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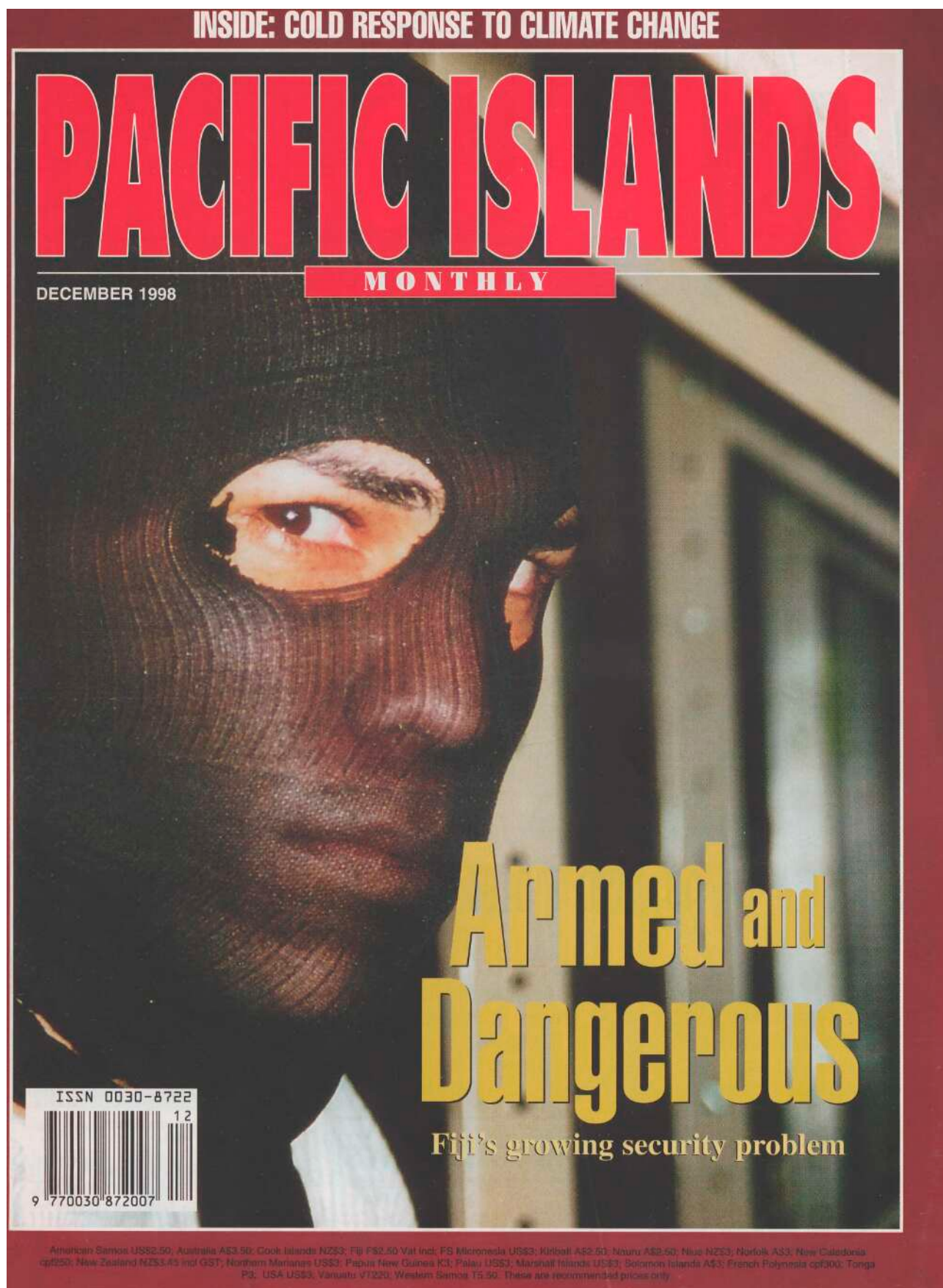
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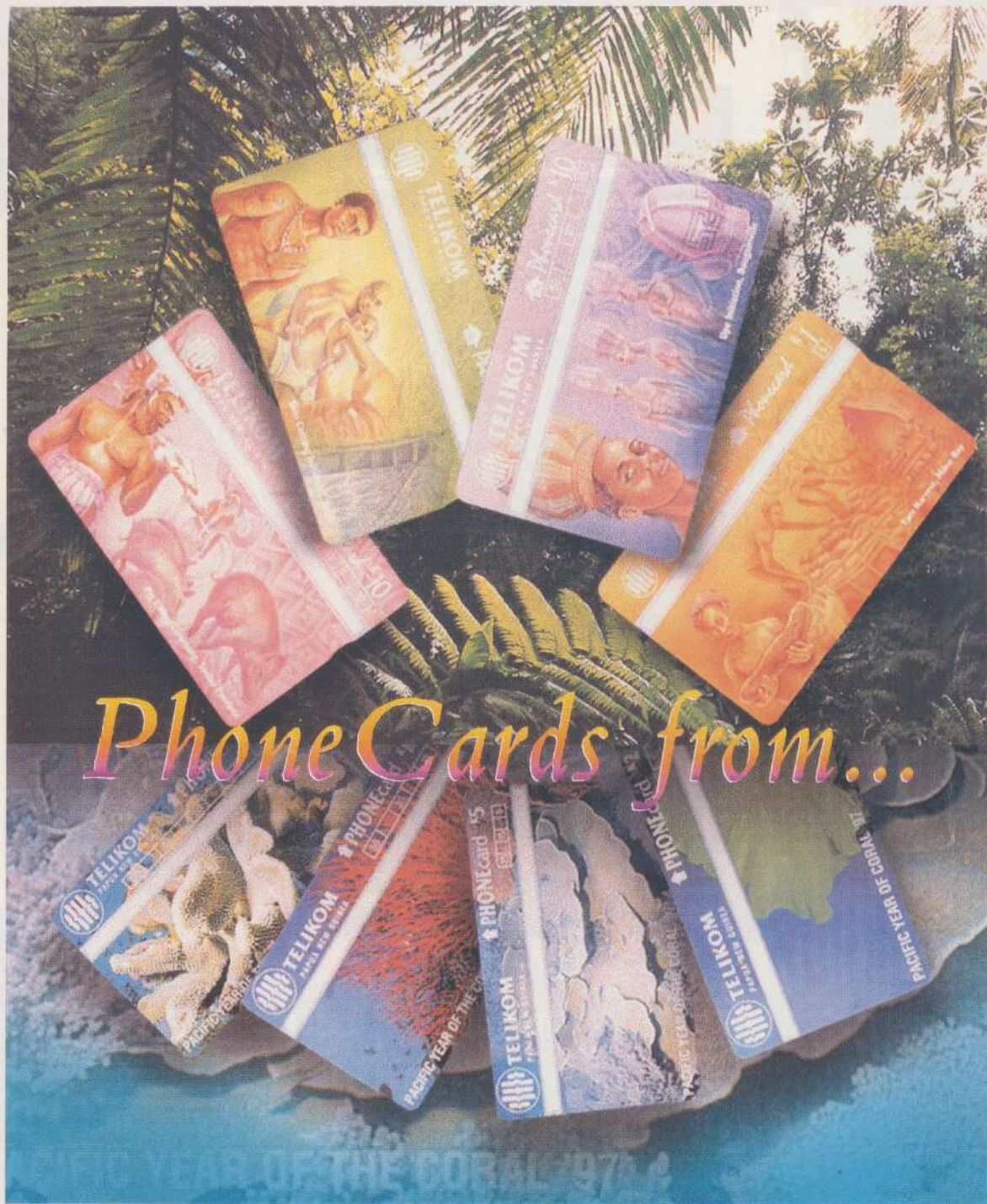
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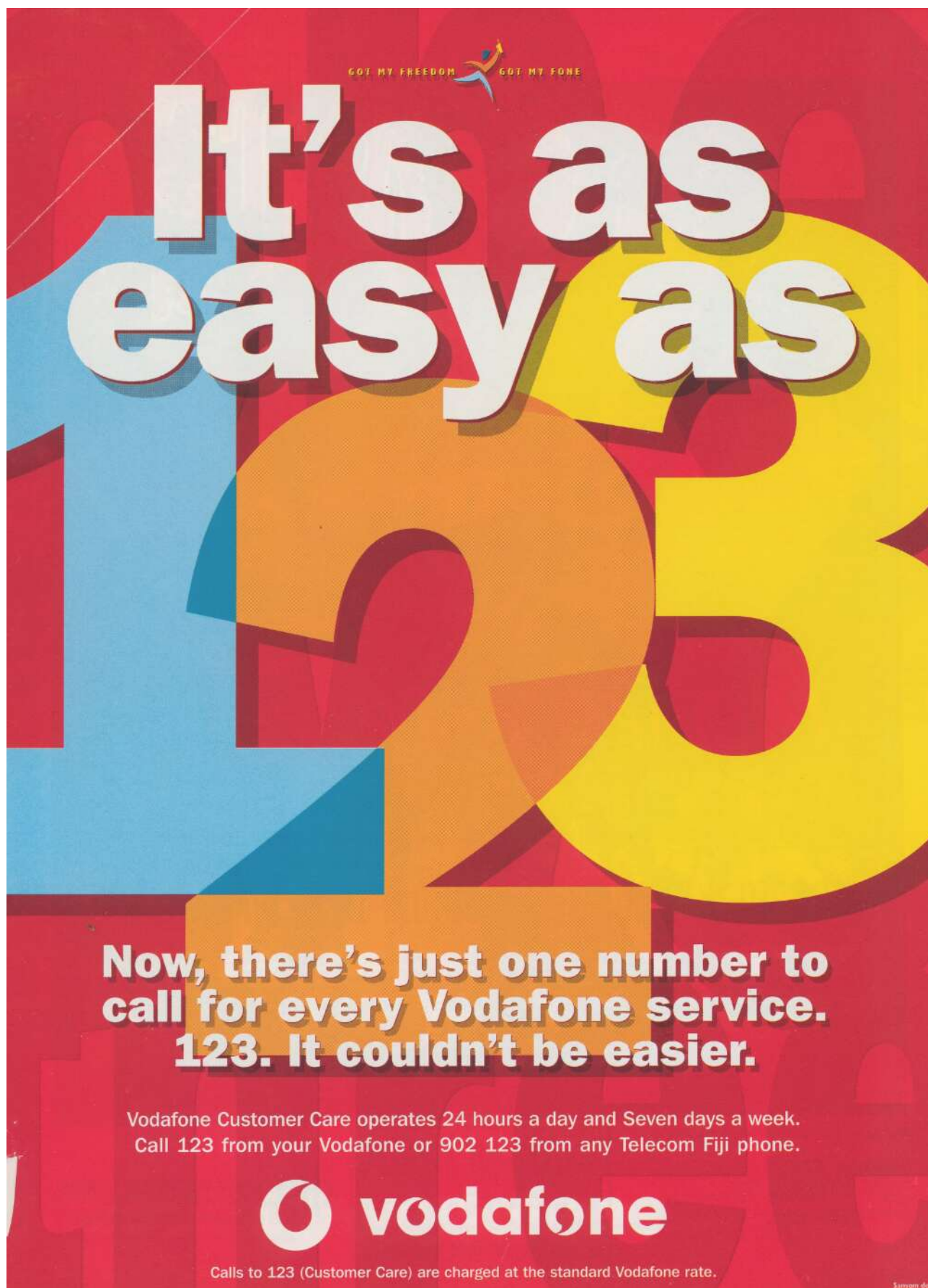
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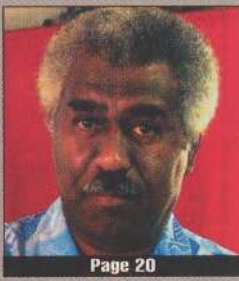
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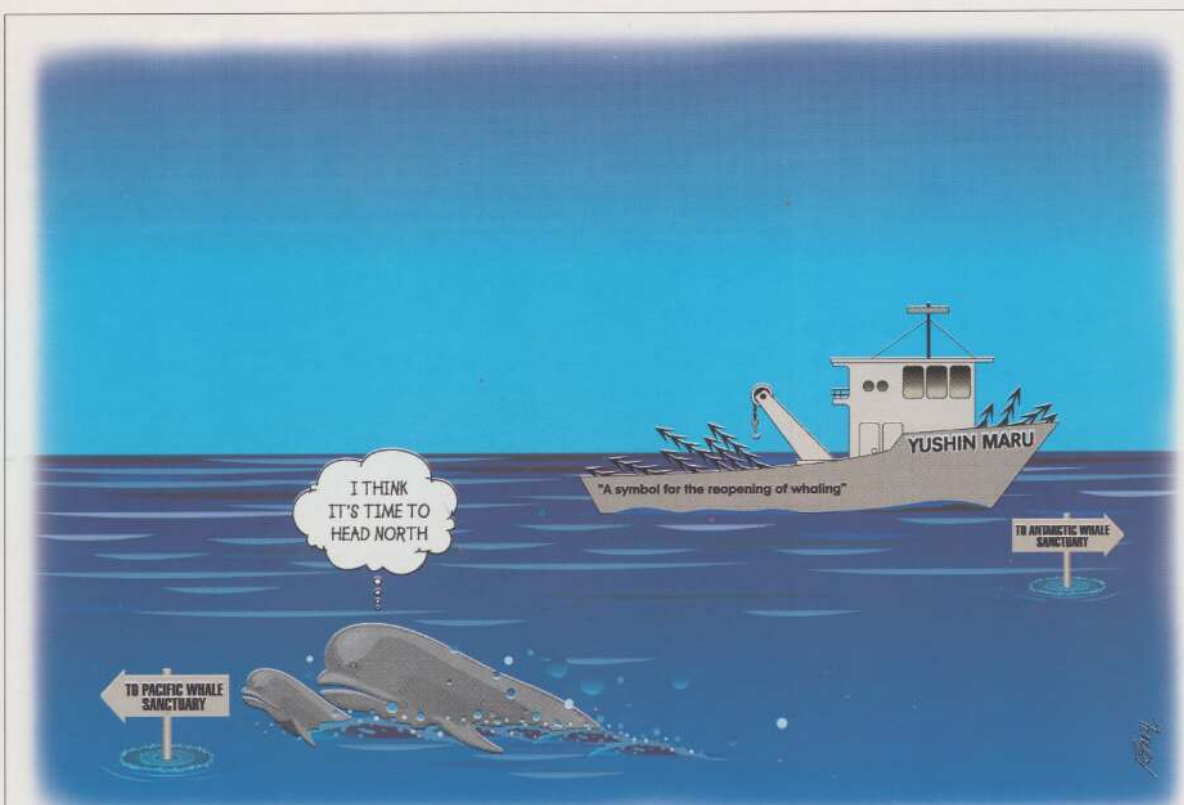
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EDITORIAL

Crime in paradise

WHEN people picture the South Pacific, it is generally an image of palm trees swaying in the breeze, gentle, friendly people and a certain amount of freedom.

To a certain extent, this is certainly the case, but of late, in Fiji, as well as some other South Pacific countries, this peace has been shattered. Crime has become an increasing problem and authorities have seemed powerless to tackle it. In Fiji, banks, supermarkets, service stations, payrolls, and armoured vehicles have been victims of a highly-organised crime spree.

No-one denies the intensity of the problem. Even Fiji's finance minister, prime minister and other high-level officials have admitted to the problem. Lawlessness shatters investor confidence and creates instability within island communities, and it is for this reason that the growing security problem has to be tackled now. When people do not feel safe to

walk the streets or conduct their daily business, the mood quickly turns sour.

Various organisations have called for stiffer penalties as a deterrent - but this is hard to enforce and judges have tended not to give the highest penalty when laying sentences.

The latest option to tackle crime has been to recruit soldiers into the police force to make up for the lack in manpower. However, this has led to dissatisfaction within the police force - especially at middle-management level. There have been complaints that current members of the force are overlooked for promotions and vacancies in favour of soldiers. It is

only time before law-abiding citizens decide that enough is enough and take the law into their own hands. This should concern lawyers, judges, politicians and every other person associated with upholding law in Fiji.

Some observers say that Fiji looks much like Papua New Guinea used to many years ago - before the rascals started dominating Port Moresby. If that's the case, then it would be wise for Fijian officials to seriously contemplate if they wish to see Fiji's security situation in the same status as that of Port Moresby in a few years. Especially considering the fact that tourism has now become Fiji's biggest foreign exchange earner. Crime is bad for business. It is bad for tourism. And it could also be bad for re-election.

This factor, most of all, should be impetus enough for Fiji's politicians to take immediate action to stunt, if not wipe out, the country's escalating security problem. ■

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

DECEMBER 1998

All Pacific countries

- Christmas celebrations (25th-26th)

American Samoa

- Territorial Xmas Tree Lighting Ceremony (4th)
- Santa Claus Motorcade (12th)
- Annual Holiday Performing Arts Festival ()
- Christmas Carol Programme (21st-31st)

Cook Islands

- Yachting - Christmas Regatta (27th)

Fiji

- Miss South Pacific Pageant

New Caledonia

- Telethon (5th-6th)
- Christmas Festivities

Niue

- Liku Village Showday (27th)
- New Year's Eve (31st)

Tahiti

- Tiare Tahiti Flower Festival (3rd-5th)
- Pineapple Festival
- Special Marquesas Islands Festival Days (17th-19th)

Tonga

- 'Eua Festival (2nd-5th)
- King George Tupou I's Day (4th)
- Royal Tongan Airlines Me'a'ofa Fare
- Pre-Christmas Talent Shows (14th-20th)
- Wesleyan Church Youth Festival (2nd Week)
- Tongoleleka Seven-a-Side Rugby Tournament (23rd-24th)
- Basketball Committee Tournament

Vanuatu

- Family Day (26th)

* Tourism Council of the South Pacific
Calendar of Events 1998

LETTERS

Regional high

Your publication is an excellent resource about regional issues. Everyone here who has an interest in the Pacific finds it invaluable.

We really appreciate it!

Tasha Sudan
Sydney, Australia

The axe falls

The Lunatics, Morons, Idiots and Sadists League (otherwise known as The National Collision) wishes to advise the public that the downgrading of all vital services throughout the land will soon be finalised and that once New Zealanders have been unconsciously brought to their knees, its members will resign as their assignment will have been completed.

"Our chief executioner has stated 'the axe is mightier than the sword' and is a far more sturdy instrument that can be wielded without restraint. Executioners throughout the nation have been advised to make sure that the edge of their implement be particularly dull so as to inflict as much cruelty as possible.

"Defenceless citizens must be driven to extremes and no social service must be left standing to assist them".

The Morons, Idiots, Sadistas and Lunatics Association Executives Annual Dinner will shortly be held at Bedlams to celebrate their Maniacal Endeavours.

Martin Leo,
Otahuhu, New Zealand

Heartening convention goers

Aloha and Greetings from Hawai'i. I was heartened to read of Pacific Delegation members activities during the Climate convention conference.

I represented Belau in the US delegation to the Small Islands Conference in Barbados (yes, back then we were still technically a colony); I was both heartened and frustrated.

Frustrated because of the status-quo policies and performance of developed nations regarding current emission levels, but heartened (as well as hopeful) that Pacific Islanders' active participation in global climate change fora can begin to change hearts as well as policies.

Keep up the good work you all and the faith. Sorry we do not have participation from Belau; we trust that you will all speak up and stand for us. Please give my greetings to Espen Ronnenberg and Yumi Crisostomo of the Marshall Islands and John Mooteb of FSM. We wish you suc-

cess during the entire conference. Mesulang (thank you).

Richard Salvador
PhD Candidate
University of Hawai'i at Manoa
Honolulu, Hawai'i

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BRIEFS

Support for British monarch system

The President of Fiji Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara says he supports the view that the British monarch should return as Fiji's Head of State for the benefit of indigenous Fijians.



The Queen ... support for a return as Head

The President spoke in support of the monarchy returning while opening a provincial council meeting in Suva last month.

He said the monarchy as Head of State works in favour of Fijians as the Queen understands the lives of indigenous people and native land custody issues.

Need for a mining code of conduct

Solomon Islands needs a mining code of conduct in places to cater for the emerging mining industry in the country.

This view was expressed by environmental campaigner, Lawrence Makili, after attending a non-governmental organisation conference on a Mining Code of Conduct in Madang, Papua New Guinea.

Mr Makili says with a code of conduct, the mining industry will be more accountable for its actions in relation to social, cultural and environmental impact.

Fear of diarrhoea in Fiji

Medical authorities in Fiji last month issued warnings to residents in the coun-

try's western division to boil drinking water fearing an outbreak of diarrhoea.

They said the outbreak was likely to affect children under five years old.

Precautions are being taken by hospitals in the west to combat the epidemic should it strike.

Lautoka hospital administrator Salote Waqanisau said they were expecting the worst after several diarrhoea cases were reported at the hospital.

Ailing leader of Samoa steps down

Samoa's prime minister, Tofilau Eti, suffering from cancer, stepped down on November 23 and was replaced by his deputy.

Parliament confirmed deputy prime minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi as the new prime minister. Tuilaepa also was minister of finance and tourism.

Tofilau, who held power for 16 years, said he would remain a member of parliament representing his home district.

Tofilau announced his resignation in Apia, the capital of Samoa, formerly known as Western Samoa, located about 120 kilometres from American Samoa.

Tofilau appeared in public for the first time in three weeks to announce his resignation - after returning from cancer treatment in New Zealand.

He resigned while addressing a session in parliament which is broadcast live by government-owned Radio 2AP. He spoke for about five minutes but was too weak to continue.

