minister Mathias Ijape and commander Jerry Singirok have ruled out any military involvement.

BRA leaders have denied any involvement in the incident, saying that if they had intended killing Miriung, they could have done so on one of his frequent visits to Arawa, including the time when his vehicle was burnt.

Sam Kaona is reported to have said that Miriung "has always been our good friend".

Supreme commander Francis Ona, on October 18, called for an independent investigation into the shooting in light of the allegations against security force members.

"The government of PNG needs to quickly carry out an independent inquiry or allow a neutral body to investigate the assassination and bring to justice the murderer(s)." Strong BRA support for Miriung was evident at his funeral in Arawa by the large number of rebels from the Central Bougainville area who attended.

Rebels from the area have voiced their shock over the killing and laid down their

arms as a show of respect.

However, possible BRA involvement has not been ruled out.

Suggestions that South-West Interim Authority chairman Nick Peniai was involved have also not been ruled out.

Peniai has remained silent on the matter. Journalists who attempted to interview him at Miriung's state funeral in Buka were told he had no comments to make.

According to information from the Bougainville administration, Peniai had accompanied Miriung to Konga in the Siwai area on October 12, and was about a kilometre away in the camp of the local resistance fighters, when Miriung was shot dead.

Meanwhile, the government appears to be firm in its decision to treat the issue as an internal matter, and not bow to outside pressures such as the recent call by Amnesty International to establish an independent inquiry into the shooting.

"In the past, extrajudicial executions have been carried out by both the PNGDF and the BRA," Amnesty claimed.

"Theodore Miriung's death is the latest in a long line.

"Sadly, it is unlikely to be the last such killing unless authorities demonstrate greater willingness to investigate human rights violations and bring their perpetrators to justice."

The call has come a little too late for the government, which has already established a local human rights commission.

Among their concerns, the commission will be focusing on abuses in Bougainville.

There has been no direct pressure on the government as yet from Australia, which provides most of the humanitarian support on Bougainville.

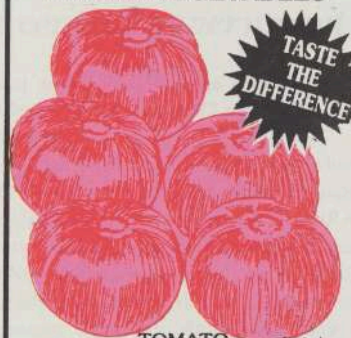
Although there were differences early in the year between leaders of both countries, especially over the alleged use of the Australia-supplied helicopters as gun ships on the island, these have long been ironed out.

The Australian military aid programme for PNG has also so far been unaffected by the killing.

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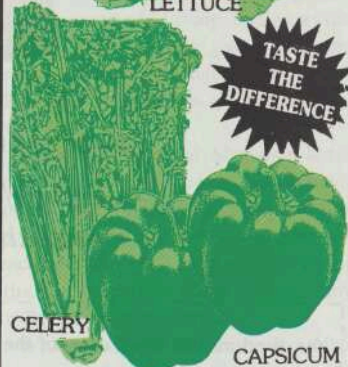
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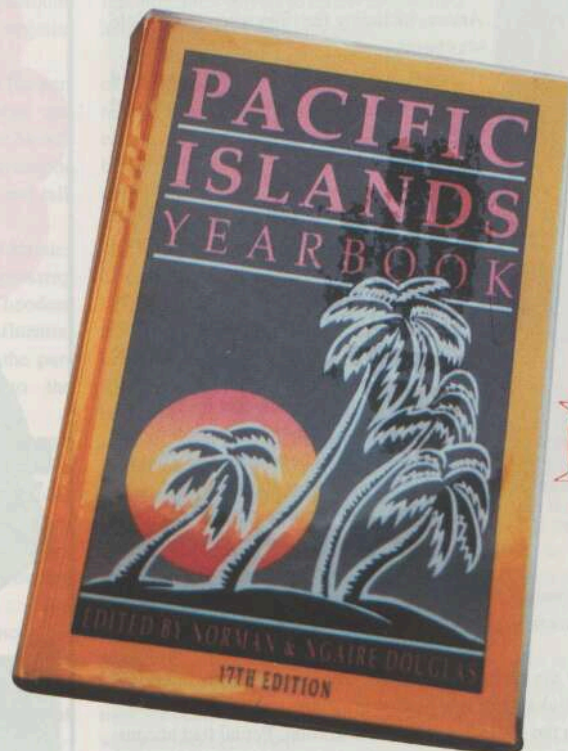


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OPINION

And who is to blame?

Miriung certainly opposed the BRA's campaign of violence but he had also become a thorn in the side of the central government

By Dr Karin von Strokirch

It may never be known who ordered the assassination of Theodore Miriung. In his attempts to peacefully resolve the Bougainville conflict, the island's premier alienated sections of the Papua New Guinea government and defence forces, as well as members of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army.

Nevertheless, assertions by PNG authorities that the BRA had most to gain by his death are misleading. Miriung certainly opposed the BRA's campaign of violence to achieve its aims, but he had also become a thorn in the side of the central government.

Miriung was appointed premier of the Bougainville Transitional Government in early 1995 because he was a moderate whom PNG sought to work with to isolate the secessionist BRA. The government recognised it could not control, much less overcome, the rebels by military force alone.

Yet Miriung was by no means a malleable puppet for the central authorities. From the outset, he chose a middle path between the two sides to the conflict.

The initial goal for Miriung's government was to achieve a ceasefire coupled with a resumption of essential services to Bougainville. The next plank in his campaign was to reach a consensus between the BRA, Miriung's own BTG and Bougainville members of parliament over the desired political status for the troubled island province. The final stage was to negotiate a political settlement with PNG.

Miriung was instrumental in bringing an end, albeit temporary, to hostilities. Thereafter his strategy and that of the PNG government began to diverge.

For Miriung and other moderates, the Sir Julius Chan government's rhetoric of seeking a negotiated solution to the crisis was far from convincing.

PNG did not support initiatives proposed in the Pan-Bougainville peace talks

hosted by Australia in December last year. Indeed, PNG forces attacked the BRA delegation on its way back to Bougainville after the meeting. Prospects for peace became more remote in March with Prime Minister Sir Julius' announcement that the ceasefire was over and the BRA's "darkest hour had come".

Signs of conciliation emerged in June as the PNG government reached an agreement with Miriung to contemplate a degree of autonomy for Bougainville. Yet, by excluding the BRA from discussions over the scope of autonomy, PNG ensured that any political settlement would not be endorsed by the rebels.

The gulf was widening between the BTG and Port Moresby over their preferred strategies for resolving the Bougainville crisis. Miriung's vision of autonomy for Bougainville was proving to be more expansive than that of the national government, and he saw little hope of a settlement without a ceasefire and full participation of the BRA in subsequent negotiations.

Notwithstanding Miriung's position and past failures at achieving a military solution, in June, the PNG Defence Forces launched a fresh offensive against the BRA. The BRA hardened its position and refused to countenance anything less than outright independence in return for negotiating an end to the conflict.

By this time, Miriung had become highly critical of PNG policy on Bougainville. From his perspective the military offensive was destructive and futile. He viewed the continuing deprivation of Bougainville civilians as "inhuman" and condemned extra-judicial killings by the PNGDF as "evil".

Miriung thus called for a referendum on Bougainville's future political status.

Clearly, Miriung was neither as moderate nor as pliable as PNG had originally hoped. The military restricted Miriung's freedom of movement. Miriung reported

that senior PNG defence personnel had labelled him a "criminal" and a BRA collaborator.

Tensions mounted in September when PNG Defence Minister Mathias Ijape alleged Miriung's involvement in a BRA attack at Kangu Beach in which a dozen PNG soldiers were killed. Ijape unsuccessfully called for Miriung's removal as premier. Thereafter Miriung was subject to surveillance by PNG security forces and by the anti-BRA Resistance vigilantes which PNG funded and trained.

