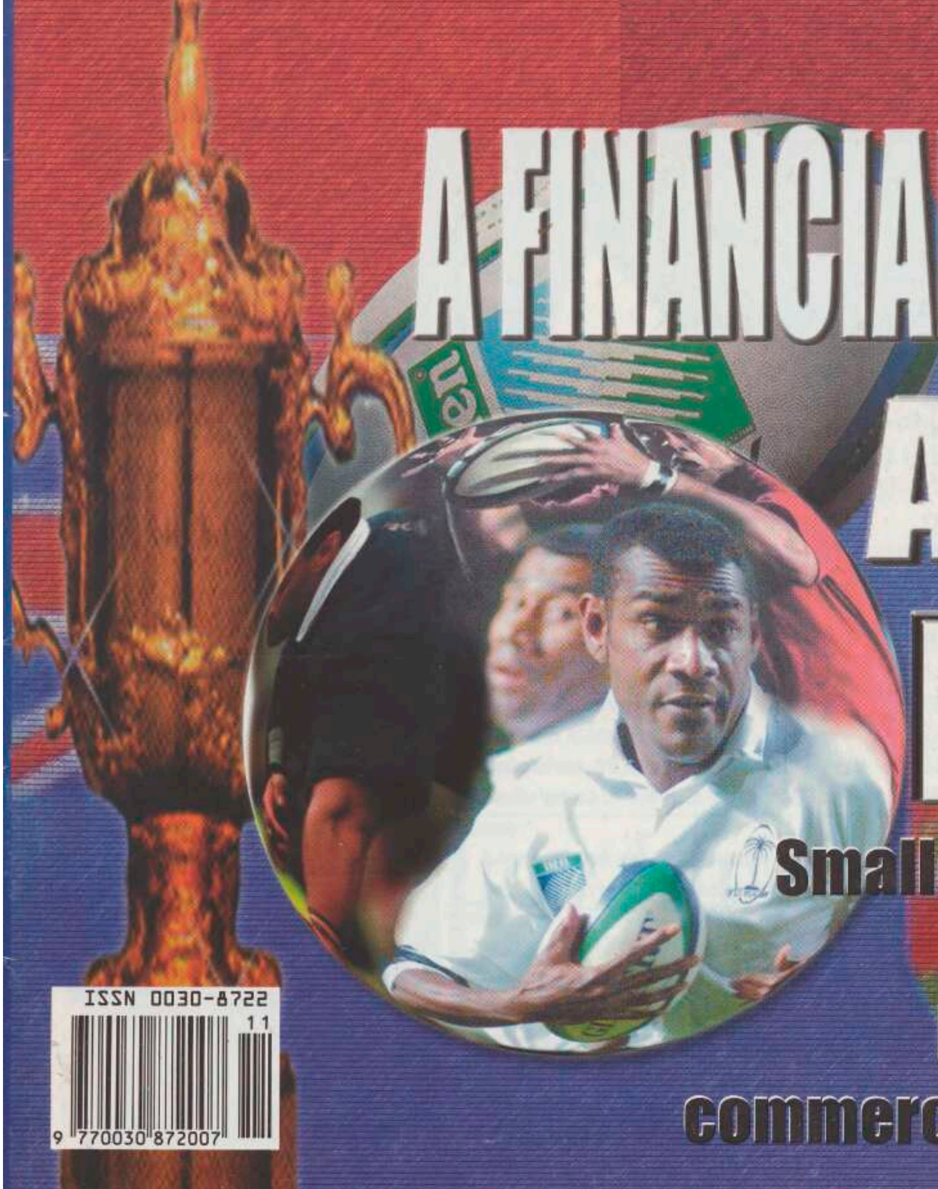
INSIDE: FORUM MAKES MINOR RECOVERY

PACIFIC ISLANDS MONTHLY

NOVEMBER 1999



A FINANCIAL RUCK AND MAUL

Smaller nations penalised by rugby's commercialisation

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EDITORIAL

Time for a serious re-think of sport

THE performance of Pacific Island teams at this year's Rugby World Cup is, no doubt, one to be proud of.

Not only did teams from Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga make it to the tournament under great financial pressure, but they took the global vision of island rugby to new heights.

Island teams face great challenges in their bid to compete at International level.

First and foremost, many developed world teams do not want to play the smaller nations, and when they do, a second, sometimes third, -string team is fielded.

Money is another problem, but one that has been a huge thorn in the side since the game's march to professionalism.

Island nations can no longer hold their top players at home, and watch them leave their shores one by one.

But this may not be such a bad thing, because it allows the rugby players to make a living, while at the same time, gaining valuable overseas experience. The only factor that the island rugby unions must contend with is whether or not, these players contracts allow for them to be released for Internationals.

As far as sponsorship goes, advertisers have never really dished out big bucks for sport, and it seems unlikely that they ever will.

The relatively smaller population sizes in the region mean smaller markets, thus smaller advertising and sponsorship dollars.

Island rugby and other sports in the region seem to be getting penalised by the commercialisation of what was once an arena where all were equal - sport.

Today, you are only as equal as your merchandising, heart rate monitors and agent say you are, and for island players, the high tech new world of sport is a far cry from the reality that they have to deal with every day.

Rugby, like many other sports in the region, needs to get its act together.

One problem that needs to be tackled as soon as possible is the lack of accountability within rugby union and other sport governing bodies in Pacific Island countries.

If island countries are to live up to their full potential on the field, they have to be backed by people who are on-the-ball off-field.

This means using the expertise of people trained in marketing, merchandising, media management, fund-raising and lobbying.

Goodness knows they will need every cent they can get if they are to front up to the big guns of sport throughout the world. ■

Disappointment over PINA

Whilst it is good to read the flowery and colorful descriptive 'words' of pride by the PINA executive in awarding the winners of this year's 'Freedom Award' and "Best Newspaper Award", one wonders - what is the PINA stance on the current Solomon Islands government "media ban?" - an issue that tests the very foundation of media freedom and democracy.

As a journalist from that part of the Pacific currently studying and enjoying the "freedom of expression" in Fiji, it is disheartening to see that the recent Pacific Islands News Association convention which ended in Suva this week, had failed miserably to raise the issue.

It is rather bizarre that PINA, a regional media body that had consistently over the years claimed to be standing for 'freedom of expression,' failed to even raise the issue. Isn't this a "Big joke" to talk about and even celebrating 'freedom awards' when a member country is exactly fighting a losing battle against a notorious government media ban?

While it is understood that the PINA president, four months ago during the initial stage of the media ban, condemned the Solomon Islands government decree, it should not be a one off affair. There should be a constant pressure(s) not only from the local media, but the region - especially from a media organization like PINA - with its worldwide connection(s). The Media Association of Solomon Islands (MASI) had proved that it could not fight it all alone. As of today, the "media ban" in Solomon Islands is still intact.

Surprisingly, at the end of the five-day PINA conference, attended by media tycoons, senior regional media executives and so-called professional journalists through out the region, none of them even cared to say a "single-word" about the current government 'media ban' in Solomon Islands. It makes one wonder on whether or not the silence over the issue has been due to the PINA President's media-business interest in Solomon Islands (a co-owner of the newly established FM radio stations - PAOA). Whatever explanation the PINA executive would give, its action has failed the people of Solomon Islands, who have been deprived of their democratic rights and the freedom of express that 'cherished' and enjoyed by regional countries whose media executives and representatives were attending the PINA convention in Fiji.

Shocking to note that the local co-owner of the PAOA FM radio station in the Solomon Islands, who is the owner-publisher of the Solomon Star, and the general manager of our only nation-wide broadcasting radio station, the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Station (SIBC), attended the convention but left without a trace of their presence. It causes one to wonder - what are these media executives really standing for. Aren't they supposed to be 'promoters and protectors' of media freedom?

Their silence should be a cause of concern for any right-thinking journalist from the region and especially Solomon Islands, who cares about 'freedom of expression' which is the main essence of democracy. Yet in the midst of this silence, PINA announced its 'media freedom awards,' without any reference to the hardship the media industry in Solomon Islands is currently facing.

It is rather obvious that with the current 'club' of media tycoons with huge business interests in the region, the issue of fighting for 'media freedom' is no longer in their agenda, but clearly substituted by entrepreneurs' interests.

This new development had seen in the media industry compromising of 'freedom of expression' in return for governments' favor. Such an issue had painted a negative image of the Pacific, while putting the PINA media freedom award(s) like a - "Governments-Media Reciprocity Award."

It is my sincere hope that PINA and its Solomon Islands' media industry members stop pretending and redirect their focus for the promotion of media freedom in our beloved country. And the protection of our 'democratic' rights and the lives of our innocent people whose very existence are under threats by the Solomon Islands government current "designed media ban."