Tofilau has also had major heart surgery and been hospitalised in New Zealand several times in recent years. He is the uncle of American Samoan Governor Tausese Sunia.

Samoa, which gained independence from New Zealand in 1962, is regarded by the United Nations as one of the world's least developed countries.

75 per cent of Fiji affected by drought

A report by the United Nations Disaster Management Programme (UN-DAC) says about 75 per cent of Fiji is now drought-affected though the figure was growing.

The independent report, prepared after a UN team toured affected areas in October, will form the basis of Fiji's appeal for international aid to assist with the drought relief programme. The report was prepared after Cabinet requested help from

the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

It says Western Viti Levu and the Yasawa group have suffered longest.

The region was the worst hit with 90 per cent of the population receiving food and water rations, a devastated agriculture crop, depleted water supplies and rising health problems.

The impact of the drought is seen as so severe that there was a need to continue to prioritise relief assistance for water and food into the first quarter of 1999. About F\$3.3 million (US\$1.6 million) is needed for relief work each month. The Disaster Management Council is considering the report before making recommendations to Cabinet.

Hawaiian Air to operate charter flights to Tahiti

Honolulu-based Hawaiian Airlines has signed an agreement with Renaissance Cruises, an American cruise line, to operate charter flights next year between the United States west coast and Tahiti.

The two-year agreement, worth more than \$US70 million, will see the airline flying 18 to 20 round-trip charters a month between Los Angeles and Tahiti on DC-10-30 aircraft.

Hawaiian Air says the new service will create about 130 new positions for pilots and flight attendants.

The airline's President and Chief Executive Officer, Paul Casey, says the new contract, which is expected to double their annual charter revenue, is consistent with the company's strategy to expand their services.

Administration changes in Micronesian Institute

The Micronesian Institute, a 15-year-old non-profit organisation established in Washington DC to build American awareness of the Micronesian region and to assist Micronesians and their governments, is undergoing reorganisation.

Earlier this year, Ambassadors Jesse Marehalau of the Federated States of Micronesia and Banny de Brum of the Republic of the Marshall Islands were elected interim President and Vice President respectively. Discussions are now underway to make the Micronesian Institute a component of the Council of Micronesian Chief Executives. ■

ARCHIVES - DECEMBER 1944

New Zealand wants bananas!

Prices defended by government

NEW Zealanders appear to have become acutely banana-conscious in the last three years. One mention of this fruit is sufficient to send Dominion newspapers into a heated campaign on banana supplies and banana prices.

Recent mention by a Fiji resident at a Rotary luncheon in Nelson, NZ, that there were abundant supplies of bananas in Fiji only waiting shipping space to the Dominion, reopened the subject and sent everyone into wild argument.

A message from Fiji, on November 16, should settle the Fijian end of the problem: "A recent shipment to Auckland was said to be the smallest ever sent, the reason being that no more bananas were available, as in New Zealand and elsewhere, the calling up of manpower to serve in the armed forces and to work on military construction, had

its inevitable effect on production. Overseas troops also spent money freely on native mats and curios, and in many native villages life for those left at home suddenly became much more comfortable and convenient. No longer was there the same incentive to cultivate the land, and the result is to be seen today in a considerable decrease in native food production.

"In Suva, where bananas grow in almost any backyard the retail price is 12 for sixpence. This does not indicate any great abundance. The situation will improve as men are released from the Army and the general demand for labour declines".

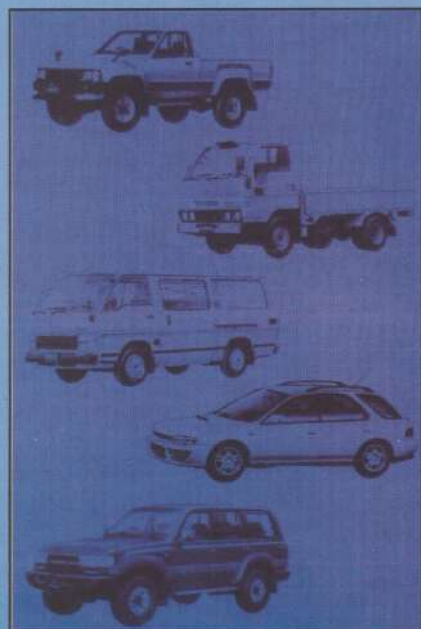
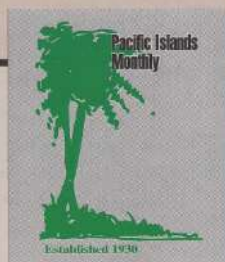
New Zealand consumers and Island growers who have been howling about the disparity in prices paid by the one

and to the other should be reassured by the following statement by the New Zealand minister of marketing (Mr Roberts) on November 13:

"In the first place," he said, "it has been stated that the Marketing Division pays 5/- a case for bananas in the Islands, the facts are that the Division pays the following prices f.o.b. Island ports: Samoa, 12/9 a case; Fiji 12/4.5 (New Zealand currency); and Tonga, 12/1. These are the prices which are determined between the Division and the selling authorities in the various islands.

"It is quite well known that, with the Pacific war, the availability of shipping for bananas and oranges is at a minimum, but the Division does import into New Zealand every case of bananas that it is possible to procure from the Islands.

"It is also a fact that the only shipping point of import for bananas is Auckland, and if other parts of New Zealand are to have a share of the now reduced supplies, the Division has to incur heavy costs in distributing the fruit on a per capita basis, as far south as Invercargill". ■



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SPECIAL REPORT

Changing climate and sea levels affect Pacific countries now

ON low-lying atolls in the Pacific, people have had to radically change the way they grow crops, because rising sea levels are seeping into the soil, making it too salty to grow staple crops such as taro, pulaka and yams.

In Tuvalu, farmers used to dig pits in the sandy soil, fill them with compost and plant their root crops. Now, however, increasingly brackish water is poisoning taro planted in pits in low-lying areas. Some farmers have relocated their plantations to somewhat higher land, but there is only limited land available in this nation of atolls. Instead, many people now grow their taro in tin containers, which they fill with compost and soil before planting the taro. Throughout the Pacific, culturally and spiritually important sites are being eroded by the rising seas. In the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Kiribati, burial grounds near the coast - sacred places where people do not go except to pray - are crumbling into the ocean. Second World War graves on Majuro atoll in the Marshall Islands are slowly being eroded by wind and surf, which breaches the sea walls and strews debris over the headstones. In Niue and Palau, where the dead lie in caves near the ocean, people are now discussing moving their ancestors further inland because of the threat from the rising ocean.

As well as slowly rising sea levels which are eroding coastal roads and other infrastructure, countries like Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands also suffered unusual storm surges in February 1997 and again this year, where the tide just kept on coming in, destroying sea walls, bridges and roads and flooding houses and plantations. In Kiribati, the bridges linking Tarawa and Betio were destroyed. Kiribati has now established a task force to oversee management of a \$US253,000 fund for

reconstruction of causeways, roads and other infrastructure destroyed by coastal erosion.

On Majuro atoll in the Marshall Islands, the airport has been flooded on several occasions recently, despite an eight-foot sea wall. Throughout the Marshall Islands, coastal erosion is evident everywhere. While some erosion in more populated parts can be blamed on inappropriate land use practices, the coasts of outer islands that have had no development are also crumbling into the sea. Like virtually all Pacific island countries, the Marshall Islands are ill-equipped to deal with sea-level rise. An extensive sea wall protection system would cost more than \$US100 million for Majuro atoll alone, disregarding the protection needs of the other 28 atolls in the Marshall Islands.

The Marshall Islands' total gross domestic product is just \$US80 million, more than half of which comes from grants from the United States which could terminate as early as 2001. Even if it were economic to build a sea-wall to protect Majuro, it would not be feasible; a sea wall around the atoll would kill the inner lagoon ecosystem.

This would have flow-on effects on the tuna fishery, which depends in part on fish which spend their juvenile period in the lagoon. Rising sea levels have already swamped some motu (small islets) in the Pacific. In Kiribati, the motu of Tebua Tarawa used to be a landmark for fishermen. Now it is gone. In Tuvalu, the motu of Tepuka Savilivili has lost its coconut trees and its sandbanks and the ocean is slowly moving up its remaining rock. In most of the Pacific, land tenure systems mean people living on a coastline that is disappearing beneath their feet cannot move inland, because that land belongs to other families. So people on the coast in countries like Kiribati and the Marshall Islands are trying

to reclaim their family land, dumping trucks or other old equipment into the sea and then piling rocks around them to try to build up their patch of land once more. Outsiders think this is pollution; in reality, it is an attempt to survive in a changing world.

The Pacific's climate is changing, as countries like Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Tonga are only too well aware. All these countries have been hit hard by recent devastating droughts. In Fiji, drought wiped out some two-thirds of this year's sugar cane crop, which normally provides 40 percent of export earnings. Tonga's squash crop, which produces about half that country's exports by value, was more than halved.

In Papua New Guinea, Australia spent more than \$A30 million delivering food aid to people in isolated areas in the highlands and low-lying islands, many of whom were close to starvation. The drought substantially reduced Papua New Guinea's important coffee harvest. In FSM, almost 40 atolls ran out of water and the capital, Pohnpei, was reduced to living off brackish underground water and shipping water to neighbouring atolls.

In the Marshall Islands the United States brought in desalination plants to provide water for the population. In Samoa, fires sparked by the unusually dry conditions destroyed large areas of forest on the island of Savaii. Pacific people traditionally depended on the ocean to supply most of their protein requirements. Over the centuries they developed a wealth of knowledge about when and where to fish.

In recent years, however, the fish have not been found where traditionally they would be expected. The currents have changed, and so have the locations of the fish. In Papua New Guinea, for example, on Manus Island, people traditionally catch large hauls of tuna in October. They use this not only for their own sustenance, but also to sell to the country's fish markets. Last year the tuna did not arrive.

Throughout the Pacific, malaria and dengue fever, both mosquito-borne diseases, are increasing. In Papua New Guinea, for example, the past ten years have seen outbreaks of malaria in the highlands, 2000 metres above sea level, where previously it was too cold for malarial mosquitoes to survive. The same is true of the

SPECIAL REPORT

highlands of the Solomon Islands, where malaria has also begun to appear. Malaria and dengue fever are starting to appear in New Caledonia. Previously there was no malaria there and virtually no dengue. But now, at some times of the year, there are outbreaks of malaria and dengue fever in New Caledonia.

Fiji and Samoa also are now suffering outbreaks of malaria and dengue fever which are far more severe than they have ever been before. For some, the battle against a changing climate and rising sea levels has become too much, particularly when these are combined with population pressures. Environmental refugees are already a reality in the Pacific. Kiribati has begun an internal resettlement programme, moving people from Betio to the outer islands. Niue recently accepted seven families from Tuvalu who decided to escape from the increasing risks of living on a low-lying atoll. The world's climate scientists have already said human greenhouse gas emissions are having a discernible effect on global climate.

While the Pacific does not have the expertise to say that the changes it is experiencing now are a direct result of greenhouse gas emissions, it does know that it is vulnerable now, and that there is a considerable probability that the risks will only increase in future. The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which provides for an overall 5.2 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by developed countries, goes nowhere near the 60 - 80 percent reductions which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has said are needed. As far as the Pacific is concerned, the sooner countries start making the reductions they have committed to, and accept that much stronger reductions will be needed, the better the Pacific's chances of surviving the next millennium. -This is part of a paper provided by SPREP regarding global warming. ■

The world's biggest Co2 emitters

FOLLOWING is a list of the biggest emitters of carbon dioxide (CO₂) held responsible for global warming, according to a list of 1996 statistics from the International Energy Agency issued at the Climate Change Conference held in mid-November.

Figures are in millions of tonnes of CO₂.

	1990	1995	1996
1. United States	4,873	5,228	5,324
2. China	2,398	3,006	3,179
3. Russia	2,000	1,574	1,516
4. Japan	1,061	1,150	1,177
5. Germany	981	884	904
6. India	600	803	863
7. Britain	585	565	582
8. Canada	428	471	469
9. Ukraine	600	430	387
10. Italy	408	424	420
11. France	378	362	384
12. Poland	349	335	365
13. Mexico	302	323	342
14. South Africa	296	319	317
15. Australia	263	286	303

Carbon dioxide is emitted by a variety of human activities involving fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) and remains in the atmosphere for 120 years.

Total emission of CO₂ from the combustion of fossil fuels totalled 22.7 billion tonnes in 1996, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, an increase of seven per cent compared with 1990.

Deforestation adds a further estimated three billion to four billion tonnes of CO₂ per year. Carbon dioxide, along with methane and nitrous oxide accounts for around 95 per cent of all greenhouse gases.

Under last year's Kyoto Protocol, developed nations have agreed to cut global warming gas emissions by an average of five per cent below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012. ■



Rising sea-levels will affect this church on the banks of the Rewa River, Fiji

SPECIAL REPORT

INDUSTRY and environmental groups had mixed reviews of the global warming action plan that emerged from the UN climate change conference that ended mid-November in Buenos Aires.

Greenpeace said it was dismayed that the plan - that calls on nations to resolve a host of difficult issues by 2000 - appeared to put national economic concerns above environmental ones. "This is turning into a trade and economic negotiation," said Bill Hare, climate policy director for Greenpeace International.

"Climate is getting pushed further and further down the agenda," Hare said. "Science is being replaced by carbon trading markets as the driver for the talks".

The environmental group Friends of the Earth International said the urgency of addressing global warming had been lost in the "Buenos Aires Inaction Plan".

"Nations have failed to acknowledge that what they agreed to in Kyoto is nowhere near the deep cuts in carbon emissions

Mixed reviews to "Buenos Aires Inaction Plan"

progress on "flexibility mechanisms" and rules for enforcement.

The decisions "bring the world one step closer to the reductions needed for a stable climate. Already, a number of the world's largest companies have responded positively with commitments to reduce (greenhouse gas) emissions early".

The Global Climate Coalition, an industry group, said the meeting was ending with developing nations "still refusing to bring their bats, balls and gloves to the Kyoto playing field".

"Until countries like China and India get into this game, the global climate treaty will be neither fair nor global," said Connie Holmes, coalition chair.

The Pew Centre on Global Climate Change, a scientific organisation based in Washington, said the biggest hurdle to progress in the debate had been the "absence of leadership".

"What was most striking about the meeting was the emergence of leadership on climate change from both industry and the developing countries," it said. ■

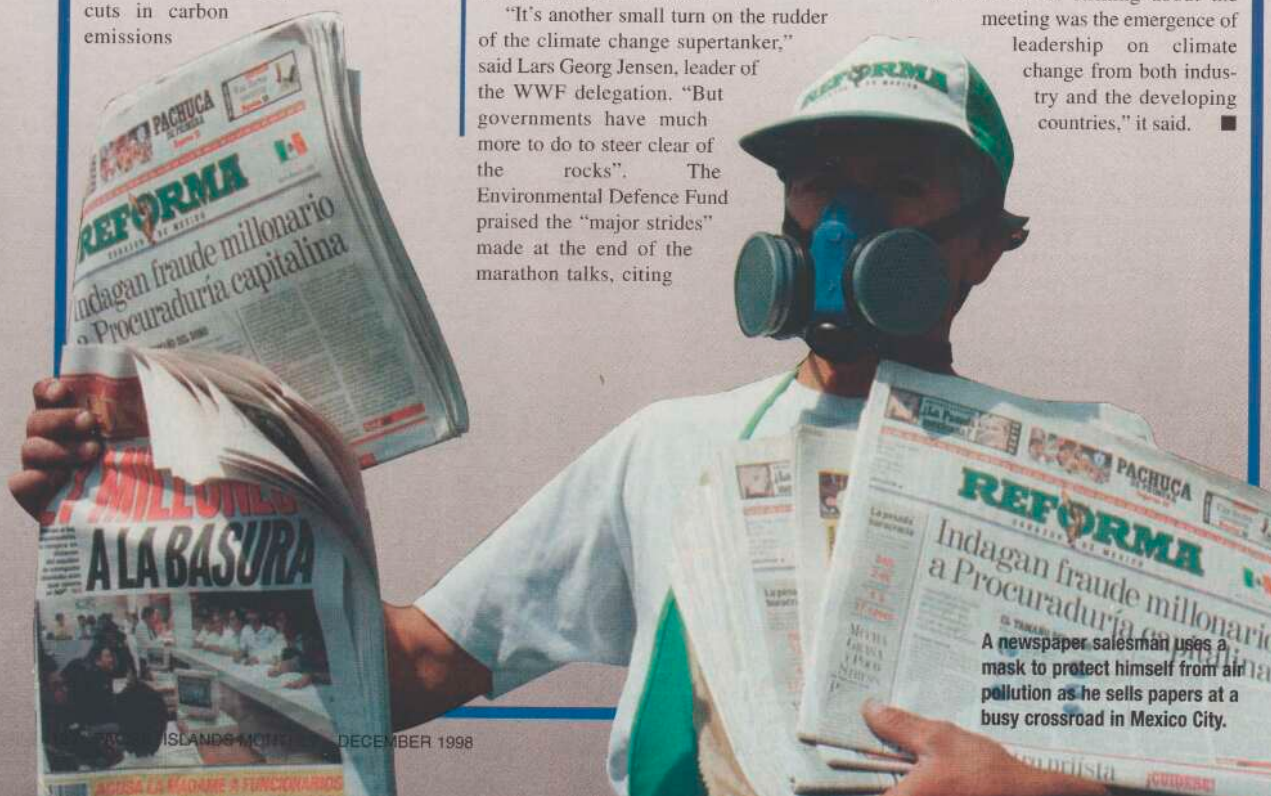
which we need to stop climate change," the group said. "The meeting has been a trade fair, wrangling over how to keep the fossil fuel industry alive and burning".

Last year in Kyoto, Japan, some 38 industrialised nations crafted what came to be known as the Kyoto Protocol.

The protocol required signatory nations to cut back greenhouse gas emissions - mostly carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels such as coal or oil - on an average five per cent from 1990 levels.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) said it welcomed the "slight" progress made at the talks.

"It's another small turn on the rudder of the climate change supertanker," said Lars Georg Jensen, leader of the WWF delegation. "But governments have much more to do to steer clear of the rocks". The Environmental Defence Fund praised the "major strides" made at the end of the marathon talks, citing



PACIFIC ISLANDS MONTHLY DECEMBER 1998

A newspaper salesman uses a mask to protect himself from air pollution as he sells papers at a busy crossroad in Mexico City.

■ POLITICS

Face to Face

PMG outgoing commander optimistic about Bougainville



Brigadier Bruce Osborn

MAINTEINING peace on Bougainville has been one of the key issues in getting Papua New Guinea and the island back on the road to development.

That task fell into the hands of outgoing commander of the Peace Monitoring Group in Bougainville, Brigadier Bruce Osborn, for six months this year. Sophie Foster Hildebrand spoke to him about his experiences on Bougainville.

PIM: How long were you in Bougainville for?

Brigadier Osborn: I was in Bougainville from the end of April, when the cease-fire came into being from April 3 until the end of October - so that's just over six months.

PIM: What was your initial impression?

Brigadier Osborn: My initial impressions were that the Truce Monitoring Group - the New Zealand that had been there before the PMG was there - had done a good job.

But I always thought that the process would become more difficult as we move forward, and indeed that is my view now and I think in the future it's going to be more difficult. Because what you are trying to do is build bridges over a number of different areas which are difficult. Nine years of war is hard to erase over a short period of time.

So I was anxious in the sense of moving forward, but I must say once I got to know the Bougainvillian people, I started to gain a great deal of confidence that they themselves were not going to let it go back, deteriorate to what it was before.

I think it's important to recognise now that it's been 13 months since the truce and cease-fire has been in place. As every day passes there's growing strength in confidence at the grassroots level.

I am a firm believer that people power is the real issue, and they provide the strength for the whole process, and it's not politicians but they themselves who are going to drive the future direction of this process. So I was anxious but I must admit I'm far more optimistic now after six months. I think there's real reason for optimism.

The only problem we had was not so much with the combatants or the ex-combatants, I mean there's a criminal element in every country and to some extent there were those. In Bougainville

they were our greatest problem but over a period of time the law and order situation has improved markedly to the point where I think the law and order situation in Bougainville would be described by most as better than in other provinces in PNG. They were certainly there but they're less evident now and I think things have improved markedly.

There's certainly been some marginal improvement but there's a long way to go in my view, to my way of thinking and certainly to the Bougainville people themselves.

They've identified several priorities in the restoration of essential services/aid area. One of those is communications infrastructure. We need to sort out the roads, telephones, radio and those sorts of things. People need to be able to communicate with each other and move material in and out for the economy to start turning over. Health and education are the other two key issues, and law and order. They're the priorities but there's a gradual increase. But until the law and order situation did improve, until the infrastructure does improve, aid organisations and others find it very difficult to send people and also material around the islands. Until that sort of improves, it's going to be a catch 22 situation to some extent.

PIM: How do you deal with people like that? I mean you have people who are born into war, teenagers who were thrust into war, and also veteran soldiers who basically have no skills, no training, no education. The only skill they have is war. How would you handle that?

Brigadier Osborn: Your question is very valid and it's always been an issue for the Bougainville leaders and the PNG government. What you've got is combatants now who basically don't necessarily have a future - who don't have an education, their prospects are very poor, and some people estimate that number's as high as 30 or 40,000. So it's a significant number.

PIM: There's no way of knowing. There's no census.

Brigadier Osborn: I think what's encouraging here is that people firstly identify and recognise the problem. Secondly one of the solutions which is being applied is to re-establish the traditional

Continued on page 48

■ POLITICS

Skate on thin ice

By **SAM VULUM**

PAPUA New Guinea prime minister Bill Skate was unstable and on the verge of cracking.