Events came to a climax in late August at the Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum held to promote peace. The premier was to have officially opened the forum but was prevented from even attending by armed PNG forces. This was despite prior approval of the forum's right to proceed from all parties to the conflict.

Traditional chiefs and local people rallied in support of Miriung, issuing a condemnation of the PNG government and security forces for their treatment of Miriung and obstruction of a peace settlement.

Sir Julius' shock at Miriung's death and announcement of a state funeral in his honour have a hollow ring. Miriung was an advocate of moderation and non-violence but many PNG authorities found his principle stance and vision of autonomy for Bougainville unpalatable.

Without wishing to endorse the dubious record of the BRA, it is clear that the PNG government failed to rein in actions by the PNGDF and renegade ministers which were jeopardising the peace process. This placed Miriung in a vulnerable position which ultimately cost him his life.

Dr Karin von Strokirch is a lecturer in International Relations in the Department of Politics at the University of New England in New South Wales, Australia



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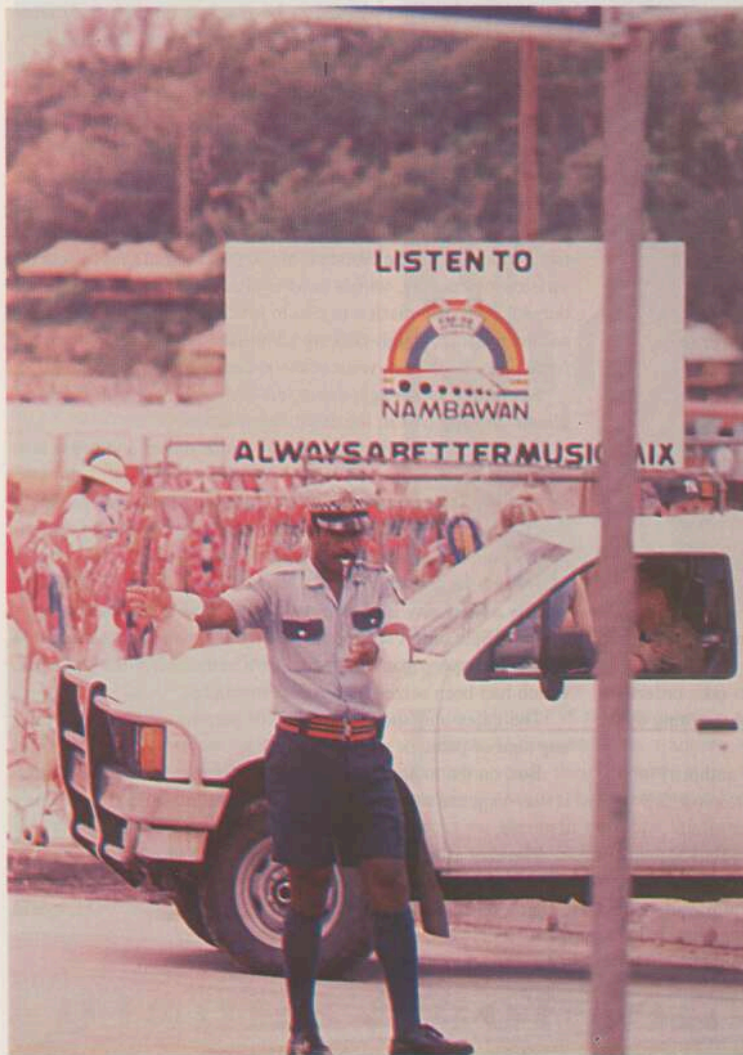
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SPECIAL REPORT

Vanuatu's 'coup' ... the Melanesian way



A police officer directs traffic in Port Vila. Paramilitary leaders abducted President Leye Lenelgau and Acting Prime Minister Barak Sope on Saturday over disputed outstanding salaries. Picture: AP

Reports by Patrick Decloitre

Saturday 12 October was a very special day in Vanuatu. As Port Vila woke up on this weekend, it found its paramilitary force, the Vanuatu Mobile Force (VMF), had staged what seemed like a coup, although they said it wasn't one.

Effectively, however, in the early hours on Saturday, at around 4am, they went to the president's house, took him with them, grabbed a pilot along the way and took off for Malekula, some 100 kilometres further north.

Their objective was to meet Deputy Prime Minister Barak Sope (who was acting while Prime Minister Serge Vohor was away in French Polynesia on a state visit). Sope was himself on official business on this northern island.

As tension mounted at Port Vila's Bauerfield airport, people slowly started to realise what had happened: President Jean-Marie Leye Lenelgau had effectively been kidnapped.

They also soon realised that international phone links had been cut.

The small Twin Otter came back to Port Vila, and the president was immediately released.

Sope, on his way back, had radioed a message to all ministers: they had to get ready for an urgent council of ministers. Soon after the plane landed in the capital, the council of ministers started to proceed.

Meanwhile top Vanuatu officers, including VMF commander Seule Takal, and Police Commissioner Luke Siba were held prisoners at the officers' mess, a reliable source in VMF said.

At Radio Vanuatu, another commando took over a studio and made an announcement to reassure the population: the Major Noel Tamata, who seemed to command the whole operation, said his men were now in control of the police and VMF.

But Tamata pointed out that it was not a coup – the sole purpose of the swift operation, codenamed "Thunderbolt", was for the VMF to finally obtain payment of some 110 million vatu (\$US980,000) in operations, travelling and subsistence allowances they claimed had been unpaid for three years.

The movement had stepped up in the preceding three weeks, with the VMF refusing to take any more orders from their commander and the police commissioner (who supervises them), withdrawing their guards from the president and prime minister's residences, barring access to their Cooks Barracks and closing down the fire station.

The week before, the VMF's "stand down" movement had forced the cancellation of Constitution Day celebrations.

Tamata called all 600 members of the mobile force and police to join him at the capital's Independence Park the same after-

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SPECIAL REPORT



Sope ... abducted

noon. "I will consider that those who aren't there do not want to stand by me," he said.

Two-thirds of the VMF had been refusing to take orders for nearly a month in the dispute and went on strike resulting in the Constitution Day cancellation.

The paramilitary force, which is under the authority of the police commissioner, is responsible for maintaining law and order and co-ordinating fire services and disaster relief.

The council of ministers soon after announced an agreement would be signed later the same day.

Sope, in a radio statement, appealed for calm and denied

rumours that Vanuatu would seek help from an "external force".

It's a problem we can solve ourselves, we don't need an external force," he said.

"The problem will be solved this afternoon."

President Leye Lenelgau also went on national radio to say he had "forgiven everything that had happened".

He said Melanesian custom called for pardons and reconciliation and urged that a solution be reached through traditional *nakamal*, which seeks to resolve disputes through consensus.

"Without our customs, we can do nothing," he said. "Return to the *nakamal*... If we use other means, we will lose ourselves."

Later the same day, an agreement was signed at Cooks Barracks between Sope and the stand down movement representative, Corporal Samson Kilman, 27.

The accord signed by Sope and Kilman provides for a suspension of high-ranking officers and settlement of the soldiers' pay demands. But the demands are to be assessed first by a commission of enquiry, which is to evaluate the sums to be reimbursed. The commission is also to investigate into possible maladministration by high-ranking administration officers within the force who, Sope said, were in the meantime to be suspended.

According to the agreement, no VMF member will be disciplined for their part in the stand down action.

In return, the soldiers agreed to resume duties and cease acts of insubordination.

"This was something that shouldn't have happened. But it was necessary so the government would take our demands seriously, which until now they haven't," said Kilman.

During the course of the day, especially on Saturday morning, usually a busy day in downtown Port Vila, business went on as usual; people didn't seem bothered by what was going on only a few metres away from the main street at the police headquarters, which had been seized by VMF commandos.

The cafes and shops were full of patrons who didn't betray any sign of panic or worry.

But, on the main street, something else caused a traffic jam – it was Vanuatu's only theatre group, Wan Smol Bag ... shooting a movie.