Duran Angiki
Journalism Program
University of the South Pacific
Republic of Fiji

One option to resolve unemployment

It is widely known that Fiji has the most accessible, mature, sustainably managed, quality (insect free), plantation mahogany, in substantial and consistent qualities, in the world today.

Fiji's mahogany timber will soon be harvested in commercial quantities. The processing of this valuable resource into finished products, such as furniture and furniture products, will provide at least 10,000 jobs for the male youth of Fiji.

The question arises: "Should Fiji, with its great mahogany resource, ensure that a well developed value-added timber industry is created immediately, providing much-needed job opportunities and foreign exchange or should Fiji sell its valuable mahogany plantations to a foreign company, with management rights to export raw and/or semi processed timber."

Mahogany could be responsible for

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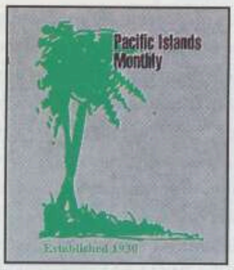
In defence of contract labour

By H S N Robinson, Secretary of the Melanesian Mission, Sydney



"INDENTURED" is perhaps an unfortunate word - a word associated with the bad old days and, in the minds of so many people, associated with "forced" or compulsory labour. There are not a few who regard it as something akin to a modified form of "slavery" - and, of course, the exploitation of the poor native.

Indentured, really, is merely another word for contract labour. A vast amount of nonsense is talked and written about the matter and idealists are often a bit of a nuisance. Indeed, many - some known to the writer - don't seek the facts of the situation, as it is today, but look merely for confirmation of their own preconceived, ill-based ideas.

I do not pose as an expert; but I have travelled much; I have sought the views and experiences of many competent to judge; visited many of the islands of the South Seas on more than one occasion; know something at first hand of the native peoples of other countries - and particularly those far removed from the usual trade and tourist routes.

I know the views of the missionaries, and their difficulties, and I warmly sympathise with them; the views, also, of the trader and planter. And, frankly, I hold no brief for "Big Business". All my sympathies are with the native - while having nothing whatever in common with the over-class-conscious product of a degenerate democracy.

It may be taken that the white man has lost none of his acquisitiveness, and that development will take place - inevitably. Now, how can this be carried out best in the interest of the native, the real owner of the land? I know of the so-called octopus grip of the "Big Firms". I have met and talked with both sides, and have seen the native as comparatively few white people have seen him.

Just what are the objections to contract labour? What is contract labour? Is it not merely an agreement between a plantation employer and a prospective native labourer who desires to work on the plantation? The contract or agreement has been drawn up by the Administration - the conditions provide ample security for the native. The employer is assured of labour, for a pre-determined time - failing which he could not carry on. Even a member of the class-conscious coterie informed the House of Representatives that "the favourable attitude of the natives to the cause of the Allied Nations is believed by the Government to be due, to a great extent, to the sympathetic administration of native affairs by past administrations ... etc.," which doesn't go to show any undue anxiety concerning ill-treatment or exploitation. No - the native knows full well that his position is secure, and that he can obtain immediate redress from the local DOs. ■

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

bringing in some four billion dollars of net foreign exchange over the next 35 years and creating thousands of jobs, particularly for the young male workforce who are not necessarily attracted to the garment industry.

With proper government policy in place, major foreign furniture companies (and there are a number interested) would have no alternative but to establish their manufacturing operations in Fiji NOW (not after five years of the raw timber being exported) either independently or in joint venture with local operators, creating these much needed job opportunities. It is timely that a transparent policy be in place to ensure that only the full potential of this unique and valuable mahogany is realised.

Within the next five years, like Indonesia and Malaysia, Fiji could then have a thriving, internationally acclaimed furniture industry, with at least 10 major international furniture manufacturing companies, processing mahogany into fine furniture products, and employing thousands of young men on good wages.

Elizabeth Clayton,
CHE International Furniture Ltd,
Suva, Fiji

Trauma in jungle captivity - a former hostage speaks

Reading the Solomon Star issue No. 1460 September 30, my attention was drawn to its front-page story headlined "ALEBUA URGED TO PLEA FOR HOSTAGES".

It brought a flash memory into my mind, fully remembering my teen life in the Philippines jungle, when I was held hostage and captive by the CHDF (Civilian Home Defense Force), notorious armed thugs of the Marcos Martial Law regime.

I was taken hostage - for almost three agonising long months - for being a suspected supporter of the then "Kabataang Makabayan" - an association of youths from both the students and peasants who opposed the martial law regime of Ferdinand Marcos.

I still remember how my captors used to tie my hands in my back and let me roll in muddy ricefields when it was

Continued next page

Continued from previous page

raining, and stand in an open field under the sun with nothing to eat or drink.

The suffering still lingers in my mind when I read about the incidents happening now in the Solomons. I cried for those innocent people just as if I was the one still being held in captivity.

I know how Peter Tahani, Jason Fioga, Johnson Laumanu, Akwai, Davies Reykol, Olomea, David Aro, Riiagalo, George Bibira, Pati Ladomea, Rex Maenukua, John Bira, Takankwao, Andrew Kofela and Makasi felt being held captive by those roving Gwale Militants whom I am sure are being manipulated like robots by their leaders like what Marcos did to my captors then.

The only difference between their and my experiences is that I was held captive by a group attached to the Philippine Government's military - like what happened in East Timor - while the Solomon Islanders are being held hostage by group(s) of militants with unknown motives and agendas.

What are these Gwale Militants fighting for? I thought they already agreed to a peace deal with the Solomon Islands government.

The worst thing that can happen to you is to be held captive - against your will, without knowing if your captors will kill you right there and then, or if you will be freed unharmed in the next couple of hours.

One of the greatest sorrows of human existence is that some people aren't happy merely to be alive but find their happiness only in the misery of others.

For almost three months in captivity, I experienced all sorts of punishment imaginable - where I suffered trauma or "emotional shock". I was freed, not by my captors, but, by the very people whom they suspected I was supporting - the Kabataang Makabayan and their very own people's army.

I will not be surprised if these Malaitans held captive by the Gwale Militants suffer similar trauma to mine, and are freed by their own people.

After these Malaitans are freed, what will the health Department, the Red Cross and the NGOs do to help them regain and reconnect their lives?

How would one go about treating over a dozen people for post-traumatic stress? The difficulties involved are considerable - especially in chronic cases or where the person in question doesn't want to be treated.

It is difficult to know even where to begin, given "patients" with various personalities. Such a task may actually be impossible.

But perhaps they can heal themselves and one another individually, at least to some degree, and thereby plant the seeds of a new sane and biologically benign culture.

In order to do so, it would seem vital that the government agencies concerned familiarise themselves with what is presently known about trauma treatment and recovery.

How will these people respond? Accordingly, victims of human-induced disasters often show more stress then victims of natural disasters because of the perceived need to find parties to blame.

Whatever the eventual circumstances, it seems that groups in differing geographic areas, and in differing economic conditions, will react in dissimilar ways.

In the case of a breakdown in communication and control, those who are more dependent on high tech will likely suffer much more than those who are still somewhat accustomed to locally filling their basic needs.

Over the short term, we are likely to see acts of extraordinary heroism alongside extreme examples of opportunism and stupidity. But what about the long-range prognosis?

As a former hostage myself, I'm willing to share my experience and the technique I personally used in recovery - which is to learn to feel my repressed grief and rage as well as my repressed joy.

The fact that we are now coming to understand how the human psyche typically deals with trauma is cause for hope: Perhaps a significant number of people will experience civilisation's crisis as a catharsis that will reach all the way to the roots of our ancient, irrational fear of nature, and help us learn to live in peace with the world, with one another, and with ourselves as I experienced a year after my release from captivity.

I understand from some information that reached me through the grapevine that these Malaitans held hostage by the Gwales are still alive even though their state of being and health are said to be unknown.

To those militants who are holding these people against their will, I beg you to show mercy and charity by unconditionally releasing your hostages as they are innocents.

I am willing to be an intermediary for the release of these hostages, if needed, being a neutral person.

To the militants, the greatest achievement of whatever you are fighting for is to release your hostages unconditionally at the earliest possible time as an act of charity that will be remembered well by the people of Solomon Island, your very own people. Charity begins at home, and I'm quite sure that charity will win the hearts of thousands.

Ramon Jun Quitales
Honiara,
Solomon Islands

Have your say!

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Fiji's domestic carrier to begin new service to Tonga

Air Fiji will this month introduce a new service between Fiji's Nausori Airport and Fua'amotu Airport.