Recent government decisions and political changes in his camp have appeared to have hit him hard. He knows well that his survival after January 22 hinges on how well he maintains his reduced numerical strength of about 61 MPs.

An insider said recently that mounting pressure was taking its toll on him - evident in his sudden change of behaviour towards his personal and departmental staff. The insider said Skate was taking his anger and frustrations on his staff. He said once the PM was swearing throughout a day in every uttered sentence.

The pressures on him were exacerbated by widespread speculation of a take-over of the government by members of the discipline forces, mainly the defence and police forces. A public opinion poll has also shown widespread dissatisfaction with Skate remaining in power.

After sacking his deputy, Peoples Progress Party leader, Michael Nali in October, he also found that the leadership of his biggest coalition partner in government, the Peoples Democratic Movement, was also shaky.

The party appears to hold the balance of power in the government's survival and its legislative agenda - the biggest being the 1999 budget. The Opposition, desperate to wrestle power from him, can move a vote of no confidence against Skate when an 18 month grace period, required by law for a challenge on any government, expires on January 22, 1999.

Skate, whose governance has been riddled with widespread allegations of corruption, bribery, sexual and criminal implications, incompetency and nepotism, is experiencing his toughest moment ever after 14 months in office.

The brick wall solidarity put together in what was referred to as the Tufi Camp when the government was formed in July in the northern Province, has fallen to pieces. The mandate to govern given by the Camp is no longer in the government.



Today, the government is a different set altogether.

Serious dents are evident in the government's powerbase after Skate sacked Nali.

He accused Nali and his party of collaborating with former party leader and prime minister Sir Julius Chan to destabilise the government.

Sir Julius lost his Namatanai seat in New Ireland province in the 1997 elections. Skate and Sir Julius have become bitter rivals since the Sandline Crisis. Sir Julius, who partly blamed his defeat on the crisis, finds it hard to live with the fact that Skate set the course for his downfall when he sought the parliament's discretion to remove him during the heat of the crisis.

The motion by Skate, seeking Sir Julius' resignation was defeated but he later stood aside to end a stand-off at the Parliament House led by soldiers.

Skate, who was among those who met and talked to the rowdy soldiers at Parliament, also provided rations for those guarding the instigator of the crisis, the currently re-appointed PNGDF Commander Jerry Singirok. Singirok blew the whistle on Sir Julius' government's

secret plan to engage Sandline International mercenaries to put down the Bougainville secessionist rebellion.

Sir Julius has taken every opportunity to attack the government after being cleared by the second Sandline Commission of Inquiry. The Commission was ordered by Skate upon his election as prime minister, in an attempt to uncover and nail Sir Julius and two of his senior ministers - Gulf MP and Pangu Party leader Chris Haiveta and former Goroka MP Mathias Ijape.

This bitter rivalry became evident recently during a PNG Pukpuk versus a multi-national PNG Barbarians rugby union tussle in Port Moresby. Skate and Sir Julius, who try to avoid each other at every public gathering, accidentally found themselves sitting side-by-side during the game.

Observers said that although they shook hands in a rare show of friendship, they hardly shared a word during the entire duration of the match.

Skate's re-appointment of Singirok is seen not only as a consolation for his own misery in losing a major coalition partner, but also a further indirect attack on Sir Julius. Dressing it as a move to reward the man for saving many lives and to rescue the disenfranchising defence force, Skate had done himself more damage than good, considering the widespread attention it has been attracting.

He made the appointment knowing too well that Singirok has yet to be cleared of bribery allegations and sedition charges.

The Ombudsman Commission has publicly announced its probe into the activities of Singirok over bribery allegations while police have re-opened the sedition charges.

Commander Singirok appeared briefly in court on November 5, charged with sedition. He is charged with one count of publishing seditious words in writing - namely, an address to the nation on March 17 - that contravened section 54 of the PNG Criminal Code.

When Nali departed, he took with him most of his party members, leaving behind a splinter group in the government of only four MPs. Skate's own party, the PNG First Party, has only four members with PDM making up most of the numbers. However, the party's leadership is set to change with leader and deputy prime minister Iairo Lasaro set to lose his post.

Sources said the party is on the verge of breaking up because Lasaro would not

■ POLITICS

stand up and represent the party on major policies and issues affecting the country.

The private opinion poll, conducted by Meli Research and Marketing Consultants, says that the Government is not very popular among the citizens in the rural or village based sector.

The poll indicated that this may have resulted from less information on the government and its activities getting through to the rural communities.

But the majority of the urban population interviewed do not appreciate the current government's performance since its formation in July 1997. The majority of women and the rural sector prefer Opposition Leader Bernard Narokobi as their choice for prime minister.

Former prime minister Sir Michael Somare was the men's choice and ranked first as most preferred prime minister overall.

A cross-section of the population, totalling 20,000 persons, was interviewed - 14,000 men (representing 60 per cent) and 6000 families (representing 40 per cent) were interviewed between July, August and September this year.

About 60 per cent of these were from the formal sector or people in urban centres, while the balance was from the rural areas.

A sample population of 9130 (representing 45.65 per cent) feels that the Skate government should be replaced after the 18-month grace period is up, while 22.9 per cent prefers it remain in power.

The second highest sample of 32.45 per cent refused to make any comments because they did not know enough about the current government and the opposition.

Most of the respondents who refused to comment are from the rural sector and do not have access to information.

While launching the study results, Meli Research principal Michael Meli said the opinion poll reflected the rural population lacked government information. It is felt that any government in PNG must have an effective network of communication between the government and its people in rural areas.

Misleading information results in opinions that really do not reflect the government's performance, Mr Meli said. People blame the current government for economic chaos in the country, which resulted from past government's mishandling.

"We therefore recommend that the Office of Information established by the Somare Government be re-established to effectively disseminate government information to the people more effectively," Mr Meli said.

About 29 per cent of the people interviewed (both formal and informal sectors) appreciate the government's performance, 36.5 per cent does not agree, while 34.5 per cent refused to comment.

The Skate government's approach to solve the 10-year crisis on Bougainville is considered "very practical and effective".

Other reasons why the Skate government is appreciated include it is "grassroots based" - displayed through its support to health and education programmes, the introduction of free education policy (despite delays in school fee deliveries)- and Skate is perceived as a simple man who mixes with people, is involved in sports and breaks all protocol procedures to meet people.

Others do not appreciate the current government because of the worsening economic situation coupled with the hire of an economic advisor at a cost of K7 million, the appointment of vice ministers and a super secretary and confusion created by splitting ministries. ■

A symbol for the reopening of whaling

THE effectiveness of the Australian-led drive to create a South Pacific Whale Sanctuary could come into question following a move by Japan mid-November to defy a ban on whale hunting.

Japan's brand new whaling fleet left the country mid-November to hunt whales in the Antarctic whale sanctuary despite concerns raised by the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

The fleet includes the Yushin Maru, which is the first new whaler built by Japan in 26 years.

The Japanese move has been described by that country's press as "a symbol for the reopening of whaling".

Leaders at the last South Pacific Forum meeting had supported the proposal to establish a South Pacific Whale Sanctuary for great whales. However, during the meeting there was last-minute opposition to the sanctuary from Palau to the wording to the agreement.

Palau wanted the text to include the cultural considerations of island countries and "their partners". Japan is a big supporter of the Palau economy and funds many aid projects in that country.

The final text of the Sanctuary recognised the need to consult with Dialogue Partners, including Japan.

The Japanese government describes the Antarctic whale hunt as "scientific research". However, the International Whaling Commission says the results of Japan's Antarctic program are not required for management of whales.

The most recent meeting of the IWC, formally noted "the grave concerns of eminent members of the international scientific community over the continuation of lethal whale research programs".

Whale meat from the hunt is expected to sell for more than US\$50 million on the open market when the fleet returns to Japan in the Spring of 1999.

"To describe this commercial whaling operation as scientific research is an insult to science," says John Frizell of Greenpeace International.

"Japan is catching whales in a whale sanctuary, intending to open that sanctuary for full scale commercial whaling," says Frizell.

"Japanese industry is investing millions of dollars in new equipment to assist the whalers. This is commerce, not science."

Japan's whaling fleet is owned by three large fishing companies, who are thought to be the source of financing for the new catcher boat. ■



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(funded by the Government of Japan)

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■ POLITICS

Sir Geoffrey supports Pokino amidst scandal

By FLORENCE SYME-BUCHANAN

WHAT does a government do with a senior minister who has brought much shame on his country, family and political party in a widely publicised sex scandal?

Nothing, if he's a Cook Islands Cabinet minister.

Disgraced minister of Finance, Papamama Pokino did not return from New Zealand as scheduled on November 7 to face Cabinet colleagues, a shocked public and hurt family members. Instead, prime minister Sir Geoffrey came forward with the excuse that his long time friend was remaining in New Zealand for "health reasons."

At 62, Pokino who's always favoured long hair and high heeled boots is healthy and fit, after years of working out on weights. So Sir Geoffrey's excuse didn't wash with the public now giving signs of being fed up with Cabinet's ongoing excuses protecting their colleague.

The Opposition Democratic Alliance party is demanding that Pokino either resign or be sacked for the public sex romp he had with Niuean woman, Dawn Vilila. The National Council of Women have written to the prime minister wanting the minister stripped of the portfolio of Women, Youth and Sport. Spokeswoman Teresa Manarangi Trott says this most recent incident was the last straw as Pokino's denigrating remarks and lewd behaviour towards women could not be tolerated anymore.

A Cook Islands citizen, Steve Boggs laid a formal complaint with Police over Pokino's public escapades. But Police still refused to investigate or lay charges, saying the matter was closed. Undeterred, Boggs went a step further and proposes to charge Commissioner of Police Tevai Matapo with obstruction of justice.

Pressure on Sir Geoffrey and Cabinet to do something over Papamama Pokino's behaviour is mounting - but as usual in the Cooks, public opinion is being ignored by the eight ministers.

All have refused to respond to questions regarding "Pokinogate" the October sex-scandal that rocked the nation. On the other hand, some have been quick to the defend Agriculture minister Vaine Tairea - alleged to have been drunk and abusive at Auckland airport while leading the country's Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference.

Education minister Ngereteina Puna says he sat next to Vaine Tairea on the flight and claims the minister never drank. Tairea travelled to Auckland barefoot, embarrassing other Cook Islanders and consular general Bill Teariki who was at the airport to pick the delegation up.

There's little public doubt that Pokino extended his stay hoping the matter would have blown over by his return. That's unlikely. ■

The "other woman" has her say

"I'M a good person," says the Niue woman who does not deny she had public sex with a married Cook Islands Cabinet minister.

Dawn Vilila has said the first mistake she made was placing her trust in Finance minister Papamama Pokino - the man she had a public sex romp with.

"A man who was supposed to be one of the leaders of your country and an old colleague of my father's."

The woman, Dawn Vilila faxed Cook Islands Press a letter expressing her feelings on the scandal.

Describing herself as an "honest and caring person" Vilila in a separate note to this writer, says her life was nearly ruined by the Cook Islands Press report on what had happened between her and Minister Pokino.

"But only because I had let it. From here on I am not going to let it happen," she says.

"What your country does with your minister is your business, but please respect my privacy as I have been through a lot lately," says Vilila in her note.

Vilila contradicts her wish for privacy by saying she has distributed her letter to "other people and the media."



Cook Islands finance minister Papamama Pokini

POLITICS

She wrote: "The media always claim to be factual and neutral. In this case I disagree as everyone has had input except me. I am sick and tired of all the allegations evolving around the incidence. I am writing to tell you that, that young woman does have a say."

Dawn Vilila is married with children and works for the Niue department of Community Affairs.

What has become evident is that Pokino and Vilila's October encounter in Rarotonga was not the first. They were also photographed having dinner together in Tahiti in July this year. A photograph of the pair has been shown to PIM, but its owner refused to have it published. In it, Pokino has his arm around a smiling Dawn Vilila - a source who was at the dinner says both had been drinking heavily and left together that night.

News has filtered to Rarotonga of Pokino's behaviour at the regional Youth conference in Tahiti. Allegations are that the minister drank excessively throughout the official visit demanding to be taken to all Papeete bars one Sunday.

He's also alleged to have sexually harassed a female liaison officer who laid an official complaint with conference organisers. She was replaced by a male liaison officer. ■

Graphic Systems

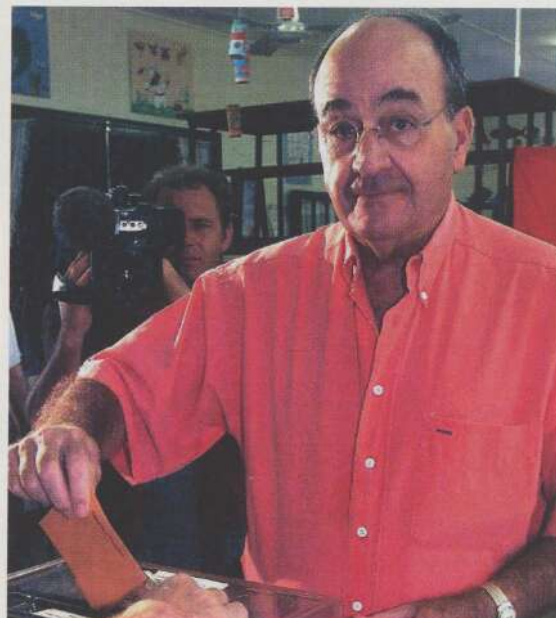
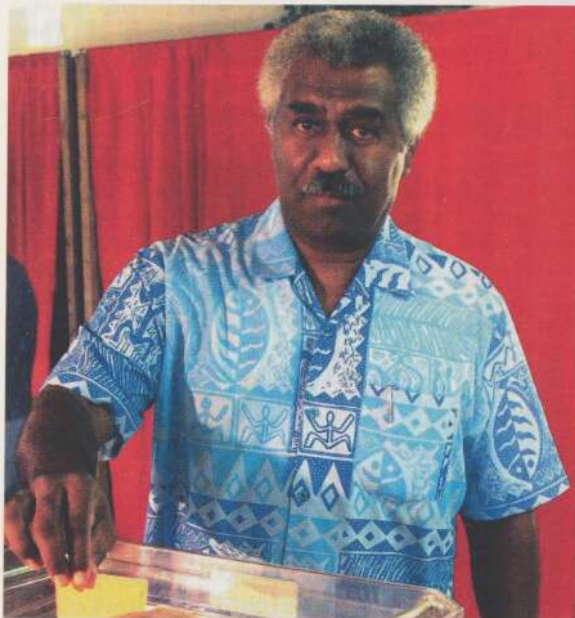
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■ POLITICS

New Caledonia prepares to turn accord into law



The leader of the independentist New Caledonian FNLKS movement, Roch Wamytan, and Jacques Lafleur, the leader of the anti-independence RPCR (Rally for Caledonia in the Republic) cast their votes during the November 8 vote for the referendum on the May 1998 Noumea Accord under which New Caledonia will gain progressive autonomy from France including an assembly and local government. (AFP Photo)

THE strong 'yes' vote in favour of a deal giving the Pacific territory of New Caledonia greater autonomy from France has eased the threat of renewed social tension, analysts said. Official results released mid-November showed 71.86 per cent of New Caledonians voted for the accord, which paves the way for the creation of a new assembly and a new referendum in 15 to 20 years on a formal split with France. The official election body also announced that 74.23 per cent of the nearly 107,000 eligible voters cast ballots.

The vote significantly eased social tension of recent weeks that forced a heavy police presence around the capital Noumea. Businessmen were also looking to the future, after maintaining a low profile during the referendum.

Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Michel Quintard said New Caledonians now had "20 years in front of them of considerable freedom and the financing (by Paris) for those freedoms". He predicted that despite the problems for the crucial nickel industry it could look

forward to a boost in tourism, New Caledonia's number two earner.

An official committee was to meet to begin turning the accord with the French government approved in the referendum, into law. With representatives of pro and anti-independence parties taking part, it is to draft a legal document based on the accord that will then be voted into law.

The leading pro-independence party, the Kanak National Socialist Liberation Front (FLNKS) has said it will ensure the law reflects the substance and the "spirit" of the agreement.

Once it becomes law new elections will be held for the territory's congress which in turn will be able to elect a new executive to replace the high commission. The accord was brokered in two years of negotiations by French officials and is aimed at preventing a repeat of the 1980s, when pro-independence groups launched a campaign for independence and triggered bloody clashes between native Melanesians and European settlers. The FLNKS and the anti-independence Rally for Caledonia in the Republic both signed the Noumea accord with French Prime Minister Lionel

Jospin in May. Both parties then campaigned for a 'Yes' vote.

The highest proportion of 'Yes' votes were in the two Kanak majority provinces, North province and the Loyalty Islands where 86.79 per cent and 95.47 per cent voted yes respectively.

In South province around Noumea, where most ethnic European groups live, turnout was a strong 80.71 per cent, but with fewer 'Yes' votes, only 62.99 per cent.

Since 1958, New Caledonia has had eight different statutes within the French republic, the present one being the fruit of the 1988 Matignon Accord, which ended several years of separatist violence.

Around 45 per cent of the population are native Melanesians and a third of European descent. Most of the others are from the tiny French Pacific territory of Wallis and Futuna, and Asian nations such as Indonesia and Vietnam.

The separatist groups are dominated by Melanesians, who say they have been discriminated against in key appointments and do not get a fair share of the wealth generated by New Caledonia's huge nickel reserves. (AFP)

■ ADVERTISING FEATURE - PRODUCTS & SERVICES

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COPYMASTERS Hawaii, Inc. has been in business since 1994, and specialises in Duplo Digital Duplicators that are the current generation of duplicator equipment. The company is also the dealer and service centre for various other office equipment and supplies including paper and toner. The company's territory covers the entire Pacific, stretching from the State of Hawaii, the entire South Pacific and Micronesia including Guam and the Northern Marianas.

"We first ventured into Micronesia because of many requests for 'spirit or mimeo' type duplicators and supplies that use very flammable fluids that were highly combustible and were being used in various school systems where there were a lot

of children," a company statement said. Schools in Hawaii were already using the digital duplicators or safe type of duplicators because of strict health regulations and the obsolete 'spirit' type equipment was being 'dumped' or sold to various Pacific-Rim countries. According to various companies "they wouldn't know the difference". Copymasters Hawaii says "this prompted us to help educate people from various South Pacific and Micronesia countries in the knowledge and use in current office equipment technology through participation in the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) conferences held each year at various locations in the Pacific".

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SINCE December 1995, Kings Neon Signs has been lighting up businesses. The company specialises in manufacturing neon lights, fluorescent illuminated signboards and advanced computerised signages, for example, cutting vinyl in various designs Car Body Decal, Reflective Road Signages, Fabricated Letters, Banners and many more.

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According to Mr Sam Chan, the managing director of Kings Neon Sign, some of the company's clients in Fiji include Post Fiji, Telecom Fiji, ANZ Bank, Courts, and Prouds. Kings Neon Sign has captured over 70 per cent of the market

share of neon and light boxes in Fiji, and that is just the start. With increasing competition amidst the current economic climate, businesses have to do what it takes to bring people into their stores. Many businesses have opted for promoting themselves through neon and fluorescent signboards, and these are very effective.

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Picture CD to revolutionise digital image-making

THE self-proclaimed harbringer of the next revolution arrived inauspiciously late and in the back of a dark brown delivery truck.

Coddled in thick bubble wrap was a new piece of technology whose makers claim will revolutionise the way people take more than 80 billion photographs each year world-wide.

The new Picture CD - jointly launched by Kodak, Intel and Adobe systems - promises to be one of the most useful bits of consumer technology announced.

Due to be released next year and currently on a trail run in the United States, the software aims to introduce ordinary photographers to the dramatic new possibilities of digital image-making.

This is one of those high-tech sectors that no one ever dreamed of needing before they were invented. Digital cameras, for all their high-tech features, have

hardly made a splash in the camera market, accounting for only about one per cent of sales since the start of the year. Their appeal has largely been more to "techies" than to serious photographers who find that bits and bytes cannot equal the picture quality of traditional film.

News photographers - professionals who need digital images to send to their papers - prefer to scan their traditional negatives for e-mail rather than taking digital photos to start with.

Retail outlets have also been largely unimpressed with the response to new services allowing customers to get their photos developed both on print and a floppy disc.

But according to industry observers, the new picture disk will change the way most people feel about high-tech pictures and will mark an important step into making digital imaging as ubiquitous as computers themselves. ■



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■ ADVERTISING FEATURE - PRODUCTS & SERVICES

Award winning Ansett okay for Fiji

ABOUT a week before it was due to begin its inaugural Nadi-Sydney flight, Ansett Australia was given the green light from the Fiji government.

Services between Sydney and Nadi have been approved from November 24 onwards, following endorsement by the Australian government for Ansett to operate twice weekly service between the two countries.