The day after, everything appeared to be back to normal, as announced, as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened ... but a sense of unease pervades the Island state. ■

Uneasy times for Vanuatu

Holding a president and an acting prime minister at gunpoint, cutting international phone links, controlling an airport and national radio are all ingredients of a coup. But the VMF commandos who carried out Operation Thunderbolt maintain they were not intent on seizing power, only to get what they were entitled to: unpaid allowances.

And by taking such drastic action, they

seem to have got what they wanted, and very quickly indeed.

"We are sad to have to do these things," said mobile force commander Louis Patu, who had only been in charge for two days. "When I left my house, my children saw me with a gun and cried. I felt bad. But I'm proud of the success of the operation because no shot was fired."

Although it all ended in an apparently

amicable atmosphere on that afternoon of Saturday, October 12, at the Cook Barracks with the signing ceremony, there remains, however, a sense of uneasiness in the capital.

"Things will never be the same again," some ni-Vanuatu residents of Port Vila said.

"They've gone too far," said one public servant, who is also a northern island

chief. He recalls that in November 1993, the Island state's public servants went on strike, claiming a 16 per cent pay rise. Four months later, most of them were sacked.

The other feeling is that this action has set a sad precedent in Vanuatu. Although the soldiers have always claimed they were not interested in seizing power, many here fear this example may have been watched with great interest by some, whose motivations are more political. And they fear that if the soldiers don't get exactly what they want again, they could once more take arms.

Vanuatu is particularly vulnerable in these times of political instability: there have been three governments in the past 10 months.

On September 30, only two weeks before Thunderbolt, Maxime Carlot was ousted in a motion of no confidence and his rival, Serge Vohor, who had resigned last February to avoid a similar motion against him, returned to power as the head of a coalition consisting of his Union of Moderate Parties (UMP), Walter Lini's National United Party (NUP) and the MTF group (a gathering of Sope's Melanesian Progressive Party, Vincent Boulekone's Tan Union and Albert Ratuva's Fren Melanesian Party).

And in the 50-seat parliament, the majority is still in the hands of two or three MPs who only need to cross the floor to shift the balance of power.

Hence, the statement by Carlot and his ally, Kalpokas, who two days after the 'industrial coup' assured their supporters they would come back to power soon. There is worry in the diplomatic circles that the absence of sanctions against the instigators might "bring down the whole system".

"It's the whole system, the authority of the government, of parliament and the president that will be discredited if no one is punished." Others doubt the solidity of principles of parliamentary democracy Vanuatu inherited at independence from its two former colonial powers, France and Britain.

"Vanuatu has lost another part of its innocence. Things will never return to what they were before," one diplomat said. ■

Pereleni – rugby's Terminator



From union to league Pereleni may be on the threshold of another career twist

By Atama Raganivatu

It is doubtful if Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, while en route to the moon and their "giant leap for mankind", would have recognised the specks on the earth they had left behind which were the Samoan Islands during Apollo Eleven's historic flight in July, 1969.

However, the people of Samoa were just as engrossed as the rest of the world in what became the first lunar landing.

The Pereleni family from Lefaga were particularly awe-struck; to the extent that they named their newest addition, who was born on the day of the launch, Apollo. Twenty-seven years later, Apollo Pereleni can also claim to be a high-flyer having made substantial impacts in both rugby league and rugby union.

It was Manu Samoa's astonishing campaign at the 1991 Rugby Union World Cup which propelled this particular Apollo to stardom. He had previously shown great promise, having represented

New Zealand at both secondary schools and Under 21 (Colts) levels, but the incomparable Michael Jones barred his way to both Auckland representative and All Black honours.

Pereleni had very limited experience at first-class level when asked to join the Western Samoan squad preparing for the World Cup. He jumped at the chance. Despite having left Lefaga for Auckland when an infant, he cherished his heritage.

Manu Samoa's opening World Cup match, against Wales, also marked Pereleni's international debut. His fearless tackling demoralised the Welsh that afternoon; paving the way for a sensational 16-13 win. One journalist covering the game dubbed him "The Terminator" and the nickname has stuck. Pereleni was equally prominent when facing Argentina, Australia and Scotland as Manu Samoa entered South Pacific folklore.

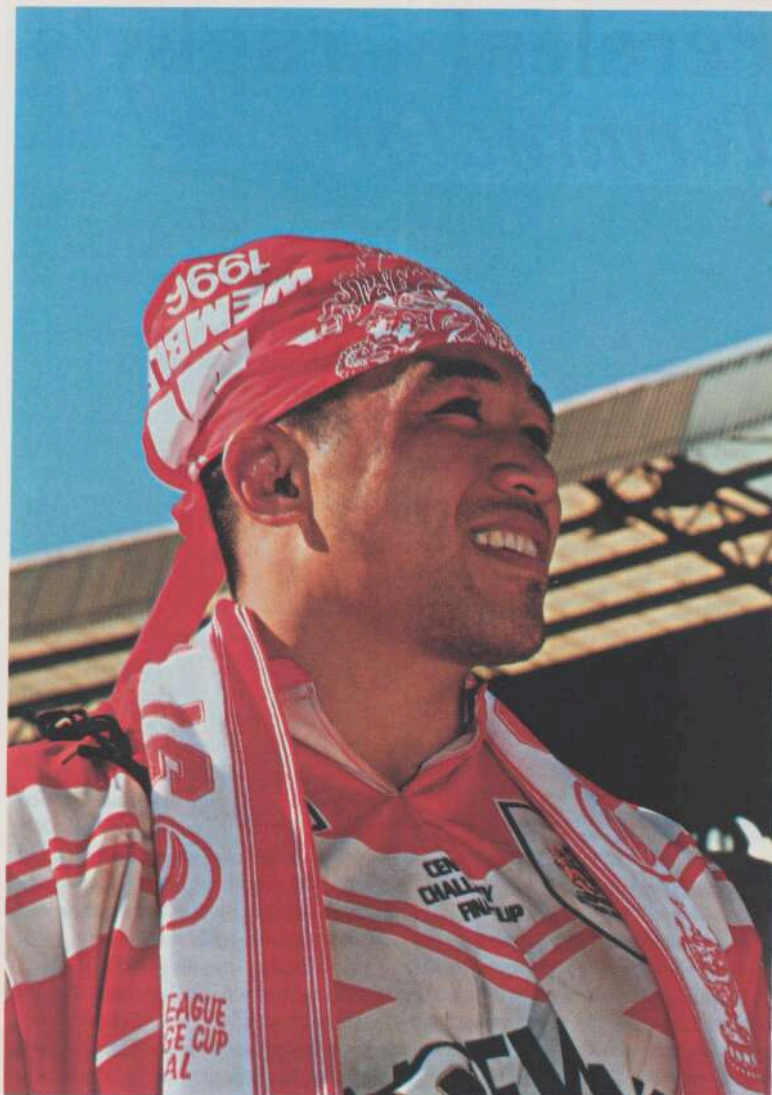
Pereleni's exploits in Britain earned him selection for the rest of the World XV which toured New Zealand the following year. The resultant Test appearance against the All Blacks further enhanced his international credibility.

Recruitment by the North Harbour provincial team in 1992 enabled Pereleni to appear regularly in New Zealand's premier domestic competition for the first time. But Manu Samoa remained his focal point until Va'aiga Tuigamala, the All Blacks' star winger and a greatly valued friend, joined the English rugby league club Wigan a year later.

Pereleni and "Inga the Winger" had been almost inseparable since they began attending the same junior school at five years of age. The friendship continued during their time at Kelston Boys' High School in west Auckland and into their adult lives as team-mates for the Ponsonby Rugby Union Club. Pereleni was the best man at Tuigamala's wedding.

After having proved himself an enormous success with Wigan and making a large sum of money in the process, Tuigamala implored Pereleni to join him in Britain. The cash rewards available in

SPORT



Apollo Perelini, named after the Apollo Eleven has been a high-flyer in his own domain. Pictures: Sig Kasatkin

rugby league began to appeal more and more to the Manu Samoa loose forward. His earnings from rugby union had always been meagre and he was beginning to question how much further he could go in the sport. When St Helens offered him a lucrative contract, he hesitated only a little while before signing it.