Manager Airline Operations, Arthur Whippy, told Radio Tonga News that the new weekly flight begins on the first week of this month. Air Fiji's Brasilia turbo-prop 30-seater aircraft will operate the flight expected to take an hour and forty minutes. He says the plane could be pressurised and can fly up to a height of 30-thousand feet.

Air Fiji hopes to expand to two flights a week, and could operate three times by the end of this month on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, according to Mr. Whippy.

The tentative schedule would leave Nausori at eight Fiji Time arriving Fua'amotu at 11.40 later in the morning. The return flight would leave Tonga one hour later. At present, Tonga is two hours ahead of Fiji. Whippy was in Nuku'alofa to meet officials from government, airlines and the tourism sector.

He says he received favourable reception from his various discussions. The new service would cater for passengers wanting to travel direct to Suva instead of going through Nadi. This will be Air Fiji's second international flight having served Funafuti in Tuvalu for about two months now. PNS

Vanuatu court confirms anti-pyramid scheme ruling

The Supreme Court of Vanuatu has ordered a company convicted of using a pyramid selling scheme in the northern Australian state of Queensland to return $300,000 they had
transferred to Vanuatu 18 months ago.

Radio Australia Pacific correspondent Kevin McQuillan reports that the action was taken by the Competition and Consumer Commission.

"In 1998, the federal court in Brisbane ruled that Golden Sphere International, a Vanuatu-registered company, had breached the Trade Practices Act. It ordered company directors Pamela Reynolds and Victor Cottrill to pay $550,000 into a trust, to compensate members of the public who'd been caught by the scheme. But only $292,000 was paid and the commission said the rest had been transferred to Vanuatu.

"The Supreme Court in Vila has now ruled that the money must be sent back to Australia, along with 10 percent interest.

"Armed with the court ruling, the commission will now access the company's bank accounts in Vila, saying its decision to pursue the company overseas has been vindicated. (Radio Australia)

Australia and Fiji agree to new talks on SPARTECA agreement.

Australia has agreed to talks for a new agreement with Fiji to succeed the current SPARTECA agreement.

Fiji Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, addressing the joint Fiji/Australia and Australia Fiji Business Council meeting in Suva, said he had written to his Australian counterpart, John Howard, on the matter and Howard had responded by reaffirming Australia's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations with Fiji.

Howard's letter said, "The Australian Government appreciates how important the trade dimension to our relationship is for Fiji, particularly for the textile, clothing and footwear industry. Your suggestion that we initiate discussions at the earliest opportunity is, one I would support as it is important that officials clarify the issues thoroughly and identify viable options for the future."

"I would be aiming to see these matters concluded satisfactorily prior to the next meeting of foreign ministers scheduled for mid December," Howard's letter said.

Chaudhry said with these anticipated direct Government to Government talks the two Councils needed to work together to work out an arrangement beneficial to the two countries. On Fiji's domestic front, Chaudhry said latest indications on Fiji's economy is positive with real GDP for 1999 forecast to expand by over 7 percent.

"Copra production has increased further by 18.5 per cent in the first seven months of the year, with total production of sugar at the end of the crushing season expected to more than double from 2 million tonnes of cane." He said his Government had reduced costs of doing business with telephone charges, power and water and further reductions expected next year.

"We will work with industry in increasing productivity and their international competitiveness in overseas markets."

The Prime Minister also assured all investors that his Government would honour all existing commitments of special concessions, but said the business sector must acknowledge that concessions granted would be reviewed periodically.

"My Government recognises the crucial role of private entrepreneurs as the key to increased growth in the economy and is committed to building a constructive partnership to create prosperity for all in Fiji as we move into the next millennium." PNS

PNG's parliament to ratify over 26 conventions for the country's workforce

Papua New Guinea's Tripartite Council is moving to ratify more than 26 conventions for the country's workforce in the November parliament session. Council members from the Labour and Employment and the Trade and Industry Departments including the Workers Unions resolved to have the ratification's made during a closed door meeting at parliament.

The new Labour and Employment Minister, Chris Haiveta, said it is pertinent this is done immediately by a competent authority in line with conditions set by the International Labour Organisation, which PNG is a member of.

Haiveta said parliament has never ratified any conventions, most of which were initially inherited from Australia including those introduced after Independence. Haiveta said the process of drafting the legislation is almost completed and he is confident the Bill will be tabled in this month's parliament session. The Bill will cover Labour Laws Reform, Terms and Conditions, Industrial Relations and Workers Compensation.

Meanwhile prime minister Sir Mekere Morauta announced the Council will expand its membership to also include parliamentarians as it is the single largest sector in terms of formal and informal employment and the major area for sustainable employment growth for the future. PNS

Tonga's vanilla beans attracting Japan

Tonga's size and quality of vanilla beans has attracted potential marketing opportunities in Japan. The market potential was revealed to Government representatives while on a recent fact finding tour with various markets destinations in Japan. Trade officer, Saimone Vuki said positive feedback was given to them in regards to the length of the beans measuring up to 28 centimetres.

Tongatrade shipped two tonnes of A- and B-grade vanilla last month and prices were as high as US$45 for each grade.

The prices compared favourably to the current level of 25-dollars or up to 30-dollars in the traditional markets in the United States and Germany. Trial export of vanil-

Continued on page 14

SPECIAL REPORT

Forum makes minor recovery from irrelevance

By Michael Field

IT could have been just another day in paradise - but it was better than that. The depleted ranks of the leaders of the Pacific were gathering on a dockside in Palau. Only seven of the 16 had been to a forum before as a leader. The chemistry was all wrong. New Zealand Prime Minister Jenny Shipley, dressed in blue silk, seemed puzzled at the little man in shorts and stripped tee-shirt. He was Nauruan President Rene Harris. Australian deputy prime minister John Anderson looked and sounded like a school boy on his first boat trip while Solomon Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu kept his perpetual scowl in place.

This was the beginning of the 30th annual South Pacific Forum, an organisation in trouble.

And then a shark flicked across the bay, just a little one, but enough to drive the mullet fleeing in every direction, some under the luxury launch to take the leaders out to Carp Island.

The beautiful Carp Island where Forum Leaders retreated

By chance, a week or so before, Kiribati President Teburoro Tito had painted a picture of the dangers he saw global forces represented for places like his. "It's like a small fish being asked to have a shark in a small lagoon, the shark will have his own agenda."

The night before the boat trip out to the retreat Palau's President Kuniwo Nakamura noted "an apparent inability of the forum to move beyond discussion and actually implement initiatives in some areas, even when a consensus has been reached."

"It is true that the failure to follow through on initiatives, resolutions at times can make the Forum appear to be more a debating society than a vital and effective multinational tool."

Last year, in the Federated States of Micronesia, the forum nearly died as the Pohnpei hosts overwhelmed it with intrusive security and a free reign on officials who were allowed to set the agenda, write the communiqué and basically run the show. The net effect was a meaningless organisation.

Proof of this came this year with a poor turnout of leaders. Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Fiji Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and Papua New Guinea's Sir Mekere Morauta all found it easy to stay away. Shipley was not going either but then the New Zealand election date was set for the end of November and campaigning required she pose for photo opportunities in Darwin with the New Zealand soldiers headed for Darwin. So she did her Palau duty then flew out to Darwin.

The retreat decided, among other things, that Tito, the veteran with five forums under his belt, could talk to the press about what happened that day.

He has a trade union background but in the divisive world of Kiribati he has often given the impression of being stuffy and unapproachable - protected by an ever present Kiribati policeman. But for the small press corps in a class room at the Palau Community College he was in a relaxed mood - delivering the news that the forum had survived.

The name had been changed, he began, to the Pacific Islands Forum, but everybody had decided to keep to the same meeting scheduled and process rather than change. Australia, always a reluctant partner in the Forum, had wanted the summits every two years. A climate change position had been restated while leaders had heard reports on the United Nations small island state conference and got around to defining how "observers" could join the forum. New Caledonia and the UN were admitted as observers while French Polynesia was recognised as a potential observer and the Philippines was admitted as a dialogue partner.

Tito relaxed into tough questions on how the process had worked in the past, simply acknowledging that until recently the communiqué had been taken over by officials. Leaders were taking it back.

"The leaders feel they should be chewing more meat rather than just swallowing the meat," he said.

The forum had accepted the idea of a forum free trade area, setting up a decade long process.

His interview with Pacnews in which he referred to a shark in the lagoon had been taken as Kiribati opposition to the free trade zone. Tito corrected this impression. It was "global forces" that were the shark, and there was nothing

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Kiribati could do about them.