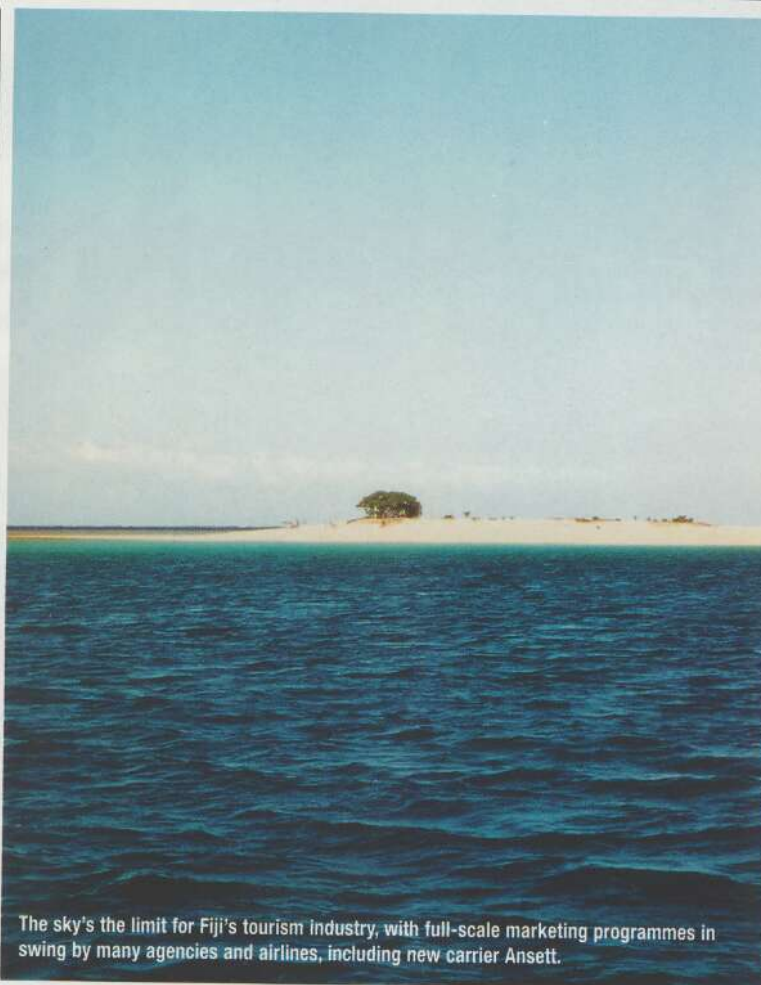
At the same time, Ansett was awarded the prestigious Australian Federation of Travel Agents/National Travel Industry Award as "the Airline of the Year" for the fifth year in a row.

Ansett Australia's Business Development Manager, Mr Terry Saxby, said the airline planned its Fiji launch with flair.

The guest list for the inaugural flight included top media and travel people, as well as the Ansett Chairman, Mr Ken Cowley.

Mr Saxby said that Ansett would be a major asset for Fiji, not only in increasing the air services between the two countries but because of its marketing strength in Australia.

"Ansett has 400 retail travel agencies in Australia; combine that with our recognised marketing expertise, means that Fiji will receive greater promotion from one of its primary markets," Mr Saxby said.



The sky's the limit for Fiji's tourism industry, with full-scale marketing programmes in swing by many agencies and airlines, including new carrier Ansett.

This is good news for the Fiji government that, 12 months ago, was fearful for the future of the tourism industry because of the global economic crisis.

Earlier this year, the Korean government suspended its national airline service to Fiji because of the Asian crisis. Korean Airlines drew up a revised operating schedule in which flights to Fiji were suspended.

However, tourists from other regions have pulled Fiji through disruptions in the sugar industry as well as a sluggish local economy.

One of the major players in the Fiji airline industry is Air New Zealand - one of the partners in Ansett.

Fiji has benefited from the company's changes to longhaul services to London and Frankfurt through Los Angeles - this allowed passengers from Europe easier and

more frequent access to Fiji and other South Pacific destinations.

The one-stop service from Frankfurt to Fiji was considered very attractive to the European market boosting visitors from that region.

Other highlights of the Air New Zealand schedule included:

- * The Auckland/Papeete/Los Angeles service was increased to three Boeing 767 flights per week;

- * The existing Auckland/Apia/Honolulu service was extended to Los Angeles, with the Auckland/Apia service continuing.

- * The Coral Route service of Auckland/Nadi/Rarotonga/Papeete began flying on to Los Angeles.

All the services were designed to enhance Air New Zealand's Destination South Pacific strategy. ■



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PIIF funding has proved useful in a number of fisheries projects where funding is not readily available for the fisheries sector. Funds for this source made available to Pacific Islands fisheries projects through SPPF is approaching US\$1 million. Applications for funding assistance from the PIIF are processed through SPPF in Sydney and approved by IFC in Washington, DC.



Enquiries concerning fisheries projects where SPPF might be of assistance may be directed to:

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SOUTH PACIFIC PROJECT FACILITY

■ ADVERTISING FEATURE - FISHERIES

APEC officials stumble over fisheries



APEC leaders, from left, President B.J. Habibie of Indonesia, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi of Japan and Korean President Kim Dae-jung wave to photographers during a group photo session at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders retreat at Cyberjaya, 30 miles (50km) south of Kuala Lumpur

IT could have been a mouth-watering discussion - about tuna, halibut and salmon. But fish gave officials at the 10th meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum a serious belly-ache, said Malaysia's International Trade Minister Rafidah Aziz.

"This is not so simple as, 'I offer you fish, I offer you forests'. It is very complicated," she said. Fisheries was one of the two issues threatening to deadlock trade

talks between 21 nations. The other was forest products. The United States and Japan had refused to budge from their positions on fisheries and forests.

Washington wanted Japan to open its market, while Tokyo refused, saying it would hurt Japanese fishermen and timber traders.

Waving a huge sheaf of papers filled with figures, Rafidah said officials had pored over tariffs of various kinds of fish so that countries could reach an agreement

on opening their markets. "I want you to be aware of the magnitude," she told reporters after she had said how tariffs for fish differed in each country based on whether the fish was dead or alive - and whether its liver and entrails had been taken out. Tariffs on fish also varied on whether they were meant to be eaten by humans or pets, said Rafidah.

Duties were different if the fish was chilled or sliced into fillets.

For more than five minutes, Rafidah read out the different categories of fish from one page.

Then she said: "God knows what they mean - but they are all trout".

She said salmon and halibut varied on the customs duties they attracted depending on whether they had been swept up in nets in the Pacific or the Atlantic oceans.

"My God, what is this, they are in all kinds of conditions - live, dead, salted and chilled," she said, looking surprised as she read some of the tariff variations.

Rafidah's comments came after ministers from the APEC nations failed to break an impasse on tariff reductions.

They instead moved to more routine discussions, leaving fish and forest products for cabinet ministers to take up later.

Trade ministers and officials met in Kuala Lumpur ahead of the summit.

However, the APEC ministers later abandoned attempts to strike a deal on free trade in nine key sectors and will send the matter to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

"The financial crisis has had a chilling effect on the package that we put together in Vancouver last year," Canada's trade minister Sergio Marchi said.

He said minister from the 21-member Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum had been unable to agree on the early voluntary sectoral liberalisation (EVSL) scheme.

"We were not able to make any progress, and our plan 'B' is to move it (EVSL) to the WTO, to hopefully shop it around as broadly as possible with an aim to move forward by the end of 1999," Marchi said.

The decision effectively throws a decision on early liberalisation in the nine sectors, ranging from energy and chemicals to medical equipment and toys, to the next summit in Auckland, New Zealand. Opening up fish markets also hangs in limbo. ■

■ FOCUS

Regional programmes in danger

INCREASING competition for decreasing resources could mean the slashing of some programmes by regional organisations, according to the Deputy Director-General of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) Jimmie Rodgers. Dr Rodgers said the realities of the Pacific's current economic climate

would have implications on the SPC and could mean the reduction of some of the organisation's programmes.

He highlighted areas such as environmental and community health, aquaculture, quarantine, information technology and television in the SPC's health, agriculture and regional media programmes.

These, he said, would have positive programme impacts on the region. Dr Rodgers told the 28th Session of the SPC's governing council, in Noumea, New Caledonia, the such competition had placed constraints on regional organisations that need to identify gaps in service delivery and better target assistance.

He also outlined internal and external constraints being faced by the SPC in terms of resource allocation and the SPC donor/client relationship.

The organisation's ability to continue to build capacity and transfer skills sustainably at national level was also highlighted.

"The eight regional organisations servicing the Pacific Islands are competing for the same resources and need to identify areas not being addressed by each other," Dr Rodgers said.

Further, the current economic climate in the Pacific Islands meant any increase in assessed contributions (from SPC member states) "would not be welcome", he said.

The representative of Tuvalu and High Commissioner to Fiji, His Excellency Enele Sopoaga also stressed the finiteness of the region's resources, urging the SPC not lose sight of the important goals of capacity building and human resource development.

He said the lack of national commitment was a constraint that needed to be addressed, as was absorption capacity at national level, particularly with implementation (of programmes).

The Forum Secretariat observer and director of its Development and Economic Policy Division, Iosefa Maiava called for regional organisations to be in tune with their changing environment.

He urged them to take the needs of the private sector into further consideration, particularly concerning the impact of economic reforms on this sector.

Mr Maiava suggested that the proposal be tabled through the South Pacific Organisations Co-ordinating Committee (SPOCC) working group.

This, he said, was to avoid duplication by other regional organisations in this area. This is one of the strategies to help make scarce funding resources stretch. ■

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■ FOCUS

Kudos for Pacific Island delegates to CRGA

NOUMEA, NEW CALEDONIA - The 28th session of the annual governing council of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) ended with the SPC deputy director-general Dr Jimmie Rodgers saluting representatives of Pacific Island governments for their role in the week-long deliberations.

This year's session of the SPC Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA) was unique, in that, it was the first time that island government representatives were given decision-making powers. In past years, it was only the SPC's South Pacific Conference which held this privilege.

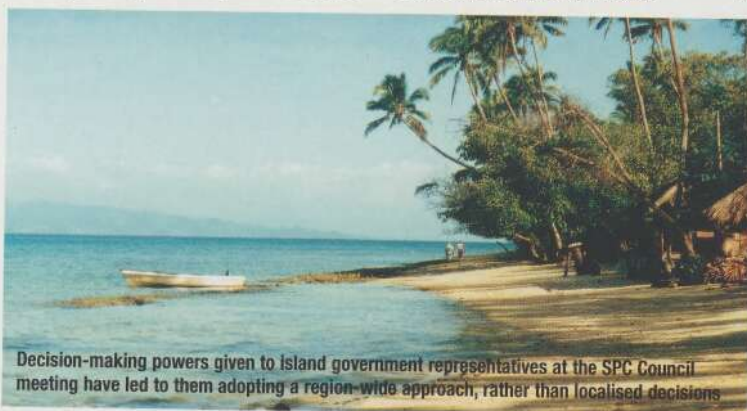
The decision to provide more power to the CRGA came about following endorsement of a recommendation at Saipan in 1996 to hold the South Pacific Conference every two years, as opposed to its previous annual basis. "This year's meeting went particularly well consider-

ing the sometimes difficult agenda," Dr Rodgers said of the 1998 CRGA session.

"For most members, the decision-making powers bestowed upon them were a new challenge to which they adopted a region-wide approach and adapted to extremely well," Dr Rodgers praised what he termed the "rationality and clear thinking" which prevailed throughout the debates, particularly the extended debate on a nine-and-a-half per cent salary adjustment for SPC staff, proposed to come into effect from January 1, 1999.

The CRGA has now approved the organisation's 1999 budget, with the salary issue being given the green light in principle, subject to the outcome of the Forum Official's Committee (FOC) meeting scheduled to be held later this month.

Other regional organisations such as the South Pacific Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) and the South Pacific Environment Programme (SPREP) were also awaiting FOC endorsement on the same issue. ■



Decision-making powers given to island government representatives at the SPC Council meeting have led to them adopting a region-wide approach, rather than localised decisions

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COVER STORY

Unlawful disorder

Fiji's growing security problem

By SOPHIE FOSTER HILDEBRAND

BUSINESS people throughout Fiji are on edge - and this time it is not to do with the declining state of Fiji's economy. The issue is security and the increasing deterioration of law and order in the country.

They have good reason to be worried. Of all armed robberies in Fiji, the majority are directed at businesses and business people. In most cases, the day's takings plus whatever amount is not banked from previous days are taken - with force.

Even the banks have not been spared from the crime spree. But armed robbery is not the only problem. With increasing occurrences of native landowners taking over land, businesses such as hotels and even the country's electricity provider have come under fire. The police have seemed powerless to tackle the problem with low morale and even fewer resources hindering any progress on this front. In September this year, the Fiji Hotel Association, which represents about 80 per cent of the room capacity in Fiji, decided that enough was enough. In a letter to the Fiji Employers Federation, the FHA called for a meeting of all business organisations and associations to pressure the government into taking action.

"You will no doubt be aware of the spate of criminal activities, as reported in the media and the suspicion of the existence of an organised crime ring manifested by the

sophisticated manner in which recent criminal activities have been conducted. Large supermarkets, service stations, business pay-rolls and banks have been victims of such activities," the letter said.

"The law and order situation with regard to landowners taking the law into their own hands has gathered momentum since the Monasavu crisis. In tourism this has extended to qoliqoli owners demanding money unlawfully for use of the water for activities such as diving and surfing.

"The Fiji Hotel Association's concern pertains to the magnitude and increase of criminal activities in our country and the somewhat ineffective deterrents imposed by the Police Force and other relevant authorities in retort to this unlawful disorder.

"These issues appear to be affecting investor confidences, a decline which simply cannot be afforded in the current economic state and the impending ramifications that may arise if this problem is not addressed promptly," it said. Already one investor in a multi-million dollar hotel project in Fiji has pulled out. This time it was because of the volatile union situation in a particular hotel that had spilled over to the point where staff had walked out on management.

After an emergency cabinet meeting, during which the Commissioner of Police briefed the prime minister on the crime situation, Fiji's prime minister, Sitiveni Rabuka said a new approach to law and order was needed.

ISLANDS MONTHLY - DECEMBER 1998

COVER STORY

"The Commissioner of Police gave us a very clear situation report of what's going on but at the end of which he said he was quoting from a report which was written 23 years ago," the prime minister said.

"So the situation now is no different from what it was 23 years ago. The only difference now is that we are trying to do something about it. It may involve the injection of funds, it may involve the injection of expertise... it may also involve the injection of a whole new approach to the fight against crime," he said. Fiji's finance minister, Mr Jim Ah Koy, in presenting his 1999 budget to parliament, admitted that the country has a problem with law and order.

"We are all concerned about the rising lawlessness in this country. In recent weeks, we read in the newspapers the increasing instances of robberies and violence. This is a serious development that we must address immediately. This lawlessness damages our reputation and shatters investor confidence," he said.

The biggest concern, of course, is the impact such a situation will have on investment. Mr Ah Koy says "for many investment prospects, law and order has become the main cornerstone of investment attraction". "There is a strong body of evidence around the world that asseverates that concessions are rather low on the list of priorities for investors. Many other factors precede concessions like stability, certainty, consistency, good governance, good payment system, law and order and so forth," he said. To tackle the problem, the government has allowed for an additional allocation to the Police Department of \$5.8 million from \$36.4 million to \$42.2 million for 1999. The Police Department would also have access to \$2.2 million set aside in the Budget for Anti Corruption and an additional provision of \$450,000 annually was made for the operation of the Prisons Department for the next three years. But even Mr Ah Koy admitted that "the problem of law and order is not going to be solved by money alone".

"It requires a multifaceted approach and some serious thinking and planning. To avert the breakdown of law and order we must ensure that the economy continues to grow to provide the economic safety net; strengthen our traditional ties and the family support unit," he said. The government solution also calls for an improvement of the education system with attitudinal training and developing laws to be supportive of

such a solution. The relevant departments in Government must build up their capacities and their management to ensure that the funds provided are used effectively and the programmes are implemented properly.

"I would like to call on each and every one of us to stand up and band together against crime. We must have zero tolerance against people who are involved in criminal activities. And we must send out a strong message that crime does not pay as we will safeguard our communities from this destructive force," he said. The chief executive of the Fiji Hotel Association, Ms Olivia Pareti, says "what's worrying is not only the increase in the number of crimes that are reported such as robberies or burglaries or whatever, but it seems also to be a very professional crime ring that's operating around the country and the targets for this, apart from the households, are businesses".

"That's very worrying for us and we have to take some drastic steps. We are inviting our members to be very, very careful now, and not to be complacent". For Fiji's booming tourism industry, the issue is one that it cannot take lightly. Image is what counts. "It's bad enough from where we see it, as Fijians living in the country, so can you imagine what our visitors think of it when they come in and see the dark side of Fiji," Ms Pareti says, "once if they stayed here for two weeks, they might see such incidents once or twice in the paper, but now there's just pages and pages of it every day". "We want to project this image of a safe and secure destination to come to. You don't want to have your hotels with lots of security guards patrolling like a few years ago. A few years ago we were saying why do we need all these security guards when the first person you see greeting you as you come into a resort is a security guard. Now it's a necessity to have that and it's not creating a good image for us," Ms Pareti says.

With tales of harassment of tourists and lately, reports of the banned drug, marijuana, being made available for tourists, the FHA has made the security situation a priority for the industry.

"What we have done is that within our own organisation we discuss this on a regular basis and also with government through the high-level consultative forum which the minister of tourism puts together, and also through the Fiji Visitors Bureau. I can tell you that every meeting we discuss the law and order situation," Ms Pareti says. The solution, as far as businesses see it now, is

to band together. "We should have a collective effort to try and work against this because it is not only our industry but the livelihoods of everybody and we should be concerned about it. It could be you next, nobody knows these days. Nobody is safe.

"There's a lot more people that are law-abiding citizens in this country and we are letting a minority over-rule this. I think if the law-abiding citizens get together and say enough is enough is enough, then we will probably be getting uphill. But at the moment we don't seem to have the willpower or maybe not enough willpower to tackle the crime," she says.

Because of police problems with funding and other issues, businesses got together last year to pay for extra police to patrol the streets of Nadi because there was harassment of tourists. This was one example of where an industry-led solution worked, and the problem has been controlled, Ms Pareti says.

Control and common-sense also the key words when it comes to protecting businesses, says the chief executive of the Fiji Employers Federation, Mr Ken Roberts.

"The most important thing, if you are thinking about it from a planning point of view, is exercise your common-sense. Look at your buildings, look at your compound, see how you store your cash, how you carry your cash, the staff you entrust with cash. Are you able to get police checks on your staff?" he says.

Mr Roberts adds that quite often staff unwittingly give away information that gives other people the idea for a robbery.

"The old expression that the Americans dreamed up in the last war, loose lips sink ships, is so true because that's exactly the problem. Here we are a very free society and people talk about anything and everything - around the grog bowl, over a few beers or whatever - and there are so few secrets. Only let those people know in your business who need to know," he says. Mr Roberts says that while the increase in armed robberies was concerning, "by the same token it is not something that we wish to talk up". He said in most cases, people were aware that it exists and what steps they could take to try and negate the increase in crime. There is no doubt that crime is bad for business. However, what the government must remember is that, with the national general elections looming next year, crime could also be bad for re-election. ■

COVER STORY

What professionals recommend for business security

1. Compound

Ensure there is a well constructed and maintained fence around the entire compound.

Adequate lighting should be provided around the compound especially in areas where staff are required to walk at night such as to their cars.

A security guard stationed at the main gate to a factory with clear visibility of the compound will minimise risks.

Keep large bush areas trimmed so people cannot hide in them and observe your activities undetected.

2. Buildings

Constructed of solid material and all holes etc. should be repaired immediately.

Exterior doors should be constructed from steel or solid timber with a deadlock.

A roller shutter should protect glass front doors on offices or factories.

Glass doors in houses ideally should have some sort of steel burglar proofing.

Windows should be locked at all times when there is no one in the building and preferably have some form of burglar proofing.

All burglar proofing should be built into the building structure and not bolted to the exterior, which will be easy to remove.

Access to the building should be controlled by a security guard or some means of electronic access control.

3. Cash Storage

If a business collects large sums of cash it should be stored in a good quality safe or a well constructed vault room in a secured area of the building.

Only the staff who need to know should be aware of this location and have access to this area. Access can be controlled by electronic access control systems.

All cash tills etc. should be cleared on a regular basis with the cash being stored in the safe until it is needed for banking. Tills are not designed for safe storage of cash.

When the safe or vault is opened to remove or store cash the door to this area should be locked. This should apply when the banking is being made up.

Overnight no cash should be kept in drawers or tills but should be stored in the safe or vault. The size and quality of the safe or vault would depend on the amount of cash being held in the building.

The area in which the vault or safe is kept should be alarmed and monitored so that any unauthorised entrance will be transmitted to an independent location and assistance can be summoned. It is pointless having a good safe area if burglars can spend all weekend breaking in. Eventually even the best quality safes can be broken into given time and resources. An alarm will give time to get assistance to your premises before the cash can be accessed.

A closed circuit television (CCTV) system should be installed to observe and record any activity around the building especially areas that have cash. This will help detect any thefts and can be used to catch the offenders.

4. Cash Transfer or Banking

If a company is paid in cheques then the banking can be carried out by anyone.

If cash is banked then companies need to consider the following:

Use a company such as Armourguard

Vary times, routes and banks used.

Do not advertise the fact even amongst company staff.

The fewer people that know about this activity the better. Numerous robberies are a result of some sort of inside information.

5. Staff

All employees that deal with cash or have some involvement should be Police cleared and a background check made of their character.

Limit the number of staff who have dealings with cash. This should possibly include the Accountant, Manager, Cashier and Accounts Clerk. Do not even let staff see where the cash is stored unless they need to do know.

Staff should be trained in what to do should there be a Robbery at the site. Trained staff who have some idea of what action to take are more likely to foil a

Robbery than those who are completely taken by surprise.

Staff who deal with cash should be in an office that is well secured and not a general thoroughfare for all other staff.

Casual employees should have Police clearance if this can be done. They should not have any dealings with cash or know where it is stored and how it is transferred to the bank.

Casual employees can present the most risk as they have the least to lose.