Perelini had intended to announce his switch to rugby league immediately after Western Samoa's Super 10 competition encounter with Auckland, only for St Helens to confirm English Press speculation about their acquisition a day earlier. Thus, under rugby union's laws at the time, he was required to watch from the

sidelines as Manu Samoa's stocks rose to unprecedented heights through inflicting the mighty Auks' first defeat by an overseas team for 13 years.

So revered was The Terminator within the side that they dedicated the win to him. It was a tearful Perelini who bade farewell to the team-mates he played alongside in 16 Tests and helped write international rugby's greatest Cinderella story.

Perelini must have often regretted his decision during the next few months as he struggled to come to grips with the disciplines demanded by rugby league, many of which were alien to him. Unlike their

rugby union counterparts, rugby league forwards are expected to maintain a defensive line and not follow the ball everywhere it goes. They are also required to make many more tackles during a game and 'hunt down' the ball carrier in gangs of two or three, rather than as individuals.

Being dismissed from the field for a head high tackle during one of his first games for St Helens also hindered the adjustment procedure.

When Perelini scheduled his wedding at Auckland to Selina Messer for a date in the middle of the English rugby league season, the Saints had no reservations about allowing him time away. But Tuigamala was much more indispensable to Wigan – they declined to let him act as best man.

Australian coach Shaun McRae must get credit for transforming Perelini from a struggling player to one of the most influential figures in British rugby league.

Immediately after taking over the club last year, McRae switched the Samoan from a second rower to a prop and then concentrated upon enhancing his defensive capabilities and enterprise with ball in hand. The vastly improved Perelini was a cornerstone of St Helens' success in the 1995–96 season, during which they captured both the Premiership and Challenge cups.

The highlight of a truly memorable campaign was the Challenge Cup final at London's famous Wembley Stadium before 70,000 spectators when a late Perelini try clinched success over the Bradford Bulls.

Despite standing at the summit of British rugby league now, Perelini may well be about to embark upon another career twist.

With rugby union at last fully professional and permitted to recruit players from the 13-a-side code, there is a definite possibility he will, at least temporarily, return to his first sporting love.

As *Pacific Islands Monthly* went to press, Manu Samoa coach Bryan Williams was endeavouring to secure Perelini for his team's forthcoming tour of Britain.

The sight of Perelini again displaying his bone-shattering tackling ability, forceful running and deft handling in the cause of their team would make every Western Samoan rugby union fan over the moon. ■

Jay soars to stardom

By Atama Raganivatu

It was only 10 years ago when Samoan actor Lamey Tupu lamented: "I have played German, French, Greek, Indian, Jewish, New Zealand Maori, English and American roles, but never somebody of my own nationality. There simply are not any parts for us."

Thankfully, things have changed a lot in the interim and Samoan characters are regularly being created for television and theatre productions in New Zealand, Australia and USA due to those countries' Samoan communities gaining in numbers and influence over the past decade.

Television director Hal McElroy recognised the relevance of modern Australia's Samoan population when insisting last year that a star of his forthcoming *Water Rats* series should be a member of it. He recalls: "The character was originally going to be an Italian. But then I realised that a high proportion of the workers in the Sydney fish market (where the programme is often set) are Polynesian and thought we'd portray one of them instead. Not only is it more realistic, but more interesting too."

So, the persona of Senior Constable Tommy Tevita was born and today Jay

Laga'aia, the actor who plays him, is a household name throughout Australia due to the show's popularity.

Laga'aia laughs when he is referred to as an overnight success.

A professional entertainer for exactly half his life, the 32-year-old has worked extraordinarily hard to gain fame and overcome numerous setbacks in the process. A remarkably versatile performer, he has combined acting with singing, playing the saxophone, dancing and songwriting (a tribute to basketball great Magic Johnson is his best known composition) and it was a part-time, local council fund-

COOK ISLANDS GOVERNMENT PRIVATISATION PROGRAMME

Expressions of interest are being sought by the Government of the Cook Islands from parties wishing to purchase its interests in the following:

- Cook Islands Savings Bank;
- Cook Islands Development Bank;
- Ports Authority;
- Airport Authority;
- Rarotonga Electricity Authority and the Ministry of Energy's outer islands operations;
- Public utilities including water, liquid waste and solid waste operations;
- Telecom Cook Islands;
- Cook Islands Liquor Supplies (assets and inventory only, i.e. CILS is not being sold with monopoly rights);
- Development rights to government lands in Rarotonga and the outer islands including the Rapae Hotel site on Aitutaki.

Parties wishing to participate in the tender process should register their interest in writing with:

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Wellesley Street
Auckland, New Zealand
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Authorised by Lloyd Powell, Financial Secretary and Chairman of the Privatisation Committee,
Government of the Cook Islands.

PROFILE

ed job teaching some homeless Auckland children how to play musical instruments which led to Laga'aia's first television role.

He featured in a documentary on the children and impressed the producers of this so much that they offered him a part in their next production, a drama series.

His versatility has kept him in good stead over the years. Included in Laga'aia's curriculum vitae are jobs as a television show host, the entertainments manager of a professional basketball team and appearances in countless television advertisements.

Those on behalf of a chain of tyre retailers and a campaign encouraging young New Zealanders to vote in elections are the most memorable.

In New Zealand, where Laga'aia moved to when an infant, he is

best known for his depiction of Judas in the stage musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* and spent 14 months touring the country with that show. He played Simon in its Australian production.

However, for many years true stardom eluded him and Laga'aia must have often wondered if he was destined to be just one amongst the thousands of journeymen in the entertainment industry as disappointments mounted up.

Laga'aia failed to gain a lead part in the hit musical *Miss Saigon* because of a back injury, a television talent show he had been scheduled to host was cancelled at the last moment, a proposed Australian-French mini series in which he had won a starring role became a victim of an anti-nuclear boycott, he was one of the very few Polynesian actors auditioned for the Hollywood film *Rapa Nui* not to appear in



Jay Laga'aia of TV's *Water Rats* fame ... "I am and always will be, a Samoan boy from south Auckland"

it and the producers of the highly claimed New Zealand film *Once Where Warriors* decided against casting him because he "did not look sufficiently like a Maori".

Then came *Water Rats*.

Laga'aia and 19 other Polynesian actors were screen tested by McElroy, who later exclaimed: "Jay was like a rocket, just the best. My boy, who is 12, said when he saw the audition tape, 'Dad, that's the guy, he's cool.' Most of Australia would probably agree with him now."

Before Laga'aia took Australian television by storm in *Water Rats*, his brother, Frank, was much better known on the island continent.

One of 10 siblings, Melbourne-based Frank is an entertainment personality with as many strings to his bow as Jay – being an acclaimed dance choreographer, as

well as a singer, dancer and songwriter.

Today, Jay's face is known throughout Australia and he has acquired fans of all ages. "I receive mail from 14-year-olds right through to 70-year-olds," he concedes. "It's all very flattering and a little overpowering."

"People just love Jay," *Water Rats* co-star Catherine McClements enthuses. "Everyone I talk to who watches the show tells me he is their favourite. He's become a heart throb."

But, Laga'aia is more than a mere sex symbol. He has reminded Australians of their relationship with the Pacific, a fact McElroy conveyed eloquently when stating: "Jay Laga'aia says to Australia, 'We're part of the Pacific, part of Polynesia. These people are part of our stories and we're part of their lives.'"

If only our politicians were as competent in building links between the Pacific Islands and Australia as Laga'aia!