"I must admit we now see this as a necessity to meet the global forces.

"I don't know who has the button on the global forces but our responsibility is to respond them before the global waves hit our shores.

"We just have to prepare ourselves for the global waves."

Climate change two years ago caused a crisis within the summit when John Howard would not allow the forum to adopt a stronger stance on the issue. Breaking with a tradition of consensus he insisted on his approach.

However Tito made it clear that the forum was back in consensus mode - and this meant it would not review the climate stance decision.

Pacific leaders are disappointed at what they see as a slowness by nations to adopt the Kyoto Protocols that specify carbon emissions.

But they would not be making a stronger statement as to do so "would go back to open the wounds" of the forum two years ago.

Consensus was reached to make a softer statement.

"That is the way life works. We can't have everything. It's like husband and wife, you cannot have everything."

Leaders had been expected to make a strong statement on the nuclear shipment issue which last month saw two ships transshipping nuclear material transit the region from France and Britain, bound for Japan. Just a week before Japan had suffered its worst nuclear accident.

But Tito said the Pacific was conscious that the shipments were part of the economic development of France, Britain and Japan and did not want to take strong action.

"We know they are doing it for development ... We do not want to cut off the tap.... We have got to be fair."

Tito acknowledge that previous forums had issued stronger communiqués on this but pointed out the majority of the current leadership was new.

"We are not advancing as quickly as we could," Tito said.

Forum Leaders are taken out on the launch "Virgo" towards Carp Island

Palau was marking its fifth anniversary of independence, making its reporters at least rather sensitive to the plight of East Timor. Tito said they had "deliberately decided not to go into the political situation" on East Timor and made it apparent that even a future independent Timor would be unlikely to qualify for the Forum.

Nakamura had referred to as a tragic manmade upheaval.

"Violent conflict erupted in East Timor as a result of sudden political change. The actions and the circumstances of certain nations produced new regional flows of immigrants and refugees which are likely to continue."

This, he said, could have a destabilising effect on the region.

The leaders spent another day in formal session refining the communiqué that came out as Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele elected himself Forum spokesman. It was more than apparent he was in a foul mood and declined to answer questions with any detail.

He ended his brief moment in the limited media sun with a line: "I love you all." No thanks to him, the Forum appears to have made a minor recovery from irrelevance.

It gets a chance to prove itself under tough circumstances next year - in Kiribati. ■

Key points from the Pacific Islands Forum communiqué issued in Palau

- The Forum is to be called "Pacific Islands Forum" following a one year transition period to allow time for the necessary administrative changes associated with the change.
- Leaders endorsed in principle a free trade area among Forum members noting that this would be implemented in stages over a period of up to 2009 for developing Forum Island Countries and 2011 for the Smaller Island States and Least Developed Countries.
- The Forum endorsed the "Forum Aviation Plan : 1999 Review" and supported the convening of a further Forum Aviation Ministers Meeting in 2000, noting, in particular, the special circumstances of Smaller Island States with respect to aviation. This will create a unified air traffic control system Pacific-wide.
- Leaders reiterated the critical importance of efficient and effective communications services for economic and social development and the constraints placed by the relatively high cost structures of telecommunication networks for Forum Island Countries.
- The Forum reiterated its view that shipments of radioactive materials and Mixed Oxide (MOX) fuel through the region posed a continuing concern and agreed to adopt a consistent position on

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SPECIAL REPORT

A decade of forums

By Michael Field

MANY Palauan men, by tradition, wear their hair long in pony tails and dreadlocks that pre-dates hippidom and rastafarians.

With beetlenut chewing common too, the effect of the red teeth and the flowing locks can give even the most humble of civil servants a manic quality.

"Tell me truthfully," said one such character, "what was this forum like, as good as the other ones?"

He seemed emotional at the answer; "Pretty good, and certainly the most friendly I've ever attended."

Palau marked my 10th forum, and only Kiribati President Teburoro Tito with a modest five forums comes close.

This year's forum was doomed to suffer poor attendance of leaders and media because of its air connections. Flights come in from Philippines, Taiwan and Guam making it an expensive proposition for anybody from the Pacific.


Leaders rush through a full agenda

The New Zealand Air Force 727 swept down with Prime Minister Jenny Shipley, Nauru President Rene Harris and Niue's Premier Sonny Lakatani, recovering from major heart surgery.

Through the portholes we could see the glittering beauty of Palau's Rock Islands and the astonishing purity of Koror, the capital island.

A month before New Zealand had hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Auckland. When Presidents Bill Clinton of the United States and Jiang Zemen of China had arrived, their subsequent state visits of New Zealand qualified them for formal welcomes. Where once it would have been a military guard of honour New Zealand suddenly felt confident enough to do it differently. A Maori haka followed by an impressive medley of Samoan, Tonga, Cook Island, Niuean and Fijian dance performed by teenagers. Clinton beamed with the joy of it; Jiang knew he was somewhere different. Up until that point, only the Cook Islands in this region had ever felt confident enough to dispense with the Sandhurst parade ground stuff.

So Palau was disappointing when this nation without an army tried the military welcome with some police officers armed with an assortment of battered old rifles. Federated States of Micronesia had tried the same thing the year before; giving it the comical presence of "Police Academy V" rather than the Pacific.

But this year the brief airport arrival was the end of the security. The small media band - Radio New Zealand, NZ Press Association, Radio Australia, Pacnews, New Zealand Herald, Agence France-Presse, Television New Zealand, the Palauan media, New Zealand's TV3, Greenpeace (traditionally obliged by the forum to register as media) and some fruitcake fringe media from Fiji - were told they could pick up their colour-coded accreditation at a local photoshop. Those that bothered found it almost pointless; nobody much looked at them and they were never needed anyway.

And one astonishing fact; for years I've endured jumped-up little security types and policemen who should be issuing parking tickets pushing me around and doing the darndest to ensure we could not do our jobs.

And, in all that time, not one single reporter has ever attempted to kill or harm a single politician. Amazing. Palau too was a reminder that the only people killing politicians in the Pacific - are other politicians.

The media room in a classroom was staffed by skilled and pleasantly good-humoured people from the local telecommunications company. In all the forums I've attended it is these kind of people who do much for setting the image a country subsequently has in the international media.

A terribly cold Rotorua in New Zealand had been my first forum. It was a big media event in those days with the gangly Malcolm Fraser from Australia and the foul-tempered Robert Muldoon from New Zealand ruling the roost. Young upstart Walter Lini from Vanuatu was there for the first time - getting a dreadful reception from the white leaders. The big issue had been a proposal to start a shipping line and Muldoon's candidate for the post, political hack Harry Julian arrived at the event in a Rolls Royce.

There were other portents though. Leaders on Sunday morning had gathered in the old and elegant St Faith's Church on the edge of the lake to hear Bishop Manu Bennett warn the plight of Maori could ruin New Zealand. Outside, Maori sovereignty protests kept up a chant. Just before the retreat began, a policeman was shot and killed in the town in an unrelated incident, rather casting a cloud.

When I next returned to a forum it was in Port Vila, Vanuatu. Somebody with a sense of humour had put the media room in a pub on the water's edge. It proved to be a marvellous way to work with a steady flow of burgers and Tusker beer throughout the day. The media contingent was touching on a hundred - mainly made up of the Canberra press gallery trekking around after Prime Minister Bob Hawke. Australian journalists can be counted to show up at a Forum only when hotels are of the quality found in Waga Waga.

Hawke was in a terrible mood, made worse by being rolled over Johnston Atoll. He tried unsuccessfully to get the Pacific to go soft on America. The memorable news conference saw him yell, snarl and abuse the media while then wife Hazel Hawke quietly sat in a second row, with the journalists, knitting.

Hawke's performance was matched by a weirder one from New Zealand's Geoffrey Palmer who addressed the media like the loud law lecturer he was, providing only headaches and little copy.

Hawke and Palmer illustrated a point that always shows up at forums; it is the white leaders who usually manage to set the media agendas. They bring their own media and hold formal press conferences as well as informal briefings for their nationals only. Pacific leaders who get little notice could do well to duplicate the accessibility their palagi colleagues show.

The first forum held at Pohnpei, FSM, was noticeable for the complete lack of accommodation, only filled in by the USS Racine, a huge tank landing craft manned by part-time sailors who quickly became bored out of their mind at being a media and officials hotel. It was Spartan and unpleasant, made only bearable by the presence of the HMNZS Tui, a tiny white research ship loaded to the gunwales with Steinlager.