All staff should be told not to discuss the financial dealings of operations to anyone outside the organisation. Sometimes the most innocent conversation can be overheard by those who wish to use it for criminal purposes.

Staff should be trained to be on the lookout for any suspicious activity or people who may be watching the activities. All robbers must at some time have observed the activities of the staff to know when to rob the company.

Staff are a company's greatest asset and have the greatest knowledge of a company and its activities.

6. Procedures

When dealing with cash a company should have clear procedures in place. These must be explained to staff and monitored to ensure they are being followed.

Procedures should be such that there is minimum risk to robbery while still getting the job done.

Certain procedures, while good for security, may not be practical and these have to be weighed up by Management.

Regular checks should be made to ensure that the procedures are being followed. These are pointless if the staff do as they wish.

7. Neighbourhood Watch (NHW)

Small businesses and homes should be included in neighbourhood watch schemes. If there are none in the area then consideration should be given to starting one.

People should get involved in the community and their neighbours and only then will we see crime come back under control.

- The recommendations are taken from a security checklist that is provided to clients of Guardforce Fiji Ltd.

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■ BUSINESS

106 promise to help re-build a nation

By FLORENCE SYME-BUCHANAN

THESE days, Linda Wichman only goes to New Zealand for short holidays, mostly to shop and catch up with family.

In the Auckland airport departure lounge after an exhausting weekend trip, Wichman recently confided she couldn't wait to get "home."

Until five years ago, the softly spoken, attractive New Zealander had hopes of returning permanently to her homeland - no longer. "I realised there was nowhere else in the world I'd rather live, this is my home now". With that realisation, Wichman, along with over a hundred other expatriates, applied for and got the right to live permanently in her adopted home.

Married to leading businessman John Wichman with two Rarotonga born teenage children, Linda Wichman was one of 106 people given permanent residency in the Cooks last month. The biggest group of flower-laden expatriates ever to be welcomed into the nation by a line-up of the country's political and traditional leaders. All received simple white PR certificates from Immigration minister Inatio Akaruru in a colourful ceremony in their honour. Like the much smaller 1996 PR ceremony, Prime minister Sir Geoffrey Henry again scolded the new Cook Islanders about their inability to speak Cook Islands Maori.

He said there may be a time when permanent residency laws will require a non-Cook Islander to speak Maori fluently first. Sir Geoffrey urged all 106 to "begin by learning the national anthem in Maori,

that's your anthem as of today, the anthem you used to sing as a child is now no longer".

"It needs to be remembered that the status of permanent residence is conveyed on you because of the belief that you too have something to offer the nation that now embraces you," said President of the House of Ariki, Pa Upokotini Ariki. While some had already made a "substantial contribution" over many years to the Cooks, others were given permanent residency in the expectation that they would do the same, said the traditional paramount chief.

"Great societies have been built on the energy, drive and initiative of immigrant populations".

When first recipient David Gragg was given his permanent residency certificate by Inatio Akaruru, it ended years of a very public legal battle between the American businessman and the immigration minister. Gragg's applications spanning 15 years were repeatedly turned down. Gragg is married to Cook Islands businesswoman and artist, Joan Rolls.

It was a gathering of people from all four corners of the earth that were welcomed into the family of the Cook Islands - Filipinos, Samoans, New Zealanders, Australians and Britons made up some of the nationalities. Malcolm Laxton-Blinkhorn was chosen by the others for his eloquence to give the speech in reply. But with emotions running high on the day, the Englishman fluffed greetings of Kia Orana in his well-rehearsed vote of thanks on behalf of 105 others. When Laxton-Blinkhorn said he felt "absolutely proud to be part of a unique and beautiful country...

now I have a feeling of really belonging," he echoed the thoughts of all other new permanent residents.

Moments later, he was congratulated by long time resident Jim Ditchburn who said, "You didn't do too badly for a pommy".

Laxton-Blinkhorn's quick "Thanks very much you Scottish git," was evidence that he was over a bad case of nerves. Later over drinks at Trader Jacks, pilot and new permanent recipient Tim Boyd stressed the "absolute privilege" it was for any expatriate to be given the right to live in such a "special place". It is not like New Zealand or Australia, where many new immigrants can be taken on every year, said Boyd.

Permanent residency isn't free and can sometimes take years. Brad Fraser waited 18 years and the October 7 ceremony was especially meaningful - it was Fraser's birthday. Expatriates married to Cook Islanders had to fork out \$500 each, others a \$1000 fee. On the eve of the ceremony, Immigration workers were phoning around to remind recipients not to forget their fees. For the cash-starved government, the PR exercise earned a welcome NZ\$75,000 or so. The local business community did well too with sales of black pearls and locally made island-style clothes. Bar sales at the town waterfront Trader Jack's, for the after-ceremony celebration, were a historic high for a Wednesday.

The Cooks has a ceiling of 500 permanent residents. Places were freed up by Immigration taking away that right from over a 100 who had shown they no longer wished to make the country their home by remaining overseas for three years or more. One of those to lose the right to live in the Cook Islands was notorious cancer therapist Milan Brych. He came to the Cooks in the 1970s - at the invitation of a former health minister. Brych set up a cancer clinic in a wing of the national hospital. A number of graves in a cemetery dubbed "the Brych yard" is testimony that his therapy wasn't always successful.

Milan Brych has not been back to the Cooks since getting booted out by former prime minister Sir Thomas Davis about 1978.

Just how many of the 106 remain permanently in the Cooks and help see the country out of its financial crisis remains to be seen. All have taken an oath to "consciously fulfill" duties as a Cook Islander - if they all do, those small white certificates will be well deserved. ■

■ FOCUS

Fiji milk goes regional

MILK supplied by Fiji Island dairy farmers is now being exported to Vanuatu to determine the demand for local dairy products in the South Pacific. Rewa Co-operative Dairy Company, Fiji's only producer of dairy foods, has begun trial exports of milk

to L'Albatros Vanuatu Ltd. Rewa is also exploring the possibility of extending exports to Tonga and Samoa.

Rewa Co-operative has delivered three trial shipments to UHT Life Milk, UHT Skim Milk and Fun Flavour to Vanuatu since May this year. L'Albatros Vanuatu is

an import and wholesale operator supplying food products to hotels and restaurants. L'Albatros director, Mr George Adams, had enquired with Rewa Co-operative earlier this year about the possibility of importing milk from Fiji.

He requested sole distributorship of Rewa Dairy products in Vanuatu.

According to Mr Adams, the response to Fiji milk is positive and he sees potential for expansion of sales.

Rewa Co-operative Dairy Company managing director, Mr Sam Speight, said he was pleased with the interest in local dairy foods by L'Albatros.

"This could be something very significant because it is the first time we have entered the export market," said Mr Speight.

"We are proud that our locally produced milk has been well-received by another Pacific Island country. This proves that local dairying can be developed to the extent of exporting within the region".

In the past year, Rewa Co-operative has invested in various initiatives to promote and improve dairy industry performance. These include an intensive artificial insemination and pasture development programme, a new supplementary dairy feed ration and new equipment for farmers.

Mr Speight said that Rewa Co-op now looked forward to discussing incentive schemes with the Fiji trade and investment Board that could facilitate future export opportunities. ■

Post-Harvest Fisheries Development

Position	Consultation for the identification of training needs and the development of a strategy for inshore and nearshore Post-Harvest Fisheries activities in the Pacific Islands, in collaboration with Regional and Canadian Organisations.
Project Background	The University of the South Pacific's (USP) Marine Studies Program (MSP) based in Suva, Fiji, with assistance from the Canadian International Development Program (C-SPODP II), is undertaking a Post Harvest Fisheries (PHF) Project to improve the utilisation of inshore and nearshore fisheries resources for USP member countries.
Services Required	The consultant will be contracted to assist the Marine Studies of The USP to carry out a needs assessment and develop a strategy to meet the priority PHF training needs in the Pacific with special reference to inshore and nearshore fisheries.
Location and Duration	The consultant will be based at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji Islands. The contract will commence on 17th February 1999 and the strategy is to be completed and circulated for approval no later than 11th June 1999.
For More Information	For more information on the qualifications required, specific duties and application procedures, etc. please contact Mr Tony Chamberlain, Lecturer in Post Harvest Fisheries, Marine Studies Program, the University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji Islands. Telephone: (679) 212876, Facsimile: (679) 301490, Email: chamberlain@usp.ac.fj



■ BUSINESS

Hilton to run new \$81m resort in Fiji

By **SOPHIE FOSTER HILDEBRAND**

ONE of the world's most successful hotel chains, The Hilton, has signed a deal for a new \$81 million (US\$40 million) resort in Malomalo, Sigatoka. The resort will have from 300 to 350 rooms. The deal was signed in Sydney, Australia.

American investor Ray Holden is providing the capital to build the resort that is "all set to go and all offshore money".

Mr Holden also owns the freehold land on which the resort will stand.

The freehold land in question was involved in a complex land case that pitted Mr Holden against the lawyer he had hired to handle the land transfer.

Mr Holden won the case in Fiji's High Court. In his judgement, Justice John Lyons said documents used in the land transfer were "misleading, deceptive and dishonest". It is understood that plans for the resort

would have gone ahead earlier had it not been for the land dispute.

Mr Holden said The Hilton had signed a management contract for 25 years that would result in Fiji being marketed as a premier Hilton resort.

"Reservations will be booked through their international reservations system all

over the world, and all of their advertising then will feature Fiji as one of their premier resorts," he said.

The five-star resort should employ about 2000 people.

Architects Pacific is the lead architect for the project, while a company out of Australia is the Project Management company.

The company was hoping to have all bids for construction back by this month, with construction to begin in January.

In late October Mr Holden met with Fiji's finance minister Jim Ah Koy who has committed to seal the road that comes off the Queens Highway back to the resort.

However, Mr Holden said, "I am actually going to pay for the road and then once the road is done and the project's done - because it's all tied to me completely the resort - then they'll reimburse me for the cost of sealing the road".

"As part of the same project, when I talked to Jim Ah Koy was perhaps extending that same road to Natadola for the Four Seasons Hotel, because that's a shorter route for them to take then the other way which requires a bridge to be built," he said.

"It would be less expensive for government if they would continue that road through the nearby villages who are in need of a better road and better transportation through there.

Nadari Road would run all the way from the Queens Highway to Natadola and to the other hotel projects that are going to be there at Natadola".

Fiji's tourism minister David Pickering said he was delighted with the Hilton project.

"It will be a very, very big boost for the industry and we are delighted to hear it," he said. The Hilton's vice-president for corporate development Mr Hugh Holmes could not be reached for comment but the company is understood to be pleased with the outcome. Mr Holmes is based in Hong Kong. ■



Colombia's President Ernesto Samper receives a beer from a waiter as he relaxes in the bar of the Hilton Hotel after the closing ceremony of the Iberoamerican Summit, Sunday, Nov. 9, 1997, in Porlamar, Venezuela. (AP Photo)

■ BUSINESS

Majuro's port booms tuna transshipment

By GIFF JOHNSON

DURING the 1990s, Majuro developed a reputation with foreign fishermen as a port to avoid: too much government red tape, high fees, and lethargic bureaucrats.

In the government "reform" parlance currently in vogue, the Marshalls had a lousy "environment" for doing business, especially for tuna boats that view every minute wasted in port as lost revenue.

Yet Majuro is strategically positioned in the central Pacific, not in - but not too far distant from - major fishing grounds, is serviced by international flights from Fiji, Asia and the US, and has excellent container ship service from Matson, PM & O and Kyowa line, among others. But the logistics couldn't overcome the anti-business climate.

Fast-forward to late 1998. In just two months, during September and October, nine large refrigerated vessels had been parked in Majuro's lagoon. Tuna was off loaded from nearly 30 Asian purse seiners and transhipped to canneries in Asia.

At the same time, the Marshalls signed deals with Taiwan and Korea for a combined total of more than 70 purse seiners to get licenses and for transshipment activities in Majuro.

This sudden rush of fishery's activity has been aided by the fact that El Nino weather, which changes the temperature of ocean water, forced the schools of tuna out of their traditional grounds in the Federated States of Micronesia-Nauru-Papua New Guinea region and to the East

of the Marshalls and Kiribati.

Having the fish here helps, but Marshalls fisheries' officials are working hard to cement relations with the Asian fishing industry to use Majuro as an ongoing transshipment port, regardless of fish migration, because of the potential wind-fall to local businesses for refuelling, maintenance, supplies and the hotel, restaurant and bar trade.

"The Taiwanese have always been here but they've never bought licenses before," Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA) Director Danny Wase said of the response to the Marshalls' new welcoming attitude toward the distant water fishing nations.

Last year, MIMRA officials, with the help of Asian Development Bank consultants, wrote a new national fishery's policy aimed at making Majuro a transshipment hub for the central Pacific. That was approved by the cabinet in late 1997, and the results are showing already.

"It's all happening (purse seiner interest in the Marshalls) because the cabinet approved changes in our national fisheries policy," Wase said. "It's not even one year later and look what's happening."

MIMRA has cut government fees that are charged to visiting boats. For the minimal payment of a \$300 license and \$600 for each transshipment visit, these mother ships can use Majuro to tranship millions of pounds of fish.

In contrast, other ports in the region charge fees per ton of fish transhipped. This could translate into a cost of thousands of dollars per visit - depending on

the volume of fish handled. MIMRA has also streamlined its clearance procedures, making it relatively quick for the visiting ships to clear the various inspections on their arrival.

Meanwhile, firms such as the Marshalls Energy Company have hooked the fishing boats with good prices for bulk fuel purchases, Wase said.

"Fuel sales are right up," said Marshalls Energy Company's Bill Roberts. One US purse seiner wanted 50,000 gallons of fuel but "the price was attractive so he went from wanting 50,000 gallons to buying 90,000," Roberts said, adding that he's being bombarded with requests for fuel prices from shipping agents and companies.

"The good thing is that the crews of these boats have money and they spend it in Majuro," Roberts said.

"Increasing transshipment activity is a major factor in our agreements (with Taiwan and Korea) because it brings crew changes, visits by families (of crew members) and use of other services," Wase said.

This is providing business to the airlines, hotels, restaurants and bars besides direct services to the ships.

Spin-off benefits aside, as a direct result of the Korean fishing deal signed three months ago, the Marshalls has netted more than \$500,000 for fish caught in its 200-mile exclusive economic zone during September and October - above and beyond the license fees collected for individual purse seiners, Wase said.

Marshall Islands revenue from licensing foreign fishing vessels, which has hov-



Chinese fishermen unload big tunas for processing at the fishport of Toril in Davao city in southern Philippines. Majuro has now got into the fishing port act. (AP Photo)

ered at the modest level of under \$1.5 million annually for many years, is expected to top \$4-million this year, MIMRA fisheries advisor Simon Tiller told a Chamber of Commerce meeting in mid-November.

"General spending in the economy this year (from the vessel visits) is expected to be in the four-to-five million range," he said.

That's no small change in a country that is heavily dependent on funding from the United States that is declining.

However, the downside is the pollution that some in the Majuro community claim is occurring.

Local fishermen and divers report having seen instances of effluent being released from at least one refrigerated carrier inside the lagoon, as well as fish dumped overboard by another.

MIMRA officials said that the vessels have been instructed not to discharge any bilge, waste or ballast within the lagoon, and face stiff fines and penalties if they do.

MIMRA staff go onboard the transshipment vessels and purse seiners to monitor and record the fish loading, but with the sudden boom in activity, MIMRA and other enforcement agencies are also clearly short-handed.

Additional oversight of the foreign vessels will be needed to assuage concern in the community, which was heightened by the polluting actions of locally based Chinese long liners in the mid-1990s.

It isn't just El Nino and MIMRA's new fish friendly attitude that is making Majuro attractive.

The Marshalls is also getting help from other island ports in its quest to become a transshipment hub. Wase said that arbitrary or ad hoc policies at other ports in the Pacific region have forced tuna fleets to look elsewhere for these services.

MIMRA, he said, is attempting to take advantage of this by demonstrating that Majuro can be an attractive port for the Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese and American fleets - regardless of where the tuna schools are located.

"The fleets are looking for a new home," added fishery's advisor Simon Tiller.

Because of the complex nature of the fishing industry, "fishing interest can disappear as quickly as it comes," Tiller said. "That's why we're trying to build a sustainable base for the future. There's a lot of work still to be done."

■ BUSINESS

PNG's new legislation up in the air

By **SAM VULUM**

A POLITICAL uproar is expected in Papua New Guinea's parliament over twin proposals for new oil and gas industry legislation.

With all the political mud-slinging and innuendoes aside, the Opposition-backed separate proposed gas legislation appears to be a winner with landowners.

However, the government is reported to be backing another legislation sponsored by Petroleum and Gas minister Sir Rabble Namaliu.

PNG's prime minister Bill Skate reportedly stated that the proposals were a reasonable compromise, taking into account interests of the State, provincial governments, landowners and investors.

He said the legislation would also give additional benefits to provincial governments and landowners.

The separate legislation was drafted by the Southern Highlands and Gulf provincial governments, and has opposition support.

However, the PNG Chamber of Commerce and Industry said the separate gas proposal would put a stop to the PNG gas project and bring an immediate decline in the petroleum industry.

Notices have been given for both proposals to be introduced for deliberation in the last sitting of the 1998 parliament.

The government is seeking amendments to the Gas and Petroleum Act while the Gulf and Southern Highlands provincial governments Oil and Gas Task Force

Committee want approval for a separate gas legislation.

Joint Task Force Committee chairman and Komo/Magarima MP Alfred Kaiabe, who gave notice for the separate legislation, said the main thrust of their efforts was to see a separate gas legislation.

To sell the legislation to the public, Kaiabe, whose Southern Highlands province will be directly affected by the country's gas development, went live on national television in early November outlining the new legislation and its importance to PNG.

Although comments could not be gauged from the government over its amendments to the Act, Kaiabe told PIM that all the MPs from the Southern Highlands and Gulf provinces would support the legislation.

He said it would be a numbers game and only time would tell whether the legislation would become a hot issue on the floor of parliament.

Kaiabe said they have already begun discussions with the government to solicit support for a single legislation.

He said they've spent about half a million Kina researching and putting together the legislation and are hoping to see it passed by parliament.

Gas development is expected to underpin the economy as PNG enters the new millennium with oil exports declining fast and without any significant mineral or oil discoveries yet.

PNG is expected to sign commercial sales agreements with the developers of its

\$3.5 billion pipeline project that will bring natural gas from the Southern Highlands province to industrial markets in Townsville and Gladstone in Australia.

Using the Bougainville crisis as an example, the Opposition-backed legislation attempts to redress almost all issues close to the hearts of Papua New Guineans involving their land and resources.

The Bougainville Crisis resulted from government and Bougainville Copper Limited's failure to address landowner grievances over the Panguna copper mine.

As well, a landmark court battle was instigated by landowners in the Ok Tedi copper mine claiming damages as a result of the mining activity.

Amongst other issues, the legislation authors dedicated a section towards addressing compensation, an issue that has become a major stumbling block to many development projects in the country over the years.

It highlights concrete and vivid description of every little detail connecting the landowners to their land and surroundings, and its importance



■ BUSINESS

in their lives, which past legislation failed to address.

The 117-page legislation, cited by PIM, says that a licensee shall be liable to pay compensation for:

- * The deprivation of the use and enjoyment of the surface of the land or any rights customarily associated with it, except where there has been a reservation in favour of the State;

- * Severance of the land from any other land of any owner, occupier or person interested in the land;

- * Rights of way and easements;

- * Loss of opportunity to make any planned improvement on the land;

- * And any decrease in the market value of the interest of owners, occupiers and persons interested in the land.

The licensee is also liable to pay for:

- * Damage to the surface of land, crops, trees, grasses and other vegetation (including fruit and vegetable) and to buildings, structures or works, caused by or which

may arise from prospecting or development operations;

- * Damage to any fish or animals;

- * Destruction or loss of, injury to, disturbance of or interference with stock, caused by the carrying on of operations by the licensee;

- * Loss of livelihood and lifestyle;

- * Loss of hunting, fishing, and gathering;

- * Social inconvenience;

- * Any other damage consequential on the licensee's use or occupation of the land.

On some subsections of the legislation, the compensation shall be payable directly to the landowners, while in others, the payment should be made to the provincial government to be placed in a trust fund to be administered for the benefit of the landowners generally.

The assessment of compensation payment shall be made according to Valuer General valuation, no more than five years old; plus 20 per cent of the stated value.

Where the Valuer General's valuation is more than five years old, 300 per cent is added to the stated value whichever is the higher amount.

If parties are unable to agree on the amount of compensation to be paid, either party may apply to the courts to have the amount determined.

The legislation says if an ownership dispute arises, an applicant for a licence would have to conduct socio-anthropological and land tenure studies, and such other investigations necessary to determine customary land ownership.

The results of such studies and investigations would then be provided to the minister who, in turn, gives a copy to the provincial government.

It said any dispute concerning the customary ownership of land must be determined by the court before the minister may grant a gas development licence.

The State and the licensee shall endeavour to resolve any dispute concerning ownership promptly by amicable negotiation with all parties to the dispute.

All costs incurred by a licensee or an applicant for a licence and the State in resolving the dispute shall be regarded as a project cost to the development.

In another plus for the landowners, the provincial government and a landowner entity - representing all customary landowners in the project area - would be granted a participating equity of up to 10

per cent (in one half proportions).

After the development licence has been in operation for 10 years, they have the option to acquire a further equity interest of up to 20 per cent of the total (in one half proportions).

The landowner entity would be managed and controlled independent of the State or State-owned entity. Any dispute regarding the value of an equity purchase shall be determined by the minister.