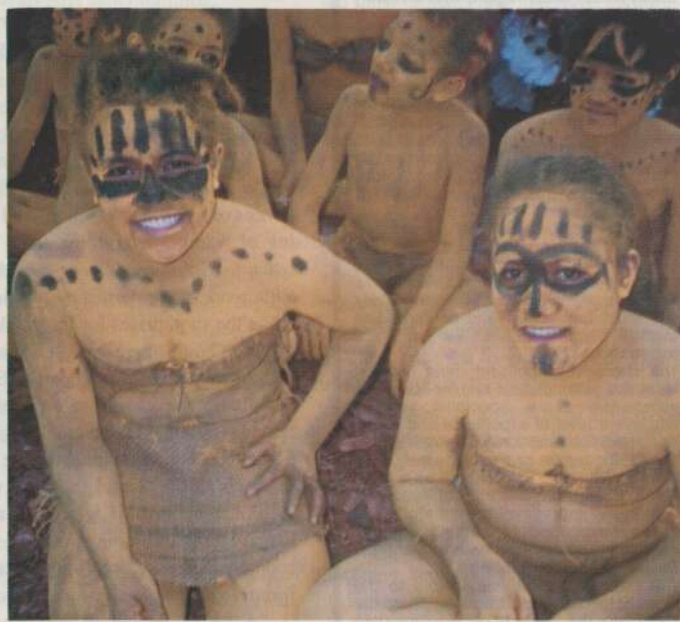
Laga'aia's wife, Sandie, previously a teacher in Auckland, where the couple's entire married life had been spent, recently moved to Sydney with their sons (Jeremy, aged 11, and three-year-old Matthew) and thereby ended Jay's commuting across the Tasman Sea, which he had been doing regularly for over a year.

Jay still finds difficulty in coming to terms with his newly acquired stardom and pinches himself to believe he is not dreaming at occasions such as when he rubbed shoulders with Robin Williams at the Sydney premiere of the American comedian's latest film, *The Birdcage*.

However, Laga'aia is adamant that success will never spoil him.

"I am, and always will be, a Samoan boy from South Auckland," he says reassuringly. ■

From the sublime to the absurd ... the Festival of Arts unveils its treasures



Part of the Cook Islands contingent (left) and Western Samoan Primary School students Pictures courtesy of Talamua Magazine

By Chris Peteru

It was a fitting fusion of cultures as Howard Morrison junior, the son of Maori entertainer Sir Howard Morrison, teamed with veteran Samoan entertainers the Yandall Sisters to close out the Seventh Pacific Festival of Arts.

Because, for 10 stunning days, 2000 musicians, dancers and artisans, from 21 neighbouring Islands stood as one and saturated crowds with a canvas of performances that breathed life into the festival's theme of "*Tala Measina*", that is, unveiling of treasures.

The only sub par performance was government efforts to turn a celebration of identity into a platform of cultural misinformation

It was often uplifting, sometimes sombre but consistently full of Pacific pride and passion.

"I almost didn't make it because I thought it was going to be just a dance

circus like that Mormon cultural centre in Hawaii," said Palauan dancer Lina Tivo, "but this, this was from the heart."

As participants and tourists hailed the event a success, despite niggly things like timetable clashes, the only sub par performance came in the shape of several efforts by the government to turn a celebration of identity into a platform for cultural misinformation.

Rain drenched the opening of the festival and the wet welcome also had an effect on the water. Two ocean-going canoes from yesteryear voyaged from the Cook Islands and neighbouring American Samoa. Although *T Au o Toga* (Southern Mist) under the helm of former Cooks Prime Minister Sir Tom Davis made the five-day sailing easily, "it's all about following the zenith star", the Samoan vessel, *Folauga o Samoa* (Navigators of Samoa) was plagued with problems from the start. As the 30-foot boat was being taken to its launching site, the low brow crane carrying her careered into the ocean

smashing the main outrigger, and left many saying the incident was a divine message about not launching a boat on a Sunday.

At sea, what should have been a bit of island hopping became an ordeal with huge waves almost enveloping the vessel. Eventually, the *Foulauga Samoa* had to be towed the final stretch into Apia Harbour. "We were surfing out there," a relieved co-skipper, Tau Hunkin, said following the 19-hour roller-coaster ride.

Back on land, delegates settled into their digs, many living at three converted high schools near Apia, or one of half-a-dozen billeting villages. Hotels across the island were booked out.

After-hours partying packed out bars and nightclubs, prompting plenty of impromptu performances and late-night revelry around town. The winner? The Tokelauans' Maori *haka* on the back of a bouncing pick-up truck going through Apia's main street. And the jubilant Papua New Guineans singing on the bus

Job Description for PTC Director
"Director of Postgraduate Training at
the
Fiji School of Medicine"
A new position

Term of Appointment

Two year fixed term appointment, subject to an initial three month probation period.

Location

Fiji School of Medicine (FSM), Suva, Fiji

The Fiji School of Medicine is the principal Health Sciences training institution in the South-West Pacific region, with a history dating back to 1885.

Following the resolutions of the Pacific Ministers of Health Conference, at Yauca Island (Fiji) in 1995, the FSM has initiated postgraduate training programmes in three areas (Anaesthesia, Child Health and Obstetrics/Gynaecology). Other programmes are due to start in the next six to twelve months, including General Surgery, Internal Medicine and Public Health.

Qualifications and experience

The FSM is looking for a highly motivated individual with a proven record in the area of health development in the Pacific region, and with sensitivity to the particular needs of Pacific Island Countries. He/she must have basic and postgraduate medical qualifications which are registrable in Fiji.

The successful applicant must have at least five years clinical and/or academic experience as a specialist, or an equivalent level of experience and expertise in medical workforce development, in the Pacific region or similar setting. He/she must be able to work well as a team member with a wide range of specialist colleagues and administrative staff.

Previous experience in running postgraduate training courses will be an advantage.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Director will be responsible to the Head of the FSM, and through him, to the Head of the Board of Postgraduate Studies, for —

- * Ensuring that a sustainable structure for postgraduate training is developed.
- * Coordination of Curriculum Development.
- * Strengthening of Postgraduate Faculty.
- * Liaising with Pacific Island Countries to determine health workforce needs, and to ensure that the training courses that are developed, address these needs.
- * Providing quarterly progress reports to the Head of the FSM.

This is a new position, and we are looking for a person with the drive, vision and initiative that will be required to establish and ensure sustainability of this vital area in the field of health training in the Pacific region.

Appropriately qualified Pacific Islanders are urged to apply.

Salary and conditions

An attractive remuneration package will be provided commensurate with his/her qualifications and experience.

Applicants should expect to be able to occupy the post by February 3, 1997, if not sooner.

Interested applicants should apply in writing to:

The Head, Fiji School of Medicine,
Private Bag, GPO Suva, Fiji, or contact
the Head, Dr J Samisoni, Ph No.
(679) 304273, and Fax No.
(679) 303469.

Applications must include the names and contact numbers of three referees. Applications should be received by November 18, 1996.

ARTS

home after giving another knockout performance. It also put smiles on the business community's face, with the Department of Trade, Industry and Commerce estimating a welcome \$US204,000 boost in over-the-counter sales.

"Pacific cultures are not really primitive people, they are very together"

The festival village, a cluster of grass huts located behind the government square in the middle of town, was given over to dozens of live demonstrations and the selling of wares — everything from Tahitian mats to Solomon Islands woodcarving. With work of premium quality being crafted on the spot, prices for the goods tended to range somewhere between this galaxy and the next one; an ornamented Solomon Islands bowl with intricate painting destined for a dining table would set you back \$US450, a handsize Tongan bone carving of a noble \$US90 bucks. Still, it was free to browse, and the advice the craftsman happily gave out to anyone keen to listen soon characterised the village as akin to a forum to exchange skills and ideas.

"A lot of people in Western society have realised Pacific cultures have a lot to offer and that they are not really primitive people, they are actually very together people," says American woodcarver Shane Eagleton. "What I've learnt about woodcarving is that you can do it anywhere in the world. You have just got to have the right attitude. The village setting is a good way to present it."

An opera was ruled out because it depicted Samoans as cannibals

The first sign of the Samoan government's point scoring was in naming the impressive village stage. Built on an artificial lake at the seaside-end of the government square, many overseas visitors thought Leafa Vitale was a famous Samoan author, pioneer or cultural icon perhaps — not the minister of public works, whose name made festival history splashed a la rock star across a large billboard at the front of the platform.