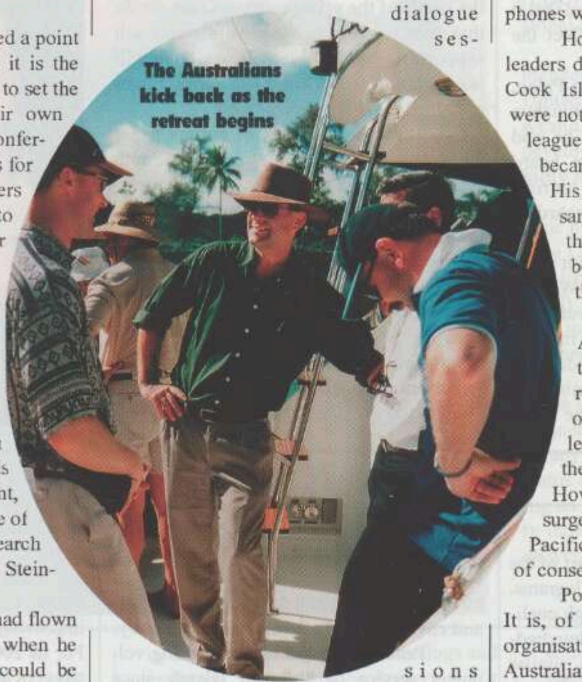
Prime Minister Jim Bolger had flown in a big contingent of media but when he called a press conference none could be found - they had all gone to Ant Atoll, complete with food, alcohol, dancing girls and a long, languid ship voyage. The resulting fury and front-page stories back in New Zealand went down very badly - with Wellington's press gallery.

Nauru was one of those forums where security early on broke down and leaders and journalists soon found themselves mingling over tea breaks. There were no known fatalities.

Australia's Paul Keating lorded himself around the place and at one point called a press conference which, given his own security's behaviour, was a Whites Only gathering.

The forum in Brisbane was something of a repeat of Rotorua for its cold weather. Security was tight and little mixing was allowed to go on. It proved too that holding a forum in a big city was a waste of time. Brisbane, which clearly thought this was just another Gold Coast type conference, took no notice and the Pacific was lost in the place.

Madang, on Papua New Guinea's northern coast, was an ideal setting, even if accommodation was a bit tight. The AFP team of three had to share a room meant for one. Tolerance was tested. But PNG's Sir Julius Chan showed his confidence in his cultures when the welcome ceremony was a glittering array of dance. The post-forum dialogue sessions were held in Port Moresby which offered - those who wanted to go - a fierce logistical problem.



The Australians kick back as the retreat begins

With France exploding nuclear bombs again, most wanted to be there for the remarkably dopey French minister who showed up to defend his nation's honour.
The tests were over the following year when the forum gathered in Majuro, in the Marshall Islands. This was Prime Minister John Howard's very first international outing and in the style to which they are used, the big Canberra press corps were nursemaided by their government. Even their water was flown in. It became very clear though that Howard did not like the Pacific and was uncomfortable with it.

The scandal was the turtles which the islanders served up to the leaders. They had sat on their backs outside the Australian media hotel all week where the journalists fumed over the horror of it all but did not do the one thing that might have made a difference - put the turtles into the water.

Despite the heat, the dust, lack of water and the Chinese acrobats, that forum was the one that will linger for me.

Still there is something special about Rarotonga where the 1997 forum convened. Prime minister Sir Geoffrey Henry is a notorious big-noter but that did not detract from the relaxed pleasures of Cook's culture. The accommodation was great and the phones worked.

Howard distinguished himself at the leaders dinner by refusing to dance with a Cook Islands maiden or two. The media were not supposed to be present but a colleague and I saw it all and poor John became the grumpy star of the forum. His air crew would not sleep on the same island and when they took off, they insisted the Greenpeace Rainbow Warrior, two kilometres from the end of the runway, be moved.

The retreat was on the divine Aitutaki Atoll, an hour by plane to the north. Golden sands, black rocks and a white washed post office made it unforgettable. At least for the two journalists still there. At the luxury retreat hotel Howard was mounting meatball surgery on the forum - demanding the Pacific's leaders all agree with his view of consensus.

Pohnpei last year was the low-point. It is, of course, a stunning island but the organisation was in meandering strife. An Australian working for the forum took it upon himself to dictate the dreary communiqué and any real discussion was cut off by a bureaucracy in control. Outside the blue neo-Chicago police worked aggressively to destroy any image Pohnpei might have for friendliness.

Next year the forum will be in Kiribati which should be interesting ...
It does not have nearly enough hotel accommodation, air-links are limited and one senses from the history that their police may be over-zealous in corralling the media. Even Robert Louis Stevenson last century noted the tendency of the place to have too many police.

That said, should I make it to my 11th forum I know some marvellous places to stay - and really interesting people to talk with. ■

SPECIAL REPORT

TCSP focus on private sector to boost tourism in the region

THE Tourism Council of the South Pacific (TCSP) says it's now focusing on the private sector to boost and promote tourism in the South Pacific. To that end, TCSP has recommended that it increase its board members to reflect the interests of the private sector.

In an interview with PACNEWS in Palau, where TCSP Director, Levani Tuinabua attended the South Pacific Forum, he said extending the membership of the board was an issue to be discussed at the tourism ministers' conference and TCSP board in Samoa.

"We have agreed to work a lot more closely with the private sector. We are doing so at the moment but the private sector is not involved in the decision making process of TCSP. What we have done is recommend to increase the number of board members from 13 to 19. The additional six will be representatives of the private sector," Tuinabua said. "We hope their presence in the Board will guide TCSP in formulating activities that meet the needs of the private sector. Once we do that, then we believe the private sector will support our work. This will, we hope will lead to them supporting our work financially," the TCSP Director said.

This was also part of his his paper presented to the leaders at the 30th South Pacific Forum in Koror.

Tuinabua said TCSP's main donor, the European Union, had changed its policy and told TCSP that it would not fund marketing projects and focus more on the work of the private sector in tourism development. "We are still negotiating with the EU and we hope they will see reasons, the importance of marketing for tourism in the

Continued next page

Palauan president Kuniwo Nakamura

BRIEFS

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la to Japan began during the first part of the year with an initial volume of 20 kilograms. Japan says if Tonga maintains its high quality, the price could be between 1-hundred-and-50 to 2-hundred-and-50 dollars, similar to the treatment given to vanilla from French Polynesia.

Saimone said vanilla growers in the Kingdom especially those in Vava'u should not lose hope for the future of the market, as further negotiations are continuing to secure better and reliable market opportunities. PNS

Solomon Islands receives for the first time the biggest group of Peace Corps from United States

Solomon Islands will receive for the first time the largest recruitment contingent of Peace Corps volunteers by the first week of this month. Country Director of Peace Corps Volunteer Service in Solomon Islands Wesley Mukoyama said 44 new Peace Corps volunteers will arrive in Solomon Islands from the United States of America November 8.

The volunteers will take up two-year assignment contracts with secondary schools, community high schools, rural training centres, youth development projects and environmental education in the country.

Peace Corps has been providing volunteer service to Solomon Islands since 1971. There are 73 Peace Corps volunteers currently working in the country. Under the new expansion of services initiative, new volunteers will also be engaged in youth and women development programmes, environmental and health and agricultural programmes. In the past programmes concentrated on teaching in secondary education, community high and rural training centres. PNS

Million dollar Fiji trade event set for year 2000

Fiji's premier trade event, the Bula Fiji Tourism Exchange (BFTE) 2000 is set to take place from 16th-19th May 2000. The BFTE Committee Chairman David Voss confirmed this. According to Voss, they were very pleased with the results of BFTE99 with the increase in number for both Buyer and Seller companies registered for business.

He stated that BFTE2000 would be bigger and better with a strong focus on improving the quality of buyers and sellers. For its 2000 event, the Committee has set a target of attracting 125 Buyer companies and 120 Seller companies to Fiji, which is an increase of 32 percent and 15 percent respectively for Buyers and Sellers over this year's event.