The State may acquire at commercial value an interest not exceeding 22.2 per cent. It shall nominate a wholly owned State gas corporation to acquire its interest with the licensee acquiring the remaining shares.

The landowners appear to be heavily favoured, with investors subjected to many stringent conditions, including heavy penalties.

Investors are required to acquire several licences, including a licence for hydrocarbon, gas retention, gas development, gas processing facility and gas pipeline.

The conditions and requirements for all licences follow the same general format with the minister having the last say on whether to approve a licence.

Among others, for the minister to approve a hydrocarbon licence, the application had to be accompanied by detailed proposals for work and expenditure during the first two years of the term of the licence.

It should also outline proposals for work and expenditure during the remaining four years, technical qualification of the applicant and employees, technical advice available to the applicant, and financial resources available. The application also has to be accompanied by a fee of K10,000.

Further, the legislation requires that when gas has been declared in a location, the minister may direct the licensee to carry out feasibility studies on a gas venture in the area.

This has to be done within a period of less than six months.

The studies would have to include:

- * Technical and economic feasibility studies on the recovery, treatment and transportation of gas from the location;

- * Proposed sites and transportation of gas from the location;

- * Proposed sites for facilities that would be required by the industry;

- * Port or berthing facilities, roads,



The major question of the alternative legislation is that the benefits of new mining and gas ventures filter down to those at the grassroots level.

■ BUSINESS

pipelines or other transportation facilities, water facilities for industrial and town purposes, the location and design of a suitable airstrip and associated landing and terminal facilities if required;

- * Generation and transmission of electricity;

- * Development of a suitable town if required;

- * Design of housing and associated civic, social and cultural facilities;

- * Future labour requirements;

- * Possible impact on the environment;

- * Land tenure and ownership.

The legislation also outlines that an investor will face a fine not exceeding K200,000 if he is caught exploring or recovering gas without a licence.

The investor will pay a fine of K1,000,000 or has its licence cancelled if it fails to supply all information required by the minister.

Another section requires that when an investor fails to pay an amount due on time, the investor will pay interest calculated at 10 per cent per annum.

The licensee is also required to pay an amount not exceeding K2,000,000 as security to the minister.

Royalty payment of gas recovered during a royalty period is payable by the last day of the next period.

In case of a failure by the licensee, eight per cent interest per day is charged on the due amount.

Each fiscal year of the term of the licence of a gas development, the licensee shall pay out its own costs to the provincial governments, development levies for the construction and maintenance of provincial roads and bridges, wharves and airports, schools and hospitals, and any other levies determined by national law or agreement. A provincial government legislation shall ensure that at least 30 per cent of levies shall be spent in the project area. The legislation also requires the establishment of a Gas Advisory Board to be appointed by the minister.

It should comprise five members, comprising a director who shall be the chairman, the Governor of a province and three other members.

The board advises the minister on any question on matters relating to the legislation. ■

■ BUSINESS

Samoan publisher wins top press freedom award

FOR years of fighting the government over controls on press freedom, Samoan Savea Sano Malifa, editor-publisher of the Samoa Observer, has won the 1998 Astor Award.

The award is the highest given for press freedom in the Commonwealth. It was presented to Savea at the Astor Award dinner during the Commonwealth Press Union conference in Kuala Lumpur in late October. It is the first time anyone from the Pacific Islands has won a top international media freedom award, and followed his strong and constant defence of the public's right to know despite all sorts of pressures.

According to the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) "Savea and his wife Jean have kept on fighting for freedom of information and expression despite the Samoa Observer's printing plant being burnt down, death threats and an assault on Savea, the Samoan Government pulling out all Government advertising, and the heavy legal cost for them of fighting criminal and civil libel actions".

Savea and the Observer have fought legal battles with Samoan prime minister Tofilau Eti Alesana and his ministers who now get their legal costs paid by the Samoan Government.

Savea has also been invited to France this month to be a speaker in the "Human Rights Defenders Summit" to be held in Paris. According to the PINA secretariat, one of the things that helped publicise Savea's story and get him international support was membership of IFEX, the International Freedom of Expression Exchange. IFEX was created in 1992 when many of the world's leading media freedom and freedom of expression

organisations came together in Montreal to discuss how best to work together.

Today IFEX is comprised of more than 30 different media freedom and freedom of expression groups who work together to promote freedom of information and expression, and media freedom, and help those under threat.

The IFEX Clearing House, in Toronto, Canada, is managed by the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists. One of CCPJ's main activities is to look after the IFEX Action Alert Network.

Member organisations report abuses to the IFEX Clearing House which then circulates this information to other members and interested organisations all over the world.

PINA says this process "allows for a rapid, world-wide and coordinated response to media freedom and freedom of expression violations".

PINA was accepted into IFEX as a full member last year. Through the PINA Pacific Freedom of Information Network, almost 20 alerts and updates about the Samoa Observer had been put out.

This led to some financial help for Savea in his court battles. Through protests from around the world, PINA says the Samoan Government now knows it is "under the international spotlight whenever it tries to do anything to Savea and the Observer".

"We mounted a very big campaign when Prime Minister Tofilau threatened to introduce compulsory newspaper licensing so newspapers he said stirred up trouble could be closed." "Our PINA alerts have publicised Savea and Jean's brave struggle. The Samoa Observer has not been alone". ■

■ BUSINESS

BPs - the end of an era

A ONCE tenacious company that took on Imperial Germany to become the commercial ruler of the South Pacific is retreating from region as it struggles to survive debt and its bankers.

It began trading in trochus shells, beche-de-mer and copra, creating an empire on across atolls and islands.

Now an Australian spice and yeast company, Burns Philp and Co., founded in 1883 has been struggling to cope with 1.5 billion Australian dollars of debt (1 billion US dollars).

With the October sale of its shares in Burns Philp Toyota, the car dealership joint venture, the company has severed its last links with Fiji and PNG and it had already gone from Samoa and most parts of Micronesia.

Ross MacDonald, now retired managing director for the Pacific BP group, said they developed Pacific trade. For many of the staff, who were part of BPs for many years, the demise of the company is certainly very sad to see," he said in Suva.

"Over many years BPs played a major role in developing the commercial sector of the economy and in bringing in skills and business acumen into the community."

BP was the most aggressive of a number of trading companies which historian Douglas Oliver in his 1951 work, *The Pacific Islands*, called "an all-embracing mercantilism".

"Whether one was sitting in a native hut or lounging on a club veranda in the British Islands, the conversation sooner or later got around to 'BP'," Oliver wrote.

"Notwithstanding many of its critics, BP does not stand for 'Bloody Pirates'."

The pirates' sobriquet has been said to stem from the fact that the company, espe-

cially in its early years, made no bones about charging what the market would bear for all its goods and services.

Scotsman James Burns established a general store in Townsville, Queensland, in 1872, employing two years later one Robert Philp, a fellow Scot, who became a partner. They then joined another businessman, Isidore Lissner, and in 1883 became BP. They began trading in the Pacific, buy-

ing freight subsidy to get their product to Europe. BP still won the battle but in 1914 the islands went to Japan who closed them to outsiders.

Between the wars BP built up a major shipping line and dominated Pacific trade. They even owned atolls, including lonely Fanning Island. In the 1950s they had exclusive retail stores through the Pacific, along with wholesaling, shipping, car sales

and inter-island shipping. In Fiji alone 3000 people worked for BP.

It was another Scotsman, Andrew Turnbull, who as chief executive in the mid 1980s turned the company's drift away from the South Pacific into a drive.

He saw the islands trade as declining and incapable of delivering the return on shareholders' funds the company needed. In fact in 1985 he remarked in an unguarded moment that the company was involved in some "rubbish" businesses in the South Pacific.

He later (in an interview with PIM) recanted

but was still determined that the future of Burns Philp lay elsewhere. He planned to make BP the world leader in the spices and yeast industry. In fact, Turnbull left the company in good shape when he retired a few years later.

In September, however, the company announced a 285.4 million Australian dollar loss, an improvement on the loss of 873.3 million dollars the previous year. Most of the losses came from spice trading in the United States. Analysts say the company is dealing with its mountain of debt and is back from the edge of bankruptcy. In March the company sold off memorabilia in a bid to raise funds.

A portrait of Burns and Philp sold for just 90 dollars. ■



The Burns Philp building in Suva, Fiji is amongst the oldest in the city

ing copra from the hundreds of scattered islands setting up plantations, financing small planters and providing freight and merchandising.

Hundreds of Australian men found themselves living in splendid isolation supervising Pacific Islanders on copra plantations. They printed "money" that was used in islands that had no currency.

At the turn of the century the Marshall Islands were under German rule and a Hamburg company, Jaluit Company, had preferential treatment. BP took them on and so Germany imposed crippling taxes on the Australians to drive them out. Australia protested to Britain who in turn took it up with Berlin. The taxes were abolished, but Jaluit was then given a heavy

■ BUSINESS

Highlands say study confirms Ramu deposit's low cost status

HIGHLANDS Pacific Limited expects to go ahead with its \$1.33 billion Ramu nickel joint venture in Papua New Guinea by the second half of 1999, after a feasibility study confirmed the low-cost status of the project.

The bankable feasibility study, prepared by Fluor Daniel and HA Simmons in joint venture, has forecast cash operating costs for the project will average US\$1.38 per pound of nickel metal or US\$10 per pound cobalt credit.

"At these cost levels, the project (will) be the world's lowest cost producers," said the managing director of the minerals explorer Ian Holzberger.

Highlands Pacific holds a 65 per cent interest in Ramu and manages the project, with Nord Pacific Limited taking up the remaining stake.

Mr Holzberger said the forecast costs were seven US cents per pound less than the pre-feasibility study had indicated, based on an US\$8 per pound cobalt credit.

"Significantly, there is potential to reduce the capital cost by up to 10 per cent and the operating cost by up to 20 per cent by incorporating a number of potential design changes identified during an engineering review," Mr Holzberger said in a statement.

"These opportunities are being actively pursued with the commissioning of additional pilot plant test work to prove the application of the changes".

He said the study also confirmed Ramu's potential as a long-life mine with production averaging 33,000 tonnes per annum of London Metal exchange class 1 nickel cathode and 3,200 tonnes per annum

of cobalt, as a pure cobalt sulphate. "The current ore reserve will support a 20 year mine life. However, the resource base indicates that a mine life of 35 to 40 years is probable," Mr Holzberger said.

He said project commitment was anticipated in the second half of 1999, with first metal production expected at the end of 2001.

"We will need six to nine months to put the financing together," Mr Holzberger said. He said the joint venture was looking

working capital. The cost of infrastructure specifically required for the project has been estimated at US\$200 million (A\$318.06 million) and included in the capital cost estimates.

Mr Holzberger said the joint venture partners and the State of PNG were investigating alternative sources of funding for this aspect of the project.

"Discussions with the government of Papua New Guinea regarding the mining development contract and the special mining lease have commenced and will be aided by the release of the study," he said. "Permitting is expected in the first half of 1999".

Upon the granting of the special mining lease, the government of PNG has the right to acquire 30 per cent participating interest in the project for reimbursement of sunk costs. "It is expected that the state will exercise this right," Mr Holzberger said.

He said talks with landowners regarding benefits and compensation agreements have also commenced and were proceeding well.

"The availability of the feasibility study will also expediate our ongoing project financing and marketing discussions," Mr Holzberger said.

The joint venture is in discussion with potential engineering contractors, he said.

Morgan Stockbroking analyst Brian Sheahan, in his latest report on Highlands Pacific has an "accumulate" recommendation on the stock.

He said the stock was heavily discounted to valuation, with the company

having a net asset value of 66 cents per share.

"We recommend accumulating the stock at current levels and expect positive price movement on the release of the feasibility study," he said.

Mr Sheahan said the downside of the project was its location and the political climate in PNG.

"But this appears to be more than fully reflected in the share price," he said. On the Australian stock Exchange, Highlands shares closed two firms at 31 cents on a volume of 499,267. ■



at a "shandy" of commercial bank debt, multi-lateral import/export agencies and equity funding.

The project in PNG's Madang region will have an estimated capital cost of US\$788 million (A\$1.25 billion), which will cover all mine, processing and infrastructure expenditure up to mechanical completion of the project.

Mr Holzberger said the total funding requirement was US\$838 million (A\$1.33 billion), which includes US\$33 million (A\$52.48 million) for owners' costs and US\$17 million (A\$27.04 million) for

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■ BUSINESS

Clean Up the World founder awarded richest environment prize

CLEAN Up the World campaign founder Ian Kiernan has been awarded the world's richest environmental prize by the United Nations in New York. Kiernan, whose annual clean up initiative started in Sydney in 1989, with Clean Up Australia, and now mobilises more than 40 million people in 120 countries, received the US\$200,000 (A\$321,000) 1998 Sasakawa Environment Prize. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) prize was presented at a dinner mid-November.

"The prize has been awarded to Mr Kiernan for communicating in the most visible way and to the world at large, the need to protect the environment," Lord Stanley Clinton-Davis, the UNEP selection committee's acting chairman said. Kiernan decided to organise a mass clean up of Sydney Harbour in 1989 after being horrified by the amount of pollution he saw while representing Australia in the 1986/87 solo around-the-world yacht race. Australians quickly embraced the concept with more than half a million turning out every year on Australia Day to clean up thousands of waterways and pollution troubled spots around the nation.

The concept was expanded in 1993 with a Clean Up the World campaign attracting tens of thousands of volunteers over three days in September. Kiernan, now 58, was declared Australian of the Year in 1994 and awarded the Order of Australia medal in 1995. "Who would have thought that in the six short years since he launched the Clean Up the World that he would have captured the imagination of so many and single-handedly done so much to arrest

environmental degradation," Lord Clinton-Davis said in a statement released in New York. The Sasakawa Prize, awarded since 1984, is amongst the world's most prestigious international environmental honours with past winners including Brazilian rainforest campaigner Chico Mendes and World Watch Institute director Lester Brown whose writing alerted the world to threats to the biosphere.

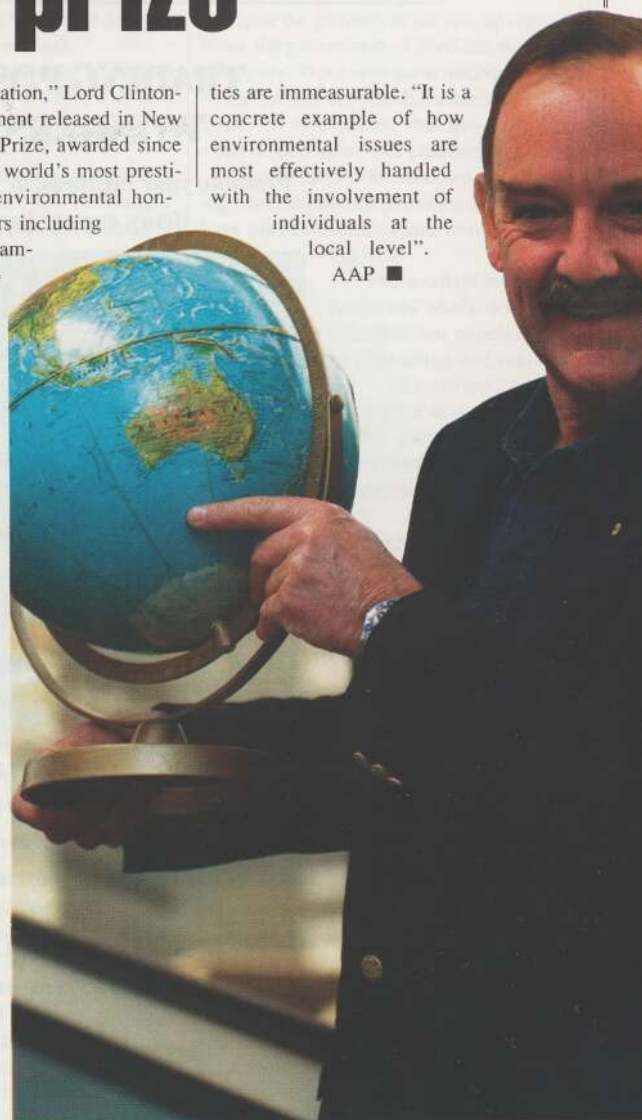
An international panel met in September to decide the recipient of this year's prize.

"Clean Up the World is a remarkable achievement in which significant contributions have been made to the health of our planet by communities working together - simple but effective," UNEP's executive director Klaus Toepfer said.

"The results of the campaign in terms of direct improvement to the living standards and behaviour of participating communi-

ties are immeasurable. "It is a concrete example of how environmental issues are most effectively handled with the involvement of individuals at the local level".

AAP ■



■ DEVELOPMENTS

Attacking fish poisoning with science

By **MICHAEL FIELD**

IT is almost folklore now, the story of the man in the Marshall Islands who survived a near lethal dose of ciguatera fish poisoning through a remarkably timely medical discovery.

It was a couple of years back when he was brought into Majuro Hospital. They tried what they had but nothing worked and the man's fate was seemed sealed.

Two doctors, Luis Jain and Neal Palafox, had one last throw of the dice and looked at manitol, a diuretic drug used to treat patients who've had head injuries to prevent swelling of the brain.

They gave it to him intravenously and within an hour the crisis was over.

Now a Hawaiian company, Oceanit Test Systems, Inc. (Oceanit), has come up with a pioneering kit, "Cigua-Check", that promises to take the risk out of eating fish.

Ciguatera poisoning is caused by a neurotoxin found in dinoflagellate algae called *Gambierdiscus toxicus*. It is related to the deadly "red tides" that occur around the world and kill millions of fish.

In warmer tropical waters the algae settles on seaweed near the shore. Reef fish, in particular, eat the seaweed and taken in the toxic dinoflagellate.

Scientists disagree as to whether the cause of the increase is due to an increase in the overall number of people fishing or to the degradation of the ocean environment that has caused an increase in the number of

dinoflagellates. Ciguatera poisoning can increase dramatically after cyclones have damaged reefs.

When larger fish eat the smaller toxic fish, the toxin becomes concentrated in the fat, muscles, and organs of the carnivorous fish.

The most dangerous parts of the fish are the head and viscera where the toxin tends to concentrate.

The risk to people increases as the toxin moves up the food chain into larger and larger fish. Symptoms typically show up four to eight hours after eating a toxic fish.

The symptoms include general weakness, diarrhea, muscle pain, joint aches, numbness around the mouth, hands and feet, and sometimes a reversal of the sensation of hot and cold.

Symptoms can persist for days or weeks, but in a few cases, up to 14 months.

Occasionally, as in the case of a fisherman on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, who died after eating an afflicted Marquesan sardine, ciguatera poisoning can be fatal within a few hours.

Cooking does not eliminate the toxin, but rather actually concentrates the toxin by cooking away water in the fish flesh.

It has been around for a long time and was reported as early as 1606 in Vanuatu while Captain James Cook described it in New Caledonia in 1774. He wrote of his sick crew whose symptoms coincide with those described today.

Viscera from the same fishes eaten by Cook's crew were given to pigs, causing their death.

Fishermen know the dangers and often take the risk while others will avoid areas they believe may be ciguatera hot. But until now there has been no easy way to know for certain.

Palafox, who now practices medicine in Hawaii after nearly a decade in the Marshalls, believes the new test will make a big difference in the region.

"During my time in the Marshall Islands, I learned that it was usually the job

of the head fisherman of a village to say what fish were safe and what places to fish were safe," Palafox says.

Cigua-Check puts science into the issue. It was developed by Doctor Yoshitsugi Hokama, a professor with the John A. Burns School of Medicine at the University of Hawaii.

In the test, a rice-grain-sized sample of fish flesh is placed in a vial of liquid methanol.

A test stick is placed into the vial then removed, air-dried and placed in a second vial of purple solution.

After the specified period, the test stick is removed and rinsed in tap water, and the results are read. If after the test, the test stick remains white, the fish is safe to eat.

However, if the stick turns purple, it means the fish is dangerous to eat.

In laboratory tests Hokama claims a high level of accuracy, around 95 percent.

Oceanit environmental scientist Bob Bourke told Pacific Islands Monthly that the problem developing the test revolved around a simple test trying to find very low concentrations of the toxin.

Ingesting just 32 nanograms of the toxin could make a sensitive person ill while others might need up to 235 nanograms.

The body, he added, did not develop immunity to the toxin and fishermen, even with a steady diet of fish, might find themselves in the sensitive category.

In testing the product, Bourke said, they had only one instance where a fish was declared safe to eat and where the person who later ate it got sick. In laboratory testing later they found the fish contained another poison, not ciguatera.

Bourke said the kit was currently undergoing certification from the US Association of Official Analytical Chemists which was expected by the end of the year. Once received they will approach the World Health Organisation and aid organisations to see if the kit can be more easily offered around the world.

"The goal is to take a minute to use and a dollar per test," he said.

Currently Cigua-Check costs US\$20 for five tests and takes 40 minutes to perform each test.

It is attracting the interest of sailboat owners who often have to risk eating fish a long way from help.

Outside Hawaii the product is available on the Internet at <http://www.cigua.com> ■

■ POLITICS

Continued from page 13

village system, same as you have in Fiji and you're very familiar with. And I think that that's where the real potential for sorting this, resolving the problem lies.

Gradually we're seeing the village elders and the traditional leaders - the council of chiefs, the council of elders - re-establishing authority. It's interesting to see a lot of these 20 to 30-year-old ex-combatants going back to school with little children.

So in many areas, that's starting to happen, but it's not happening everywhere at all, the problem still exists. I think we need to look into some vocational training programmes, we need to get projects up and running which are employing these younger people or these unemployed people.