Polynesian mythology has Tagaloa as the god of creation. However, Samoan



Ten days of Pacific pride

officials, for unexplained reasons, downplayed Tagaloa with Nafanua, the war goddess. A drama by students at the National University of Samoa titled *In the Arms of Tagaloa* had to be renamed to be included in the festival.

An opera about the Samoan king Malietoa, who put a stop to cannibalism, was ruled out because it depicted (accurately) Samoans as cannibals.



"As this theme was meant to be the unveiling of the best in our artistic and cultural treasures, it is unhealthy to censor what should be the foundation of our spiritual, artistic, and physical development as people and individual nations," said publisher Apollo Lance Polu who was on the Festivals Arts subcommittee.

A Samoan, offended by penis gourds and bare-breasted women, tried to lash a performer with a coconut frond. The PNG warrior had to be talked out of retaliating with his bow and arrows

If Christian ethics was the spur for such censorship, it was in short supply when one local and a performer from Papua New Guinea were involved in an onstage scuffle during an evening performance. The Samoan, offended at the male penis gourds and bare-breasted women, tried to lash his victim with a coconut frond. It sparked an angry response from the PNG warrior who had to be talked out of retaliating with his bow and arrows. What riled New Guinea officials more was that soon after the man was escorted away by police he was allowed to go and remained at the venue.

"In PNG the police would have beaten him up on the spot, it needs to be dealt with severely," advised Governor John Tekwie of the Sundaun Province where the group, performing publicly for the first time, was from.

TVS insisted they had total copyright in a country where there are no copyright laws

Cultural and Tourism Minister Micheal Nali, who said a pullout of the 200-strong contingent was considered, raised the issue with his Samoan counterpart, Luagalau Levaula Kamu. Both prime ministers were informed. "We will not change our performances to suit any individuals or personal taste or philosophy. If someone out there has difficulty in adjusting to our public appearance, they will have little choice but to live it," said Nali. "If you try to make us something that we aren't then you've killed us."

Kanaky dance group leader Jimmy

Laula said: "Well, I suppose it might have offended some people, but it is a part of their culture. It depends also on what people are looking for and whether it is a primitive culture or not. I don't think that there are any countries who didn't come here without the intention of presenting the most fundamental, the most traditional of its culture." In court, the assailant was later charged and fined.

For those watching in their homes, the festival was covered well by state-owned Televisi Samoa. Arguably, the station's (which went to air in 1993 and has a total of three cameras) stand-out festival achievement was cutting off the spectacle to a potential audience of millions by what appeared to be a move to make a fast buck. Two weeks before the festival began, the network suddenly announced it was lifting the fee for overseas film crews from \$US500 to \$US5000. That signalled the immediate cancellation of four overseas film crews, including Television New Zealand's *Tagata Pasifika* whose director, Stephen Stehlin, slammed the fee hike as "outrageous". TVNZ had prepared a shooting schedule of four half-hour programmes, and would have gained plenty of mileage from viewing audiences.

An 11th-hour written plea from Pacific Islands News Association president Monica Miller for the prime minister to intervene was ignored. In the end, only a New Caledonian film crew arrived, primarily to shoot footage in preparation for hosting the 2000 festival, but they left early. Hilariously, TVS insisted they had total copyright over all filming of the festival in a country where there are no copyright laws. The end result was a loss of goodwill with foreign networks and a loss of global coverage. The upside? TVS selling \$US28.00 video tapes of the event.

The quality of the performances remained exceptional throughout

Videotapes may be the only way for many to capture performances missed as timetables were often rearranged without the public being aware. The quality of those performances remained exceptional throughout.

"We asked for *Tala Measina* and I think we got it – the best from the Pacific, that was seen and shared," smiled co-ordinator Tauiliili Meredith.



and passion Pictures: Chris Peteru

Hanging over all this, from the government building on Beach Road, was a four-storey-high banner that proclaimed "Samoa the legend that became a nation" and intimated a causal link between the prime minister, Nafanua, the former cannibal blue blood, Malietoa, and the advent of Christianity. To many who knew their level-one Samoan history, this was *Tala Measina* visits Disneyland.

Remember your Friend

There are times in your life when you feel your friends have been missing out on something good. Now's your chance to do something about it and share with them one of the good things you have. Buy your friend a subscription to Pacific Islands Monthly and let him or her join you and thousands of other people worldwide who are kept informed of the latest political, social and cultural changes taking place in the Pacific.

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South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

Vacancy: Head, Finance and Administration Division

Applications are invited for the above position with the SPREP Secretariat in Apia, Western Samoa. The position will become vacant in January 1997.

SPREP is an intergovernmental organisation responsible for advising on and assisting with environmental issues in the South Pacific region on behalf of the governments and administrations of 22 Pacific Islands countries plus 4 developed countries. Some 50 staff work under the overall supervision of a Director, who is assisted by a Deputy Director and 4 Heads of Divisions including Finance and Administration.

Duties

The Head, Finance and Administration Division is responsible to the Director, through the Deputy Director, for the Secretariat's finance and administration functions and for the effective management of the Division. More particularly, but without limitation, the officer is required to:

- provide sound advice and assistance to management and staff on all aspects of the Secretariat's finance and administration requirements and procedures;
- ensure that all financial transactions are in accordance with approved Financial and Staff Regulations;
- prepare regular and timely financial reports for management, Work Programme Divisions, individual projects, donors and members;
- prepare annual financial statements for audit and submission to Meetings of Members;
- prepare all financial information required for the Secretariat's annual Work Programme and Budget process;
- advise other Heads of Division and Project Officers on all financial and budgetary matters affecting their activities;
- maintain effective control of SPREP's assets, including bank accounts, local and foreign currency reserves, vehicles, office furniture, equipment and supplies and technical equipment;
- approve delegated responsibilities under the Financial and Staff Regulations;
- supervise the work of all staff in the Finance and Administration Division; and
- carry out such other duties as may be required from time to time.

Qualifications and Experience

Applicants must have completed formal accounting or commerce qualifications from a recognised tertiary institution and have at least ten years relevant work experience, for which service in the South Pacific region would be well regarded. Other essential attributes include an excellent understanding of modern accounting systems with experience in financial reporting at management level, well-developed computer skills particularly in the use of spreadsheets and computerised accounting packages; proven management experience, inter-personal and communications skills, the ability to work with interdisciplinary and multi-cultural teams and to prepare reports proposals to deadlines often under difficult circumstances. Previous experience in a similar position, and/or in a Pacific Islands environment, would be highly regarded. The role suits a team player who is able to motivate and lead staff.

Conditions

This is a senior position and the appointment will be made at Head of Division level with salary depending upon qualifications and experience. The package will include annual return airfares for appointee and dependents, a housing subsidy and other benefits. SPREP remuneration may be tax-free depending upon circumstances. The appointment will be for 3 years initially, with renewal for a further 3 years depending upon the officer's performance during the first term.

Applications

Applications must be accompanied by detailed curricula vitae including information on qualifications and experience, previous appointments, current position and salary and names and phone or fax numbers of 3 persons associated with the applicant professionally who would be prepared to provide testimonials. Please also indicate how soon you would be available.