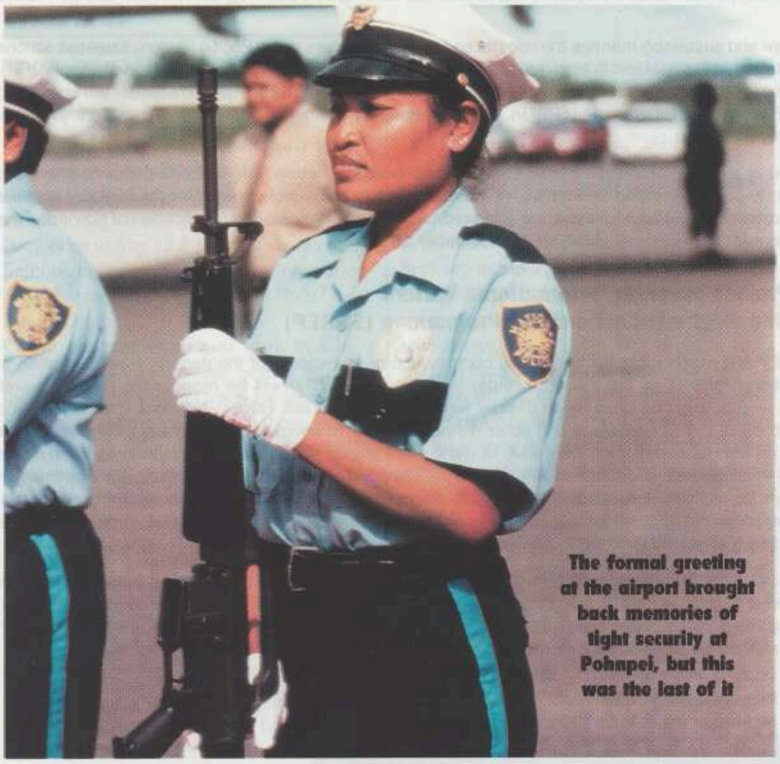
A key attraction for Buyers has been the inclusion of neighbouring South Pacific destinations in the event such as Tonga, Samoa, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea. A much larger contingent from the Pacific Islands including Tahiti is expected to participate as Seller Destinations in next year's event.

There has also been a conscious effort to work together with the other key trade events within the region that happen around the same time. Registration forms for Buyers will be sent out by mid-October and any interested Buyers are to contact the Committee Secretariat for further information. PNS ■

Continued from previous page

South Pacific and give us some support. But we do know that the support from the EU will not be there for perpertuity so we have to prepare for the time to look after ourselves," Tuinabua said.

TCSP has also received US$90,000 from Taiwan to research the potential of the Taiwanese market for the Pacific and the provision of tourist management information. PNS



The formal greeting at the airport brought back memories of tight security at Pohnpei, but this was the last of it

Forum leaders reiterate call for vulnerability index for islands

LEADERS of the South Pacific Forum, which will now be called the Pacific Islands Forum, have welcomed progress being made to develop a vulnerability index for small island countries.

In a communique issued after their meeting in Koror, Palau, the leaders re-iterated their call for a comprehensive vulnerability index. They said this index should encompass such factors as environmental and capacity considerations that could be broadly applied and included in the criteria for determining Least Developed Country (LDC) status, and for deciding on concessional aid and trade treatment.

"In this regard, the Forum commended the positive developments in the United Nations and within the Commonwealth, as well as in the region, towards the development of a comprehensive vulnerability index," the communique said.

"Leaders commended recent work done by the South Pacific Applied Geo-science Commission (SOPAC) on developing an Environmental Vulnerability Index (EVI) and encouraged development partners to support SOPAC's ongoing work in this area.."

The Forum agreed to pursue further in the United Nations, with its development partners as well as in other fora, a deferral of any decision on graduation from LDC status until work is completed on developing an internationally accepted vulnerability index that includes economic and social as well as environmental factors. PNS ■

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the issue, taking into account the risks of an accident occurring and the consequences of such an accident.

- The Forum noted there had been no further signatures or ratification of the Rarotonga Treaty since 1997 and reiterated its call upon the United States to ratify the Protocols to the Treaty.
- The Forum welcomed progress in developing a vulnerability index and reiterated its call for a comprehensive vulnerability index, encompassing such factors as environmental and capacity considerations that could be broadly applied and included in the criteria for determining Least Developed Country status and for deciding on concessional aid and trade treatment.
- Leaders welcomed the increasing interest in the Forum and its related meetings and endorsed the following criterion for observership by Pacific Territories: "A Pacific Island territory on a clear path to achieving self-government or independence may be eligible for observer status at the Forum, subject to the approval of Forum Leaders".
- Leaders agreed that the Forum Fisheries Agency Vessel Monitoring System needs to be fully implemented by all FFA members within two years. Leaders reaffirmed the importance of a coordinated regional approach to the issue of maintaining fish stocks at a sustainable level in the Western and Central Pacific.
- The Leaders recalled the positive outcomes of the inaugural South Pacific Forum-Japan Leaders' Summit held in October 1997 in Tokyo and the recent communication with the Government of Japan concerning a possible follow-up Summit in the near future. The Forum highlighted the importance of the Summit in expanding further, the already strong links between the region and Japan and tasked the Secretariat to pursue discussions with Japan on the timing of the next Summit.
- Leaders warmly commended the strong contribution of South Pacific Forum members to regional security, in partnership with one another and with the international community. Leaders indicated their willingness and desire to provide practical support, as required and within their resources, for UN operations in East Timor, including for the current INTERFET operation. ■

Strategic Action Program for International Waters in the Pacific Islands Region

Applications are invited for the positions of **Project Manager/International Waters** and **Fisheries Management Adviser.** These positions will form the basis of the Project Coordinating Unit for the GEF/UNDP funded project to Implement the Strategic Action Program for International Waters in the Pacific Islands Region.

The long-term objective of this project is to conserve and sustainbly manage the coastal and ocean resources in the Pacific Region. Targeted actions will be carried out in two complementary areas: Integrated Coastal and Watershed Management (ICWM) and Oceanic Fisheries Management (OFM). ICWM will focus on freshwater management, Marine Protected Areas, coastal fisheries and waste management. The Project Manager will be located in Apia, Samoa, with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The Fisheries Management Adviser will be located in Honiara, Solomon Islands, with the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA).

Applications for each post should be accompanied by a detailed curriculum vitae containing full personal details, information on qualifications and experience for the position, previous appointments, current position and salary, names, addresses and telephone and/or fax contact numbers of three persons associated with the applicant professionally and who would be prepared to provide testimonials. An indication of how soon the applicant would be available should also be indicated. **Applications close on 15 November 1999.**

Project Manager/International Waters
South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

The Project Manager shall be contracted to SPREP and responsible for the overall coordination of all aspects of the general implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the International Waters of the Pacific Islands. In particular, he/she will be responsible for the overall management and supervision of the UNDP/GEF project. He/She shall liaise directly with the Regional Task Forces, National Task Forces and National Focal Points, as well as the representatives of the GEF partners and other donors, in order to coordinate the annual work plan for the programme. The work plan will provide guidance on the day-to-day implementation of the current project document and on the integration of the various donor funded parallel initiatives. This will include close coordination with the Forum Fisheries Agency and the South Pacific Commission who are responsible for the implementation of major project components. He/She shall be responsible for all substantive, managerial and financial reports from the Project, in particular the ICWM component of the programme. He/She will provide overall supervision for all staff in the Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) as well as providing guidance concerning external relations for the project.

Applicants must have an advanced degree in a discipline relevant to environmental management and institution building; at least ten years of professional experience in senior project management posts in fields related to the assignment; demonstrated diplomatic and negotiating skills; previous experience in the operational aspects of large UN-funded projects or similar regional/multi-country projects, as well as familiarity with the goals and procedures of international organizations, in particular those of the GEF partners (UNDP, UNEP, World Bank).

Further Information

Expressions of interest and requests for further information should be directed to:

The Director
South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
PO Box 240
APIA
Samoa

Phone: (685) 21 929
Fax: (685) 20 231
E-mail: SPREP@sprep.org.ws

Oceanic Fisheries Management — Fisheries Management Adviser
Forum Fisheries Agency

The Fisheries Management Adviser position will focus on assisting in the development of strategies to conserve and manage the highly migratory fish stocks associated with the Western Pacific Warm Pool ecosystem. Specifically, this position will be responsible for assisting FFA member countries with the coordination and development of fisheries management arrangements. Such arrangements are designed to help FFA member countries assess the biological, economic and social implications of alternative fisheries management strategies in the context of the management of highly migratory fish stocks. The Fisheries Management Adviser will be required to travel extensively, mainly within the Pacific region.

Applicants should have a thorough understanding of fisheries management principles and techniques, at least five years practical fisheries management experience, demonstrated analytical and research capabilities, and sound presentation and communication skills. An understanding of fisheries science, particularly stock assessment techniques, international fisheries law, and the tuna industry, are helpful though not essential attributes.

Further Information

Expressions of interest and requests for further information should be directed to:

The Director
Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)
PO Box 629
HONIARA
Solomon Islands

Phone: (677) 21 124
Fax: (677) 23 995
E-mail: Len.Rodwell@ffa.int

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Ragg predicts riches in brewery trade

By Alan Ah Mu

WHEN he found that the German managers locked a toilet for their exclusive use at Samoa Breweries Ltd, Hugh F. Ragg was clearly upset.