The real problem exists in the urban areas where you have the urban drift - where you've got a lot of people, younger people, ex-combatants, who don't have a family anymore.

You've got all these families with one parent or something, so it's very hard for them to re-establish themselves back into the traditional environment. The solution to this has got to be a Bougainville solution.

Various countries in the region might be able to assist and it's very much a Bougainville solution with the PNG government and other countries helping. But it's a real challenge.

PIM: There are lots of Bougainvilleans who have managed to move their way up the PNG administration - several that are willing to go back to Bougainville. Could that be one of the solutions - getting Bougainvilleans to talk Bougainvilleans through the peace process?

Brigadier Osborn: I think that there's no doubt that's an important aspect of future development. I mean it's one thing to establish a Bougainville reconciliation government but what you're going to need under that is a bureaucracy that is capable of supporting it, and that needs to be put in place now or to start putting it in place now.

By the time the Bougainville Reconciliation Government is established perhaps as early as early next year, then you have this bureaucracy,

you have people who understand Bougainville and I think in all government functional areas, the more Bougainvilleans you have initially who understand the problems of Bougainville perhaps the easier it will be to find solutions for the PNG government.

PIM: When you were there, was there much talk of independence?

Brigadier Osborn: The issue of independence has always been on the table.

Through the eyes of the peace monitors, which is some 300 strong over a period of six months, I think it's important to recognise that independence is spoken about but it's not supported by the vast majority of Bougainvilleans. It's supported by a minority of hard-liners.

I think it's important to recognise that regardless of what the aspirations are of the Bougainvilleans, that in the short-term there is a consensus that there is a need to establish a single provincial government as the first step.

If you ask 10 Bougainvilleans what independence means, you'll get 10 different answers. I mean if you say independence will provide better health care, education, law and order then of course people are going to endorse - that's what they want. But that is what they want - they don't actually want independence, they want an improved standard of living and a chance or an opportunity for their kids.

I think people need to be careful about associating their comments for independence as you and I might think about it. But there is still a group, a small group, who have very much seen independence as the long-term objective.

PIM: What about the mines? Was there much activity or talk of restarting that? That was basically what the fight started over, wasn't it?

Brigadier Osborn: Certainly the mine was the focal point of the initial problem, and of course it then became a succession issue. I'm not an economist, I'm not a mining expert but the feeling amongst most Bougainvilleans is that the mines should stay closed.

PIM: Where do you see Bougainville after 2000?

Brigadier Osborn: Well, that's a very good question. I want to be guarded about giving an opinion based on six months.

PIM: Where do you hope to see it?

Brigadier Osborn: I'm extremely optimistic. I think it's important to recognise that a great deal has been achieved in such a short period of time.

After 13 months we now still see peace existing. We see strong movement of the peace process at the grassroots level. We now see, I think, greater flexibility at the higher political levels, in particular on the part of the PNG government.

The Bougainville parties themselves have yet to find consensus on the way ahead, but I think that's gradually occurring.

I'm optimistic that once a reconciliation government speaking for all Bougainvilleans, involving and incorporating all Bougainville parties, is put in place, then there's real hope that a lasting solution will be found, and that gradually through political stability, improved law and order and hard work, that gradually we will see a marked improvement in the standard of living and the economy of the island. Once that happens, I think you are going to find that there will be great optimism about the future of the island. So I'm very optimistic.

I hadn't been there before. It's got to be one of the most beautiful places in the world, it's a paradise, the people are warm and generous and very friendly and I think it really must be a potential for eco-tourism and other industries like that and the future must be enormous. But it's for the Bougainvilleans and the PNG government to decide their future but I think there should be reason for great optimism.

PIM: What do you think was the reason peace worked now and not say five years ago?

Brigadier Osborn: I think there's a whole range of reasons. I think in the past there wasn't necessarily the strong commitment by all parties to a cease-fire.

In this case, I think simply people have got sick of war, they're sick of it - the deaths and the suffering. The estimates of deaths directly from the war is as much as 20,000 but in my view it might be indirectly much higher, given people dying from diseases which were curable like malaria, polio, tuberculosis, and I think after nine years people just got sick of it. I think they were sick of it after five years. ■

■ DEVELOPMENTS

Island band hits big time



OF Tokelauan and Tuvaluan blood and heavily influenced by Samoa and New Zealand Opetaiia Foa'i is an unlikely revolutionary.

But with his family and the group built around it he is taking the music world by storm. Not just in the Pacific, but in Europe and North America.

And back on Tokelau too.

Suddenly Pacific music, which seemed trapped between ancient tradition chants and a syrupy mix of Polynesian country-and-western is going places again.

They call themselves Te Vaka, the canoe, and in the last year they have become stars of the lucrative world music scene, playing to adoring crowds across Europe and hitting the best seller charts with their lively CD. This year the 10-member band did a 15-country tour of music festivals from England to Estonia, to the World Expo in Portugal and in a dramatic appearance at Ronnie Scott's in London. They get airtime across the world; Radio Australia, Air New Zealand's

business class sound track and radio stations in North America. They combine traditional Polynesian rhythms, sounds, stories, dances and ambience with a touch of modern technology. It is lightly flavoured with Aboriginal and European styles.

"Most people on the other side of the world think instantly of Hawaiian guitars and hula skirts," said the group's manager Julie Foa'i of the music. She's Opetaiia's wife who had the bright idea of sending a track of their music to Peter Gabriel's Real World studios in England. Opetaiia thought Julie was crazy; she was right and Gabriel, a master of the world music scene, demanded more. The pair assembled musicians - all family members including their four children, and two Europeans and produced their first album of original contemporary Polynesian music titled "Te Vaka" that was released world-wide by ARC Music Productions International in more than 60 countries last May. It topped music charts from California to Switzerland, and received rave reviews globally. Opetaiia

describes a poignant moment when one day his wife wrote on a piece of paper: "Target - we take this music to the world." The band members looked at each other disbelievably, shrugged, and said "sure".

Their initial tour was hugely successful, and the return tour this year brought even more acclaim and prestigious invitations, including the chance to record at Gabriel's studios that, because of time constraints, they could not accept. Though the songs "make people feel good" says Julie, they also impart the sorrow of Tokelau's past that her husband gathers by talking to the elderly and his own family from the islands. One song tells of how Tokelauans were taken by South American slave traders between 1850 and 1872, reducing the population to 80 people, mainly old men and women, and young children. The song "Taga Sina" expresses the sadness and desperation felt by those left behind.

They live in a rusty two storey home out in the bush in west Auckland, and link in with the 5,000 Tokelauans who live in the city. Their influence is seen in some of the songs, literally. Most of Tokelau seems to sing in the joyous "Siva Mai"

"We take essences from different islands - the common denominator is that it's all Polynesian," says Opetaiia.

Ronnie Scott's in London is a celebrated jazz club, and Te Vaka are by no stretch jazz musicians, but the club has a reputation for show casing the best in world music. One review of the show hailed the group's "vibrancy and vitality".

"From the moment they walked onto the stage it was obvious that we were going to be spending the next hour and three quarters in the South Pacific". The reviewer was swept up by Sulata Foa'i who had "an incredibly rich and powerful voice" while Opetaiia's skilled guitar work was hailed. "The pleasure that the group get out of performing their music is manifest and contagious. By the end of the concert there were people up on their feet in front of the small stage and even on it with the group dancing to the tropical tempo".

An American reviewer said "Te Vaka's forceful rhythms, inspired melodies, and heartfelt song-writing offer a long-overdue, stereo-type-smashing glimpse into the true soul of the South Seas".

Another write-up of Te Vaka's CD is that if it was any indication of their talent "they could become a force in world music". ■

■ YACHTING

Navigating the internet

Story and pictures by **SALLY ANDREWS**

SIMPLY amazing... I can be sitting in Montreal (Canada) or Suva (Fiji) and, after a couple of clicks on the mouse, I'm connected to the Internet. Do I want data on tropical cyclones (www.earth-watch.com/hurricane.html)? Would I like information on the Pacific Islands (www2.hawaii.edu/~ogden/piir/) or a yacht charter (www.moorings.com)? How about a peek at this month's features in PIM (www.pim.com.fj)? Myself, I like to send and receive "e-mail" (far_meridian@hotmail.com). For neophyte net navigators, this all sounds a bit like alphabet soup. Don't worry. It soon makes sense.

You can access the Internet through home or work computers but travellers like me rely on libraries or Internet Cafes. Electronic-mail (e-mail) services are offered by most Internet providers, but the most popular for those away-from-home is www.hotmail.com because of its world-wide accessibility. At sea, cruisers can use new electronic equipment to e-mail messages through HF radio or satellite communicators.

"Surfing" or "browsing" the Internet, exploring the informational byways and flyways of the World Wide Web, using "links" to navigate through cyberspace is fun. Sailors can check out technical information and prices on marine equipment or get race results and weather/tide data.

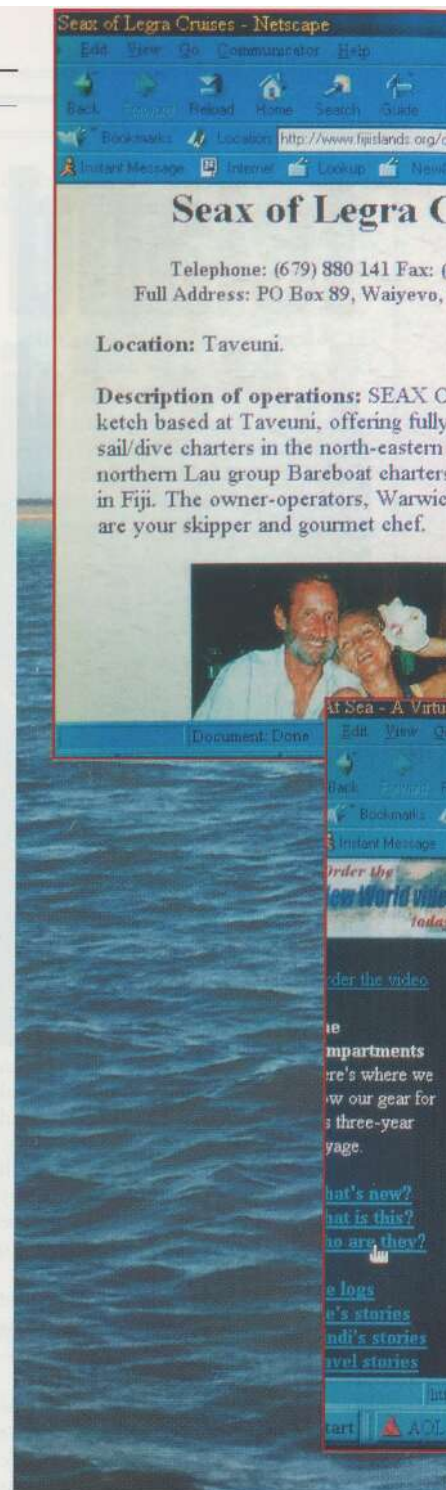
Business people can surf for stock quotes or track shipments. Students can explore research sources or join on-line discussion groups. Consumers can get information on products before buying or places before going. Often there's no telling what you'll find out or even if you'll remember where

you were going in the first place. For instance, a few months ago I was sitting at a computer in an Australian library and typed in www.latitude38.com, the cyberspace address of a Californian magazine for sailors. After checking out the home page, I clicked on various links. Eventually, after surfing a computer in Greenwich England and learning all about GMT and Time Balls, I was catapulted onto a web page dedicated to Princess Diana. Sailor/singer Jimmy Buffet wrote: The best navigators are not quite sure where they're going 'til they get there. This is certainly true on the Internet.

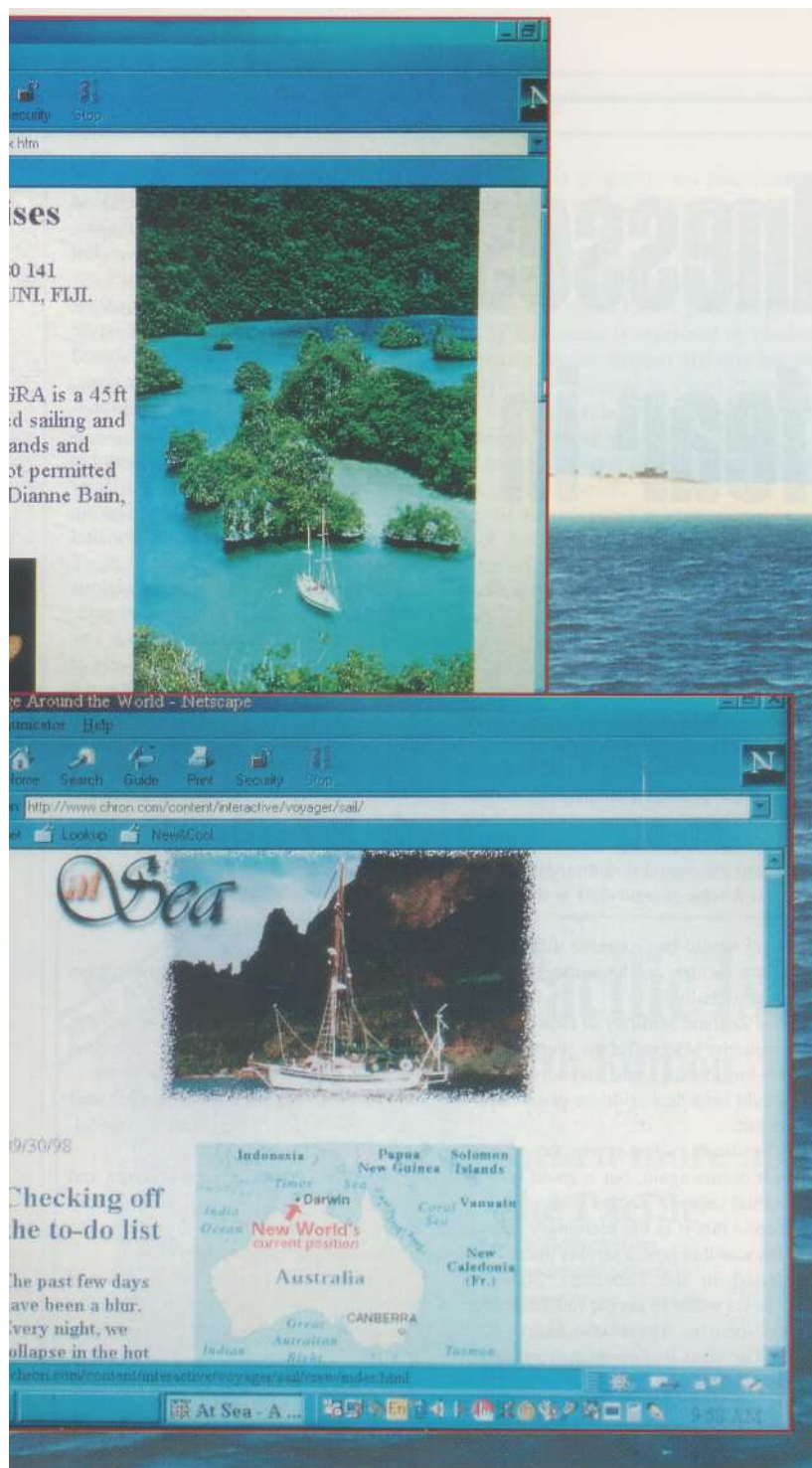
The World Wide Web can be a source of instant news and information, but beware. Just because the information is close at hand doesn't mean you can digest or assimilate it all or even that it's correct. The "Internet for Dummies" book warns: "Data is as far from information as information is from knowledge. Access to numbers does not make someone a mathematician. Access to paint does not make someone an artist."

If you're looking for specific information on people, places, topics or activities, you can probably find it - if you know how to search on the "information superhighway". You can use search functions or leap straight into specific websites. Links within a specific site lead to a zillion options. Once you cast off, you really don't know where you'll end up. Navigating through links on the www.seafaring.com site, I discovered "At Sea, A Virtual voyage Round the World". Created through Inmarsat C communications in conjunction with the Houston Chronicle newspaper, this site has the best coverage (that I've found) of a sailing voyage.

Written by cruisers Mindi and Lee aboard "New World", the site has extensive stories and information on their adventures and



plenty of interactive links to associated topics. Their boat, "New World", is a traditional 32-foot Lyle Hess designed yacht that departed Texas in March 1997. After transiting the Panama Canal, "New World" headed into the Pacific, stopping in French Polynesia, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu and New



Zealand. When I last checked (September 1998), they were exploring northern Queensland, Australia. By typing <www.chron.com/content/interactive/voyager/sail/> you can access their site directly. Another website <www.goals.com> specialises in information on educational adventures with an emphasis on science, technology and nature. American sailor Karen Thorndike on "Amelia" introduced me to GOALS, whose acronym stands for Global Online Adventure Learning Site. I met Karen when she stopped in Hobart on her single-handed circumnavigation. Through the

Internet, I followed her eastward voyage until August 1998 when she completed trip and arrived safely in San Diego, California. The goals.com site also has a super web page written by three kids aboard the American yacht "Kyrnos": Nicolas (9), Mathieu (7) and Lucas (4) Lafitte. The Kyrnos kids are on a 2-year cruise around the Pacific but admit: "We've had to take our parents along, too." What is most interesting is the perspective. Ocean cruising through the eyes of three children as they visit the Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu. Another GOALS site features a "Trans Oceanic Rowing Expedition" by Mike Byrd who is rowing round the world in his vessel "Reach". The California to Hawaii leg is already completed, next stop Majuro in the Marshall Islands. Check it out. The Internet is awash with sites about sailing and the South Pacific. If you haven't tried it yet, now is the time. For sailing sites, try typing sailingindex, mahina, apparentwind, westmarine, or bluewaterweb in between "www" and "dot-com". For links to Pacific Islander websites world-wide, try <www.uq.edu.au/jm/coco/index.htm> - the CocoNet Wireless with News of the Pacific. For travel information, moon.com and lonelyplanet.com are excellent and include health links and tips. If you want to find out about a surfing holiday in Fiji, learn a few Fijian phrases or check out USP's website, look on Michael Ogden's "Pacific Island Internet Resources" <www2.hawaii.edu/~ogden/piir/>. It's a great catalogue of resources available on the World Wide Web focusing on Pacific Islands. His links to Pacific sites are extensive - Jon Frum's Home Page, Pacific Islands News Reports or "Namele o Hawaii" (the music of Hawaii), is quick and easy to find. PIIR is full of general information (books, media, academic institutions, travel and tourism, news groups) as well as geophysical data and covers Anglonesia (i.e. ANZUS), Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. The amount of information available through the Internet is overwhelming - reminding one that too much is never enough, but on the other hand, it's too much! What do you think? Write to me care of PIM pr e-mail <far_meridian@hotmail.com>. *All sites checked at time of writing, however, sites change regularly and some may have altered their address or be no longer available. ■

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■ DEVELOPMENTS

Simple illnesses the real fear in Pacific

By **MICHAEL FIELD**

PEOPLE worry about an exotic disease like AIDS reaching into the Pacific but among medical experts the real fears are the seemingly simple illnesses that can slaughter vast populations in days.

And even today, with all the big advances, there is not a lot that can be done if something like influenza or measles hits a Pacific island.

Evidence of the power of such a tragedy can be seen behind an Apia churchyard where there is a mass grave which many believe is haunted - a result of some of its occupants still being alive when they were buried there.

November marked the 80th anniversary of the arrival of Spanish influenza.

In a remarkable blunder the New Zealand administrators of Samoa let the virus into Western Samoa - and then went on to spread it in Tonga and Fiji.

On November 7, 1918, the virus arrived in Apia and within a month 22 per cent of Samoans died in what the United Nations later termed "one of the most disastrous epidemics recorded anywhere in the world during the present century".

Neighbouring American Samoa did not get a single case.

The warning for the Pacific is that the best medical advice suggests it will happen again.

Auckland public health official Dr. Lester Calder said he had no doubt that another influenza pandemic was inevitable and with similar consequences.

"There are very limited medical interventions for the genetic shift in the virus," he said.

There would be "extreme difficulties" to tailor a vaccine quickly enough and distribute it globally.

New Zealand Ministry of Health principal virologist Martin Tobias said a variety of anti-biotic drugs and anti-viral agents that could help deal with the pneumonia's that result.

"The death toll may not be as high when it occurs again, but it could be very substantial indeed," Tobias said.

Proof - that it is the seemingly innocuous diseases that pose a serious threat - was illustrated in the Federated States of Micronesia when 13 people in Chuuk State died of measles. There were nearly 1000 cases. The virus had come in from neighbouring Guam.

What happened in Samoa in 1918 was a continuation of what had happened in New Zealand itself. A liner, Niagara, arrived in Auckland on October 12, 1918, with two dead and 131 sick. It had been quarantined in Suva, Fiji.

Prime Minister Bill Massey and Finance Minister Sir Joseph Ward were aboard so it was not quarantined in Auckland. Around 0.5 per cent or 5,471 New Zealanders died soon after.

The Union Steam Ship Company ship Talune left an epidemic stricken Auckland for the Pacific with one of its passengers, Reverend Paul Cane of the London Missionary Society, sick with the flu.

Talune arrived in Suva and was quarantined, although somewhat casually, while 85 Fijian dock workers were taken aboard to help with cargo handling in later ports. Fifteen were to die in the round trip voyage through Samoa and Tonga.

The ship arrived in Apia on November 7 and was greeted by port health officer Frank Atkinson who was told by Captain John Mawson there was nothing unusual aboard.

"We had sniffles, but nothing serious and we are all over it now," Mawson said.

He knew of the Auckland epidemic - he carried newspapers with grim accounts of it - and Atkinson, would have known the disasters earlier measles and influenza epidemics had wrought on Pacific people.