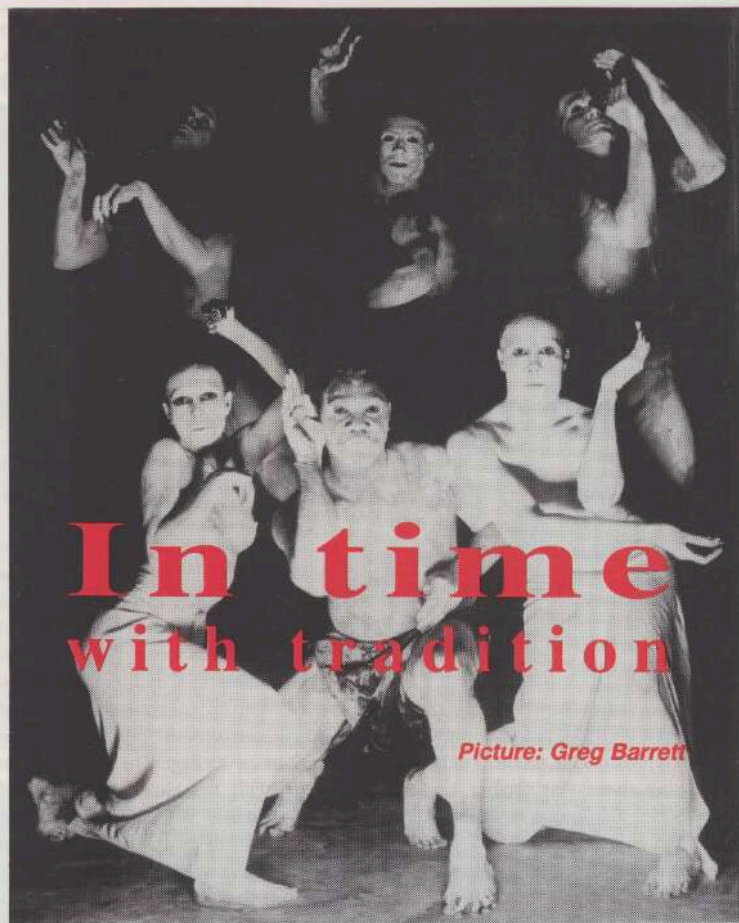
Applications are to be addressed to:

The Director
SPREP
PO Box 240, Apia
Western Samoa

Telephone: (685) 21929
Fax: (685) 20231
E-mail: sprep@pactok.peg.apc.org

Further information, including a full job description and a schedule of terms and conditions of appointment, can be obtained from SPREP's Administration Officer, Mrs Malama Hadley, at the above numbers.

Closing Date: 31 December 1996



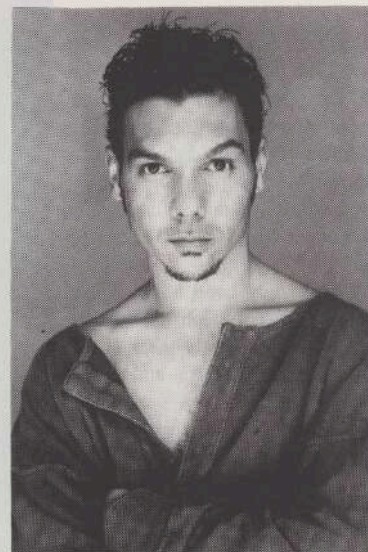
By Liz Thompson

I first met Stephen Page six years ago when I was researching a book about contemporary Aboriginal artists, writers and performers. At the time he was with the Sydney Dance Company working with choreographer Graham Murphy. He told me then that he was interested in traditional Aboriginal bodies: "They are completely different from the anatomy that we are so used to. The Aboriginals keep their heel on the ground for so long without even lifting it off while they squat on the ground." Page began to work out a routine to develop this movement and found that many Aboriginal dancers were able to do it. He also encouraged exercises in which dancers would spend a whole day in a parallel line concentrating. This, he said, inspired the sense of focus he sees in traditional dancers.

Page was interested in drawing influence from traditional Aboriginal dance

but never copying it. Ownership of traditional dance comes under strict laws of custodianship – performers like Page are not allowed to use movements which do not belong to them without the permission of these custodians – besides which Page was not seeking to imitate but to create something new, a fusion of traditional and contemporary, a dance which expressed his own reality, a dance form unique to Australia which drew on his own cultural roots but which also expressed his urban reality, his own existence. In this way, his vision of a kind of fusion was also to act as a bridge between black and white, a meeting, a step towards reconciliation.

Now, six years later, he has realised many of these dreams. In 1991 Page became artistic director of Bangarra, an Aboriginal dance company, the first professional indigenous dance group in Australia and initially formed to showcase talent from Sydney's National Aboriginal



Stephen Page ... a burning flame in Australian dance

and Torres Strait Islander Dance School.

Bangarra means "to make fire" in the Wirandjuri language of New South Wales. The logo of Bangarra represents a flame, the headdress of a Torres Strait Islander warrior and the point of a spear used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island hunters. Bangarra and its recent production *Ochres* has hit the Australian dance scene by storm. Page is now acclaimed as an outstanding choreographer and performer.

In 1993, under his creative directorship, Bangarra was voted the joint winner of the prestigious Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award and Page was recipient of the 1993 Mo Award for Dance Performer of the Year. He also won Best Director at the 1995 Green Room Awards for his direction of *Ochres*. He recently received an inaugural Young Australian Creative Fellowship worth \$US26,000 from then Prime Minister Paul Keating. Most recently Page was appointed choreographer and artistic director of the Olympic Flag Handover Ceremony for the 1996 Atlanta Games Closing Ceremony.

One of 12 children – six girls and six boys – Stephen is a descendant of the Mundaldjali clan of the Yugambeh tribe in south-east Queensland.

"We had a good upbringing," he says. "With a big family you're really close and communication is a really important

ARTS

thing. We were always told to communicate no matter what happened to us. The funny thing is that though we struggled in our family, entertainment was always a big thing. Mum and Dad would always tell us stories. We couldn't afford to go to the pictures and things like that, so my sisters would put on shows for us."

This family bond has remained strong as two of Stephen's brothers, Russel and recently Kirk Page, dance with Bangarra and David Page, another brother, works as a composer and performer with the company. David has composed and performed in numerous productions as well as creating music for television including the theme music for the ABC TV series *Heartland*, for which he received a nomination for an APRA Award. It is his startling soundtrack, produced in collaboration with Stephen Page and Bernadette Walong, to which *Ochres* is performed. Like the dance itself, it combines traditional sounds and rhythms, clap sticks and didgeridoo with contemporary influences and urban music.

Ochres is divided into four parts: Yellow (women's business), Black (men's business), Red (relationships) and White (spiritual cleansing). These four colours are also those of the Aboriginal flag.

To open the dance, Djakapurra Munyarryun, who is from Yirrakala Aboriginal Community in the Northern Territory and acts as both a cultural consultant and performer with Bangarra, crouches on his haunches and begins to paint his body with yellow ochres. Before



Ochres by Bangarra Dance Theatre Picture: Ashley de Prazer

your eyes he is transformed into a mystical figure of the spirit world. Yellow follows and represents the mother landscape, "its flowing rivers that cleanse her, the yellow ochre she dresses in, the sun and seasons she nourishes".

It is danced by four women slowly and, with tremendous power they illustrate the "gathering, nesting and birthing of this image". In Black the dance by four men takes place to a powerful musical collage drawing on buffalo and stick dances from Yirrakala, but also from 1990s black urban dance music. Red explores relationships between men and women. Its four contrasting sections – youth, obsession, poison and pain – and all the ensuing struggles which take place with them are portrayed through the dance.

In White, Mother Earth calls the white ochre spirits to prepare them for a journey – the painted bodies of the dancers emerge ethereal from behind rocks and bushes to stand tall like ghost gums glimpsed on a dark night before they are consumed again by the blackness. Munyarran, the elder, watches over them.

Ochres has toured extensively, travelling to Indonesia, China, Hong Kong, New York, London, Berlin, Tokyo and Noumea as well as all over Australia. In 1993 Bangarra did the Back Yard Tour in

the Northern Territory when they took the performance to Yirrakala. They danced in the light of the camp fire and the moon, something Page had expressed the desire to do six years before.

When Page began dancing with NAISDJA (National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association) he recalls how "once a year we were sent to remote areas to learn from the elders, and I went to Yirrakala in Arnhem Land". He was adopted into the tribe and introduced to ochre as a visual art and also its sacred purposes in ceremonies. "To take that essence into a contemporary dance was," he says, his dream.

This adoption by the people of Yirrakala, alongside the fact that Djakapurra Munyarryun is from the community, has meant that Bangarra has been able to draw inspiration from traditional dance in

this area. Munyarryun grew up learning of his people's traditional dance and ceremonies; as a teenager he travelled in Australia with the elders teaching and conducting dance workshops. Today he frequently has to return to Yirrakala to take part in traditional ceremonies, weddings, births and funerals as, without his advice and consent, traditional dance cannot be performed.