As general manager/director of Carlton Brewery (Fiji) Ltd, Ragg was in Apia in last month to sign a deal for Carlton and United Breweries to buy 12.8 per cent shares of the Samoan brewery off Brauhaase International Management and 4.5 per cent from Grove International.

"What happens when you want to take a piss?" he asked someone before ordering that the facility be kept open for local staff.

With new shares to go with those bought back in July, Carlton increased its SBL majority stake from 51 to 68.3 per cent. But the company has no intention to replace Brauhaase as managers, leaving that to local staff now promoted to senior management positions.

"As far as we are concerned as the investor in the company here, Samoa Breweries is a Samoan company, and it is our intention that it be run by Samoans. We don't expect to have any expatriates within the company, we will support the company from Fiji in terms of technical advice and backup, engineering backup and product backup," said Ragg.

"But basically ... it's going to be run by Samoan people, without interference. Which is a big change from how it was operated in the past," he said.

Carlton is the major production arm of the brewing giant Fosters Brewing Group Ltd., which recorded an after tax profit of about A$350 million and with a market capitalisation value of A$8 billion.

It bought the majority shares in Samoa Breweries Ltd - producer of Vailima beer. SBL also holds franchise for Coca Cola products that the Samoan government relinquished because of economic reform.

Carlton was attracted to Samoa by the company tax cut from 35 to 29 per cent and the abolition of the 15 per cent tax on repatriated dividends, both of which become effective January next year.

"It encourages investment," said Ragg.

Carlton's move creates stronger economic links between Samoa and Fiji - where Carlton owns 63 per cent of Carlton Brewery (Fiji) Ltd. The Fiji-based company has a brewery in Suva and a distillery in Lautoka.

Being part of a group as big as Fosters means access to "huge support services for technology," said Ragg and benefits from the company's buying power.

"Just to give you a small example: Samoa Breweries has being buying malt, which is the major raw material for beer at 90 dollars a ton more than we pay in Fiji, and that's on an FOB basis so we can immediately get a gain here of 90 dollar per ton Australian.

"Various spare parts could be purchased at a far better price by a huge group rather than by a small individual company.

"The other thing of course is that in the past because the company has been under the management of a German company, Brauhaase, the sheer distance away has made it very difficult to back up, technically, the operation here.

"If you have a major break down for instance that needs specific technical expertise, instead of having to wait for somebody to come from Germany who might take a week to 10 days, you've got people an hour and a half away in Fiji, you've got people four hours away in Australia. And in Australia, in particular, Carlton has a large number of machines which are similar to the ones Samoa Breweries use so we already have the expertise, knowledge of operating, repairing and so on of this type of sophisticated equipment.

"I have to tell you the equipment you have here now is much better than the equipment we've got in Fiji."

Ragg said they will not commit suicide with such a universally accepted product and tamper with Vailima beer or change its name.

But Carlton could add another product or two along the diversification route they took in Fiji where after 35 years of putting out only one brand of beer they now have 17 different products.

"There's a real opportunity here to do something similar: bring in the raw spirit or the bulk spirit from Fiji, mix it here with the spirit and have similar products available here. So that you can buy a gin and tonic or a vodka and orange or whatever," said Ragg.

The Vailima Brewery outside Apia in Western Samoa

Carlton has spent about $13 million Tala on improving equipment at Samoa Breweries mainly to make the process of cleaning the bottles to packaging electronic, largely removing human contact with the product.

"Nothing is broken," said quality control manager, Ray Faamau, of bottles as they were being packaged by machine, as opposed to smashes resulting from bottles slipping from hands.

Dominion Breweries tried making Vailima under license in New Zealand, but it flopped said Ragg, "because of the water and because of the container perhaps, they couldn't completely copy the product here and the product was pretty well rejected by the Samoan commu-

Continued next page

Pacific islands monthly : PIM.

Whales bring good fortune to Jonah's native land

By Sophie Foster Hildebrand

JONAH Lomu may be a famous All-Black, but he is also Tongan and named for the biblical character who was saved by a whale.

History, it seems, has a habit repeating itself, but instead of saving Jonah, the whale is saving his native land from financial downturn. For whales have spawned a profitable industry for the people of Jonah's native land - Tonga.

The country is seeing an influx of new breed of hunters, quite unlike those that sailed the high seas in the Pacific's past. Their driving force is not the thrill of the kill, but the thrill of watching the magnificent creatures in their natural habitat.

And it is paying off for the people of Vava'u.

A new study by Mark Orams, a senior lecturer at Massey University in New Zealand, cites whale watching at being worth "at least T$746,000 each year to Tonga's tourism."

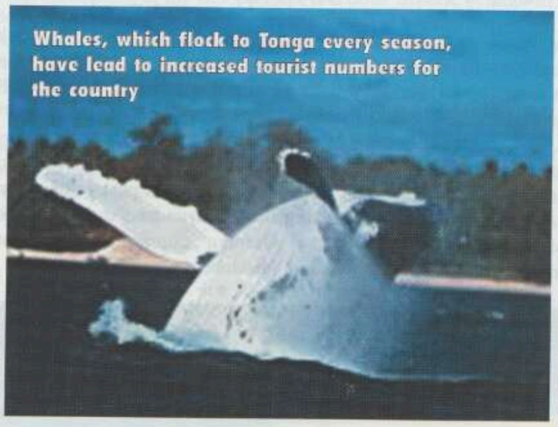
In "the Economic Benefits Of Humpback Whales As A Tourism Resource In Vava'u, The Kingdom Of Tonga," Orams says, during its lifetime, a whale could be worth as much as T$1.6million as a tourism resource in Vava'u.

"Economists recognise the 'non-use' value of resources such as whales. A conservative estimate of this value in Vava'u was arrived at as a result of this study and totaled T$269,500. Therefore, the estimated overall economic benefit of whales as a tourism resource in Vava'u is between T$998,000 and T$1,036,000 per season," he says.

It is an economic spin-off that has conservationists jumping for joy.

Humpback whales migrate to Tonga from the Southern Ocean each year, to give birth and mate, and Vava'u began capitalising on this migration in the early 1990s, developing a now-thriving whale-watching industry.

The move followed a ban on local whaling, imposed by the King of Tonga in 1978 after whaling, mostly south of Tonga, had brought humpback whales to the brink of extinction.



Whales, which flock to Tonga every season, have lead to increased tourist numbers for the country

Around 30 whales are thought to visit Vava'u each week during the season, consequently each whale can be valued at around T$30,000 per annum as a tourism resource, Orams says. Over an expected 50-year life span, one whale could be worth as much as T$1.6 million as a tourism resource in Vava'u.

The study found that 78 per cent of tourists arriving by plane in Vava'u during July-October 1999 paid to go whale watching either from a commercial operator or while on a yacht charter.

Orams says the whale watchers contributed between T$78,000 and T$116,000 in direct expenditure on whale watching in Vava'u each season.

Further, the study found that those visitors to Vava'u who came specifically to watch whales (an estimated 378 people) spent an additional T$567,847 on accommodation, food, transport, souvenirs and other items whilst in Vava'u.

There are five permitted whale watch operators in Vava'u who spend an estimated T$54,464 on their whale watch operations. Employees of those whale watch businesses spend an additional T$44,000 in Vava'u each season.

Sue Miller, Biodiversity Officer with the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), says a new survey is "the first time that the actual value of whale-watching in a Pacific Island country has been quantified."

Miller said the new figures on the value of whale watching showed how far-sighted Tonga's whaling ban was.

"Whaling profits hardly ever flowed back to the Pacific, but whale-watching is plainly an increasingly important part of Tonga's economy."

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nity in New Zealand."

But recently Vailima was re-launched in New Zealand with those lessons learnt.

It was similar in American Samoa where Vailima sold poorly, consumers unable to distinguish it from the American brands, said Faamau.

They then increased the alcohol content from 4.9 per cent to 6.7 per cent and American Samoans took to it, he said.

"We would like to see export to the Samoan community in Australia and further afield if possible," said Ragg.

"And maybe in conjunction with Carlton in Fiji, we would like to have a look at the US market. Now, I understand, there are almost as many Samoans in the west coast of the US as there are in Samoa.

"Also there is also quite a large community of Fiji people living in the west coast and in conjunction with the two operations we would like to try and penetrate that market, not with a huge amount of product but as a niche product that people are prepared to pay a little extra for." ■

Higher sales but lower profit for Rewa Dairy

THE Fiji-based Rewa Cooperative Dairy Company Ltd announced an initial profit before tax of F$115,764 for the year to December 31, 1998.