Samoans in canoes around the ship knew something was wrong.

A man, Tuatagaloa, said one Falielo called out from the ship "there is sickness in this boat". Tuatagaloa went aboard and among the first he saw was a girl, Ta'u, who was laying on the deck in a very weak condition.

"I saw there were many sick people on board," Tuatagaloa said.

Atkinson saw Ta'u and sent her ashore saying she was "dangerously ill". She died that night, Samoa's first influenza death.

Cane went ashore, visited the bank and saw friends before being taken to hospital. He survived.

Next day Talune sailed for Tonga and introduced influenza there. It killed 10 per cent of the population. It then returned to Suva and the virus arrived there.

On November 11 most of Apia turned out to mark the end of the war. The celebrations guaranteed a high kill rate from the virus.

A chief died in Apia and a fautasi or long boat came to get his body. The 17 men who rowed down all died in Apia.

At the Vaimea mass grave near Apia they buried 70 people in one day alone.

Some were still alive. Forced gravedigger Newton Rowe wrote of the "putrid corpses and added "strong men with hearty constitutions and stomachs like iron had, after handling some of these bodies, sat on the roadside and vomited". The epidemic crippled the new military rulers and

■ DEVELOPMENTS

Administrator Colonel Robert Logan seemed to go mad.

A girl's boarding school sought help only to have Logan show up and abuse them, telling them he would burn down the school and if the girls were hungry they could eat the dead horse he had seen.

In cables to Wellington he blamed Samoans for their deaths through neglect.

The US Navy, which ran American Samoa, had maintained a tight quarantine and the virus never entered. They sent a wireless message to Logan offering a full medical team. Logan, who hated Americans, ordered wireless communications with Pago Pago cut for eight days.

An Australian medical team arrived on December 2. New Zealand sent no help.

A formal inquiry found 7,542 people died, or 19 per cent of the total population, but added that with many still sick the final death toll would be around 22 per cent.

Atkinson and Mawson were blamed although no action was taken against either. Logan fled to England.

"The introduction of influenza and the burying of the dead in a common grave has entirely changed their feelings, but this, I

hope, is only temporary and like children, they will get over it," Logan wrote.

They never did.

This vulnerability has been known, and ignored, for nearly two centuries.

The idea of the Pacific paradise polluted by Europeans is ingrained in Western literature. Writer Herman Melville has one Polynesian character in Typee crying out "...we are all dying with your cursed diseases. When will you give over?"

English explorer James Cook in 1773 in his journal wrote: "We debauch their morals already prone to vice and we introduce among them wants and perhaps diseases which they never before knew and which serve only to disturb that happy tranquillity they and their forefathers had enjoyed."

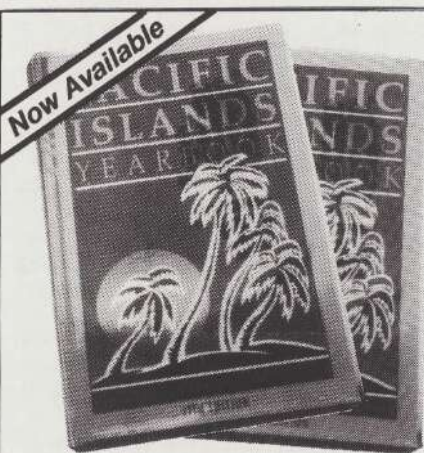
Maori anthropologist Sir Peter Buck in a 1938 book refers to how "western man arrived with the host of deadly microbes that seem to accompany him wherever he goes", adding "no branch of the Polynesians has suffered more for its kindness and hospitality to Europeans than have the Marquesans". In 1861 the ship *Hirondelle*, with a measles affected crew,

called at Anatom, Vanuatu. Within three months one third of the population was dead. It spread to Erromango where missionary George Gordon saw it as divine retribution.

"Were I to give you a catalogue of the crimes which this people have committed upon foreigner and among themselves for the last three years, you would be astonished, and will not be surprised to learn that God has cut off two-thirds of them in some settlements if not in all."

The islanders blamed him and hacked him into pieces with axes. In 1875 measles hit Fiji and 20 per cent of the population was dead. Thousands more died later from whooping cough. Measles hit Tonga in 1893 killing one-twelfth of the population, and as one contemporary observer reported, "the remainder were so demoralised that they were nearly carried off with famine".

Even today isolation can work against islanders and the population of Tokelau, north of Samoa, regularly suffers epidemics when outsiders come in, or islanders return home from abroad. AIDS might just be the latest of a long line. ■



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■ OPINION

Polynesian connection in NZ general election



David Barber

WELLINGTON

THE Pacific - the word and its Polynesian people - will play a major role in New Zealand's general election next year.

In itself, that is a happy prospect. Whether, in fact, it will turn out to be good for New Zealand and its Maori and Pacific Island people remains to be seen.

It could put the Maori and island populations on the political map as never before and raise their cultural identities to exciting new heights. It could also separate them alarmingly from their pakeha and

Asian fellow countrymen, causing dangerous new racial and cultural divisions in a nation increasingly diverse and in need of harmony.

As the politically volatile year of 1998 draws to a close, it could go either way.

At the centre of this issue is a new political party called Mauri Pacific - which means "essence or spirit of the Pacific".

Its aim, said founding leader Tau Henare, is "to take the nation on a voyage of rediscovery, back to the Pacific and towards cultural integrity so that we can begin to understand who we are, where we are and where we are going".

Despite New Zealanders' origins in an indigenous Pacific peoples' movement, what he calls Anglo-New Zealanders are the dominant culture in a land that has failed to develop its own uniqueness, he said.

Maori culture, said Henare, was an important source of unity and pride and should be capitalised on to "galvanise" the nation towards a common vision.

Brave words and a brave move by the Minister of Maori Affairs, starting a new political party towards the end of a year in which many New Zealanders have become sick and tired of politics and politicians.

And starting a party that, on first appearance at least, has little to recommend it except a somewhat nebulous vision is bravery indeed.

Henare and his four fellow founding MPs, Internal Affairs Minister Jack Elder, Maori seat holders Tukoroirangi Morgan and Rana Waitai and the Reverend Ann Batten, are an odd mixture of new party political visionaries.

On the face of it, all the three Maori members have in common with the other two are former membership of the New Zealand First party, whose MPs split up in August when its coalition government with Prime Minister Jenny Shipley's Nationals collapsed. This inevitably led to charges of political opportunism, charges enhanced by the fact that Elder and Batten are now members of their third party in as many years.

All had remained in Parliament as independents since the split, supporting the now minority National Party government while their former colleagues went onto the opposition benches, with Henare and Elder retaining their ministerial portfolios.

Mauri Pacific - in the unusual position of having been born holding the balance of power in Parliament - has to convince voters that it is worthy of a lasting place on the fast-changing New Zealand political scene in the Mixed Member Proportional environment.

As an infant, it has to be said the odds are heavily stacked against it. One has only to remember the fate of the United New Zealand party, also created by a handful of MPs defecting from other parties, who were all voted out, with the exception of leader Peter Dunne, at the 1996 election.

Henare's first task, given his cultural vision, is to win the Maori seats which NZ First captured with a clean sweep in 1996.

This Maori bloc - not longer ago hailed as the "tight five" - is now in disarray, with Tu Wyllie staying with NZ First in opposition and Tuariki Delamere supporting the government as an independent.

The Labour Party, which had a monopoly on the Maori seats for years, claims to be regaining lost ground and Winston Peters' NZ First will be lusting for revenge on those he dubs traitors, promising a no-holds-barred tussle on the hustings.

But Henare says he wants to field candidates in every electorate and insists Mauri Pacific is not a Maori party, but is aiming to attract all New Zealanders. "It is really all about nationalism," he said.

There was little in the way of policy when the party was launched, only two planks: * Compulsory Maori language lessons in primary schools, and * Signposts and public billboards to be bilingual, both in Maori and English.

Now it has to be said that with the best will in the world the majority of pakeha voters are not going to stop in their tracks and regard those as founding policies that will force them to seriously consider switching their political allegiance.

Whatever Henare says, it cast Mauri Pacific as a Maori party from the outset in most pakeha eyes. True or otherwise, it gave credence to some critics' claims that Mauri Pacific's bi-cultural approach, which ignores the growing Asian population, for instance, will be divisive rather than inclusive.

And a new divisive party is something New Zealand does not need as it goes into an election year in which the nation's politicians will inevitably be highlighting their differences rather than the things that should draw New Zealanders closer together. ■

■ OPINION

Vanuatu's reform a winner



Jemima Garrett

SYDNEY

AFTER a 3-day summit in Port Vila, Vanuatu's ground-breaking and ambitious Comprehensive Reform Program (CRP) has emerged to fight another day. This all-important summit was the first to assess the implementation of the reform program, which in the next few years, aims to completely overhaul most areas of government administration and economic management.

For the future of the program, it was vital that community groups, from all over the country, attend and air their views, both positive and negative, on the way the process is affecting people's lives. But on the eve of the summit Vanuatu's four opposition parties put a petition to the Speaker seeking an extra-ordinary session of parliament to hear a no-confidence motion in the Prime Minister Donald Kalpokas. As Prime Minister Kalpokas told PIM, after the summit, he was worried that many people might not turn up and that the reform process itself might be in jeopardy.

Instead, the summit proved to be a major success and highlighted the fact that, in some ways, this reform program is a world leader, particularly when it comes to consultation.

To people used to living in a Melanesian society, the scale of consultation - live radio broadcasts of the debate and attendance of almost 200 community leaders who were able to penetrating and unrestricted questions of key Ministers and public servants - does not seem exceptional. Elsewhere in the world, for example in many of the Asian nations going through restructuring as a result of the recent economic crisis, it would be nothing but a pipe-dream. While Vanuatu's economic problems are very different from those in Asia, there is no doubt reform is just as vital.

In March this year, Vanuatu faced an immediate crisis which brought it to the brink of bankruptcy. Riots and loss of confidence forced the government to make huge payouts to members of the Vanuatu National Provident Fund and to bail out the Development Bank of Vanuatu (DBV) and National Bank of Vanuatu (NBV) which were revealed to be carrying large numbers of bad loans.

In the longer term things seemed no better. For years population growth has been running ahead of economic growth meaning

people's per capita income, already low, is dropping. In parliament, political instability and corruption are sapping the ability of governments to provide leadership, while in the public service the number of political appointments made after each change of government, paralysed efforts to give good policy advice and implement important programs. These are the problems the reform program has been designed to tackle and as the summit itself noted in its communique, in just 12 months, 'considerable progress' has been made. Monetary and fiscal policy has been overhauled. Finance Minister, Sela Molisa, told the summit foreign exchange reserves, depleted by the VNPF debacle, are now back to normal (equivalent to 5.8 months of imports) and he says the government will more than meet the deficit prediction he made when he delivered the budget earlier this year. The way the government does its accounting has been revamped with the introduction of a new program budgeting system and a Ministerial Budget committee has been established to improve the budget process and ensure government departments do not overspend. A Foreign Investment Code has been introduced and in the space of just 2 months the new Foreign Investment Board has approved 12 projects.

From the floor of the summit, most anger was reserved for politicians who contribute to political instability by putting their own personal interests above those of their constituents. Here the government has been able to minimise the effects on the public service by enacting legislation ensuring that merit is the only criterion for selecting Directors-General and that they be appointed for fixed terms. It has also enacted a strict Leadership code and Prime Minister, Donald Kalpokas, warned those found in breach of the Code would face severe penalties.

The parliamentary speaker, Edward Natapei, called for changes to the constitution to limit the problems caused by politicians changing parties. He suggested resurrecting a provision that would result in MP's who resigned from their party losing their seat in parliament. Other suggestions were made for tougher limits on no-confidence motions. These ideas will be pursued by the Speaker before next year's summit. While it is obvious enormous progress has been made through the Comprehensive Reform Program there is still a long way to go before the benefits are felt by people living in rural villages and this is an issue the government has pledged to address. So far, in rural areas only the costs of reform are being felt. Improvements to education and health are still in the planning stage but the summit was told the 12 per cent Value added tax introduced, in August, has led to large price hikes and profiteering at some rural stores. Similarly, in the towns, job cuts in the public service are making life hard for families before other benefits have started to flow. The scale of the task ahead was acknowledged in the summit communique, which re-iterated calls for commitment to the process from all political leaders.

While the opposition's attempted motion of no-confidence failed because of lack of support it was clear that it has not given up and is now pinning its hopes on a court decision on disputed electoral results for Port Vila constituency, which is due December 3. The other major problem facing the reform program is 'lack of capacity'. Public servants and key Ministers, such as the quiet but perceptive junior Minister for the CRP, Daniel Bangtor, have been burning the midnight oil for a year now. Whether they can continue to do that over 3 or 4 years and whether the public service can be skilled up to meet the deal with the vast amount of change it will have to embrace, remains to be seen. ■

■ DEVELOPMENTS

Radio broadcasting in developing communities

By **RON EHRKE**

BROADCAST stations and networks throughout the world are continuing to undergo massive changes, mainly resulting from continuing rapid changes in technologies now available to broadcasters. This continues to open up the world to the sharing of information

in ways that were not possible a decade or two ago. Technological developments provide the means to establish small low-cost radio stations so that information can be shared among people living in remote, and often poorer, communities. This should be of particular interest to Pacific Island countries. While it is important to build hospitals and schools, high priority must also be

given to developing existing broadcasting networks, or building new stations. These can be used to talk about basic development issues such as clean water, nutrition, prenatal care and so on. This can be extended, for example, into agriculture, talking about development in basic techniques of food production, land management, the environment and so on.

Thus broadcasting provides support for social and economic development - the practical application of fundamental resources. Broadcasters in developing countries need modern and up-to-date technology but there is a need to provide what is appropriate to the needs and skills of the local staff. This often requires low-cost and simple technologies rather than sophisticated technologies.

The latter can bring with them a high price to buy and to maintain and a need for staff to have a high level of skill with new technologies to service the equipment. Broadcasting developments can make a very significant and practical contribution to the development of people living in remote communities. Often the poorer people, who do not have the many benefits available to people living in and around major cities, benefit substantially through being able to listen to educational programmes through local radio stations. There are benefits from establishing low-cost radio stations in remote communities. People in the communities are provided with programming that is informative, educational and entertaining.

* Ron Ehrke is a broadcast consultant with more than 32 years experience in the field. ■

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NAGOYA	SAILED	23-23/09	01-01/09	16-16/10	29-29/10	14-14/11	27-27/11	13-13/12
YOKOHAMA	SAILED	24-24/09	02-03/09	17-17/10	30-31/10	16-17/11	28-30/11	15-16/12
MAJORU	-	-	11-11/10	-	-	-	08-08/11	-
TARAWA	11-12/09	-	-	-	09-10/11	-	-	-
HONIARA	-	04-04/10	-	27-27/10	-	27-27/11	-	26-26/12
LAUTOKA	16-16/09	10-10/10	16-16/10	02-02/11	13-13/11	03-03/12	14-14/12	02-02/01
SUVA	17-17/09	12-12/10	17-17/10	03-03/11	14-14/11	04-04/12	15-15/12	03-04/01
APIA	19-19/09	13-13/10	19-19/10	04-04/11	16-16/11	05-05/12	16-16/12	05-05/01
PAGOPAGO	20-20/09	14-14/10	20-20/10	05-05/11	17-17/11	06-06/12	17-17/12	06-06/01
PAPETE	25-25/09	19-19/10	24-24/10	10-10/11	21-21/11	11-11/12	21-21/12	12-12/01
NUKUALOFA	01-01/10	-	29-29/10	-	26-26/11	-	26-26/12	-
NOUMEA	05-06/10	28-28/10	02-03/11	19-20/11	01-02/12	21-22/12	29-30/12	21-22/01
VILA	07-07/10	07-07/10	05-05/11	29-29/10	04-04/12	30-30/11	02-02/01	29-26/12
SANTO	08-08/10	-	06-06/11	-	05-05/12	-	03-03/01	-
NORO	11-11/10	-	09-09/11	-	08-08/12	-	08-08/01	-

COSCO NEW ZEALAND LIMITED

MANILA/TAIWAN/HONG KONG/KOREA SERVICE					
PORTS	BAI HE KOU	XIAO SHI KOU	BAI HE KOU	XIAO SHI KOU	BAI HE KOU
	V281/282	V258/259	V283/284	V260/261	V285/286
*MANILA	SAILED	SAILED	14/09	14/09	02/11
*KEELUNG	SAILED	SAILED	15/09	15/09	03/11
*KAOHSIUNG	SAILED	SAILED	16/09	16/09	04/11
*HONG KONG	SAILED	SAILED	20/09	20/09	08/11
*BUSAN	SAILED	SAILED	27/09	27/09	08/11
SUVA	12/09	30/09	20/10	20/10	01/12
AUCKLAND	15/09	02/10	23/10	23/10	04/12
LYTTLETON	17/09	05/10	25/10	25/10	06/12
*FEEDER SERVICE LAUTOK-VIA RELAY					

CHINA/JAPAN DIRECT SERVICE					
PORTS	BAI HE KOU V281/282	XIAO SHI KOU V258/259	BAI HE KOU V283/284	XIAO SHI KOU V260/261	BAI HE KOU V285/286
*DALLAN	SAILED	SAILED	25/09	17/10	07/11
*HUANG PU	SAILED	SAILED	17/09	11/10	04/11
*NANJING	SAILED	SAILED	18/09	12/10	05/11
*QINGDAO	SAILED	SAILED	26/09	18/10	08/11
*SHANGHAI	SAILED	SAILED	28/09	20/10	10/11
*XINGANG	SAILED	SAILED	24/09	15/10	05/11
KOBE	SAILED	11/09	02/10	23/10	13/11
NAGOYA	-	-	-	-	-
YOKOHAMA	SAILED	10/09	30/09	22/10	12/11
SUVA	12/09	30/09	20/10	11/11	01/12
AUCKLAND	15/09	02/10	23/10	14/11	04/12
LYTTLETON	17/09	05/10	25/10	16/11	04/12
KOBE	24/09	14/09	05/10	26/10	15/11
NAGOYA	-	-	-	-	-
YOKOHAMA	26/09	16/09	06/10	28/10	17/11

*FEEDER SERVICE LAUTOKA-VIA RELAY NAGOYA CARGO CENTRALISED TO KOBE FOR LOADING (FCL ONLY)

PACIFIC DIRECT LINE LIMITED						
NEW ZEALAND-FIJI						
CONTAINER (DRY / REFF), LCL & BREAKBULK SPECIALIST						
VESSEL	DIRECT JABIRU	DIRECT FALCON	DIRECT EAGLE	DIRECT KIWI	DIRECT FALCON	DIRECT FALCON
VOYAGE NO.	V378	V380	V383	385	387	V390
LYTTLETON	09/09	26/09	16/10	30/10	13/11	05/12
AUCKLAND	10-11/09	27-28/09	17-18/10	31/10-01/11	14/11	06-07/12
SUVA	18/09	30/09-01/10	21-22/10	04-05/11	18/19/11	10-11/12
LAUTOKA	19/09	1-2/10	22-23/10	05-06/11	19-20/11	11-12/12

AUSTRALIA/FIJI - INTER ISLAND					
VESSEL	CAPT TASMAN	FUA KAVENGA	CAPT TASMAN	FUA KAVENGA	CAPT TASMAN
VOYAGE NO.	V14	V232	V15	V233	V16
BRISBANE	SAILED	10/09	27/09	11/10	16/11
SYDNEY	SAILED	13/09	30/09	14/10	19/11
MELBOURNE	SAILED	16/09	03/10	17/10	22/11
LAUTOKA	11/09	24/09	11/10	25/10	30/11
SUVA	12/09	25/09	12/10	26/10	01/12
APIA	14/09	28/09	14/10	-	03/12
PAGOPAGO	15/09	29/09	15/10	-	04/12
NUKUALOFA	18/09	01/10	18/10	-	07/12
LAUTOKA	-	04/10	-	25/10	-
SUVA	21/09	-	21/10	-	10/12

FIJI-WALLIS AND FUTUNA	
VESSEL	MOANA III
VOYAGE NO.	V14
SUVA	25-26/10
FUTUNA	28/10
WALLIS	28/10-01/11



NEPTUNE SHIPPING LINE							
NEW ZEALAND - FIJI - NEW ZEALAND DIRECT SERVICE							
VESSEL	VOY NO	LYTTLETON	TAURANGA	AUCKLAND(LOAD)	LAUTOKA	SUVA	AUCKLAND(DISCHARGE)
CAPITAINE WALLIS	19	SAILED	SAILED	SAILED	SAILED	09-09/09	15-15/09
CAPITAINE WALLIS	20	18-18/09	18-18/09	22-23/09	29-29/09	30-30/09	05-05/10
CAPITAINE WALLIS	21	09/09/10	12-12/10	12-12/10	20-20/10	21-21/10	27-27/10
CAPITAINE WALLIS	22	30-30/10	02-02/11	02-02/11	10-10/11	12-12/11	18-18/11

AUSTRALIA - FIJI DIRECT SERVICE - NORTHBOUND						
VESSEL	VOY NO	BRISBANE	SYDNEY	MELBOURNE	LAUTOKA	SUVA
CAPITAINE TASMAN	14	SAILED	SAILED	SAILED	12-12/09	13-14/09
FUA KAVENGA	232	10-10/09	13-13/09	16-16/09	24-24/09	25-25/09
CAPITAINE TASMAN	15	29-29/09	02-02/10	05-05/10	13-13/10	12-12/10
FUA KAVENGA	233	11-11/10	14-14/10	17-17/10	25-25/10	26-26/10



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