Eventually he will return home to teach but for now he is integral to the company's philosophy. Not only is he a superb dancer, he is a powerful link with traditional Aboriginal culture. Only when he is performing with them is Bangarra allowed to use traditional dance movements from Yirrakala.

Munyarryun successfully manages to move between two worlds, a teacher in both. He is a bridge, the bridge which represents what Bangarra is all about. "That is the future for us," says Jan Pinkerton, the first white dancer to be accepted into the Bangarra Dance Company, a step towards reconciliation on stage. Tokyo International Festival managing director Nakane Tadao, who invited Bangarra to Japan, goes so far as to say that Bangarra is "not only the cultural identity of new Australia, but the future identity of Asia-Pacific arts". ■

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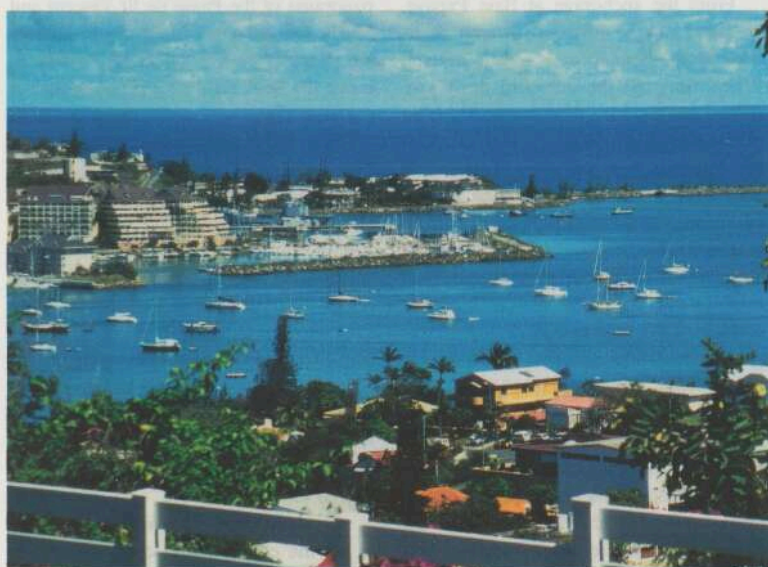
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Registration of Interest — please send your name and address and we will forward a description of Plant and Moulds with photographs. For an appointment to view the equipment please phone Gary Ohi at (61-77) 83 3432 or John Honeycombe phone (61-77) 83 2344, after hours (61-77) 83 1342, fax (61-77) 83 2079.

Baguettes and bureaucracy



One of the faces of New Caledonia Pictures: Sally Andrew



Overlooking Noumea's beautiful harbour

By Sally Andrew

Landfalls are exciting but challenging – reefs, shipping traffic and other navigational hazards can tax a weary crew. And often, relief at being in port is ruined by endless rounds of paper-

work. Noumea is different. Baie de la Moselle marina is absolutely wonderful – top-notch facilities, great people, a free night on the dock for visiting yachts. Their helpful staff welcomes cruisers with open arms and makes all arrival arrangements for quarantine, customs and immi-

gration clearance. It couldn't be easier.

Our formalities were completed quickly. We tracked down our friend, Jean-Baptiste Portier, on his French yacht, *Fuli*. He stopped by *Fellowship* later that evening and we cracked open a bottle of French wine, then tore into some fresh baguettes and blue cheese. It was a brilliant opportunity to catch up on each other's lives.

But even in paradise, bureaucracy can rear its ugly head.

In New Caledonia it was immigration. The standard one-month visa is not long enough to cruise to the outer isles of the Loyalty group and back. So we searched out the Bureau d'Etrangers – we soon took to calling it the "Bureau of Strangers" – and requested an extension.

The town of Noumea has lots of charm. Old buildings dating to the late 1800s stand alongside modern shops filled with exotic French and European goods. It has a colourful market where Kanak ladies in modest Mother Hubbards sell their fresh fish and vegetables. Noumea also boasts beaches where female tourists, wearing little more than mono-kinis, can worship the sun. The Latin quarter is filled with cafes, on the side streets there are crafts shops such as *Le Coin du Cuir* and, near the marina, an icon of American culture – McDonalds.

Noumea's museum has a good selection of common and ceremonial artefacts, including wood carvings, masks, petroglyphs and pottery from New Caledonia, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea. It is the best South Pacific Island museum – or would be, if the descriptive labels were bilingual.

A walking tour of Noumea is not complete without a trip to Mt Coffyn, after which you feel like you need one. The view from the top is spectacular – you can see all the islets and reefs as far away as the Amedee Lighthouse.

Down in the Latin Quarter we renewed ourselves with a citron sorbet and a double espresso. The nearby *patisserie* was filled with mouth-watering pastries bursting with calories, and cakes that cost \$30 and \$40. Unfortunately, we had a

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View from Fort Tereka (1878) just outside the capital, Noumea

baguette-sized budget.

There are several places to moor a boat in and around Noumea. Baie de la Moselle is very convenient to downtown, but Baie de l'Orphelinat, shortened to "Bay D'orf" by tongue-tied Anglophone cruisers, is closer to Noumea's beaches, hotel district, and new shopping centre.

Yachts from around the world enjoy stopping in Noumea for a taste of France. Jane and Shelly DeRidder on Canadian yacht *Magic Dragon* have made nine trips to New Caledonia so we picked their brains on all the places to see and things to do. That morning's coffee was the start of a new friendship.

When we returned to *FellowShip*, we hoisted both anchor and sails, then coasted downwind to Baie Maa. We stretched our legs with a walk through the dry, grassy, almost treeless rolly country. A few palm trees were growing near the beach elsewhere we found ghostly, twisted, silvery trees with peeling bark. The earth was a rich red – an insidious blood-colour that ruins socks, shoes, foredecks, anything it touches.

The river at Port Laguerre is a good hurricane hole for yachts and we toured the waterway by dinghy with Jim and Ann

Cate of American yacht *Insatiable*.

From the anchorage at Baie Papaye, we raced into the mangrove swamp, throttled back, then cruised gently upriver. When Jim shut the outboard down, we drifted quietly with the current, listening to the sounds of the birds, marvelling at the reflections of the mangroves in the still, green water. On our way to Ilot Moro, we considered stopping at Tanguet and several other sandy isles along the way but the wind was good, the sun was bright, the tide was low. With such perfect conditions, we kept going.

Turtles surfaced like submarines, heads erect, to spy on us. Although an endangered species, turtles are legal quarry in New Caledonia three months of the year. We anchored shortly after noon, packed a lunch and rowed ashore. Goat trails cut across the island, which has raised limestone outcrops interspersed with casuarina and bush. The only inhabitants are yellow and black striped sea snakes. Further north, Ile Ducos proved a beautiful island, sparse on vegetation but loaded with wild goats and horses. A rancher lives on the north-west coast.

We walked a circular loop to the east and north side of the island for some fan-

tastic vistas. The highest peak gave us a panorama of the Passe de St Vincent and lovely sandy islets strung along the reef like beads. It was much too windy to move the boat, so we remained secure in the snug anchorage.

The wind dropped overnight and *FellowShip* was southbound at the crack of dawn. By noon, we had our anchor down in a sandy patch behind the reef at Kuendu Beach, five miles from Noumea. In 1864, the first convict settlement buildings were built here.

Now, however, a hotel with Melanesian-style cottages lines the beach. After lunch, we walked up to Fort Tereka (1878) at the far west end of Ile Nou where four big 138mm cannons mounted on wheels were set up in 1894-96 to defend the harbour.

From this vantage point we were able to see the entire central chain of Grande Terre.

Back in Noumea, we trudged back to the Bureau of Strangers to see if our request had been approved.

Hooray! We left our passports and patiently waited one more week. In the end, it took nearly a month to get our two-month visa extension. ■

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