Following tax deductions and a decision by the company board to allocate $100,000 from 1998 earnings to a bonus for shareholders of $300,000 in 1999, profit was reduced to $17,063.

Addressing shareholders at the Coop's Extraordinary General Meeting, board chair, Ram Chand, said although profit fell short of 1997, it was still a significant achievement in an economy affected by a severe downturn.

He added that value of sales, at $27,206,603, was the best result in the company's history and illustrated ability to hold its position in the market, even during recession.

In 1998, Rewa Coop recorded its highest-ever intake of milk at 12,456,712 litres which it attributed largely to a continuing campaign to raise farming standards. Total payout for milk supplies was $4,633,739, six per cent more than in 1997. Shareholders' equity at year's end was more than $6 million. Cost of sales was $21,929,714 above the 1997 result of $18,911,421.

"The main reason for this increase was the substantial extra cost imposed by the 20 per cent devaluation of the Fiji dollar in January 1998," said Chand.

"Devaluation aimed to protect employment, maintain competitiveness and preserve foreign reserves. The downside was that imports became expensive and some prices rose. For Rewa Coop, it brought higher costs for purchases which added significantly to our overheads.

"Our farmers, along with the rest of the population, had to cope with the increased costs of living and the effect of drought on pasture quality and water supplies," he said. Overall sales volume rose $2.6 million to $27,206,603 with the coop's three core products - UHT Life Milk, Rewa Butter and milk powder - generating the biggest increases.

Life Milk sales were up 213,000 litres to 8,532,900 litres. Sales value increased from $8,594,100 in 1997 to $9,002,100.

The milk powder market, said Chand, was intensively competitive for the year. Despite this, the Coop managed to boost milk powder sales to 1321 metric tonnes worth $7,310,400 - 112 metric tonnes and nearly $100,000 more than 1997.

"We progressed with plans to start local manufacture of milk powder with investment in spray dryer equipment. Milk powder is crucially important to our business. Profits from this product enable us to preserve financial viability and meet our commitments to farmer-shareholders and the new blending operation will help create jobs and income opportunities in dairy provinces.

"Rewa Coop has a special responsibility to our rural shareholders. Concessions we have previously received from government have been granted in recognition of this role."

Rewa Butter gained in sales mainly from increasing its market share against competition from margarine. Value of sales was $8,336,200 - 20.4 per cent higher than 1997. Production was up by 71 metric tonnes to 1,321 metric tonnes.

The Coop sold 140,400 kilogrammes of cheese - 3,800 kilogrammes more than 1997 - for a sales income of $915,500, against $825,700 the previous year. Consumption picked up as a number of new restaurants and fast-food outlets opened in main centres. Rewa Coop's prices are lower than prices for overseas cheese.

Through a more concentrated marketing effort in schools, fun Flavour sales improved. The company sold 402,900 litres valued at $666,400.

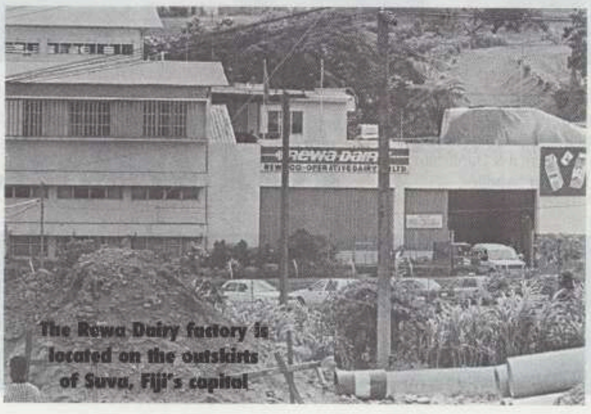
Demand was up for Rewa's cultured food, including fresh and sour cream, cottage cheese and yoghurt. These products earned $323,200 (1997: $302,100) from 101,000 kilogrammes sold (1997: 92,900 kilogrammes). In its first full year, Tarumba Juice generated sales revenue of $151,300 from 125,000 litres of juice.

Dairy farmers continued to benefit from a number of schemes and farm development initiatives. The company incurred cost of operating chilling centres at Naluwai, Waidawara and Waidalice for farmers which went up from $250,000 in 1997 to $313,226 in 1998.

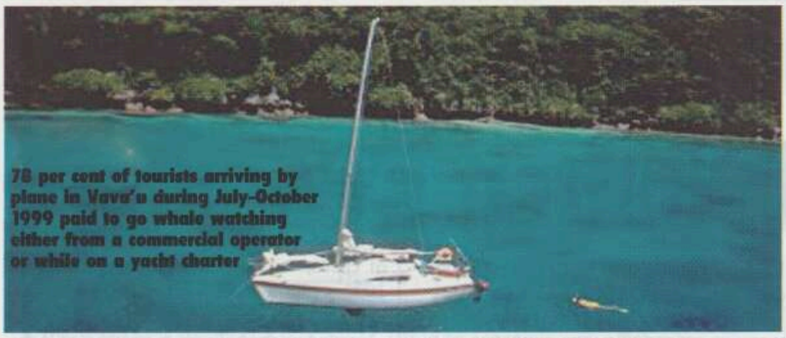
A revolving fund scheme provided alternative source of finance for farm maintenance and upgrading. Loans granted in 1998 totaled $440,676 for 118 farmers. This compared to $328,611 for 101 farmers in 1997.

Chand said: "Through prudent management and concentrated marketing and promotion, we were able to keep our results positive and maintain our obligations to shareholders. We responded to the demands of 1998 by focussing on the future and how we should best develop our industry."

He concluded: "Management and employees showed outstanding effort in 1998. They fulfilled their obligations to the Coop and its owners." "As always, we owe a debt of gratitude to the people and government of the Fiji Islands for their strong support for Rewa's products. Without that support, there would be no dairy industry." ■



The Rewa Dairy factory is located on the outskirts of Suva, Fiji's capital



78 per cent of tourists arriving by plane in Vava'u during July-October 1999 paid to go whale watching either from a commercial operator or while on a yacht charter

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She said there was great potential for expansion in this field, providing backing for Pacific Island countries that supported the proposal for establishment of a South Pacific Whale Sanctuary. "Internally, whale-watching is estimated to bring in US$ 504 million each year, and this figure continues to grow. Dr Oram's research shows clearly that whale-watching could provide a growing source of tourism income in the Pacific, in years to come."

To date, seven Pacific island countries - American Samoa, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Niue, Samoa and the Solomon Islands - have asked SPREP for advice on whale-watching operations.

Miller said a Whale Sanctuary in the South Pacific would increase public awareness of the region's attraction as a whale-watching venue, thus encouraging more tourists interested in whale-watching to choose the Pacific rather than other parts of the world.

The growth of whale watching internationally has been spectacular, Orams says, with it now occurring in over 70 countries and estimated to be worth more than US$ 550 million each year in revenue.

Last year's South Pacific Forum meeting agreed that a South Pacific Whale Sanctuary proposal should be developed.

Orams study found that tourists visiting Tonga are strongly opposed to whaling.

Asked whether the hunting of whales at a particular location would reduce their likelihood of visiting that area, 62 per cent of yacht visitors and 78 per cent of air holiday-makers agreed that it would. "These attitudinal tests show, not surprisingly, that the great majority of visitors to Vava'u are opposed to any consumptive use of whales. This is important, because it reveals that any change in the protective status of whales and resumption of whaling practices, even on a small scale, would likely displace a large proportion of the current visitors to Vava'u. Thus, there is an 'opportunity cost' with regard to use of the whales in Vava'u. It appears highly unlikely that a whale watching industry could co-exist with a lethal 'use' of whales in Vava'u," Orams says.

But with a royal decree backing a Tongan whaling ban and the economic spin-offs from whale watching increasing, it seems unlikely that the people of Jonah's native land will do anything to jeopardise their good fortune. ■

Small business - the key to conservation

By Alan Ah Mu

ENVIRONMENTAL protectors are taking on the business world in a bid to make conservation financially viable. If this sounds like a contradiction, it becomes all the more harder because it is happening in a region where the idea of conservation for its own sake is not a favourite or even viable option.

Most Pacific Islanders want, and in cases need, to continue to use their diverse environmental resources. But to push the point that islanders can conserving resources while still making money out of them, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) enlisted the expertise of the Samoa Business Enterprise Centre (SBEC).

The task of the business/environment alliance is to make the many "conservation areas" now established in the region generate income to provide for their owners and conserve resources at the same time. Most communities that have agreed to conservation areas wish to continue to use the natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Some of these uses, such as firewood, artisanal fishing and shifting cultivation, are essentially subsistence in nature. Others, such as handicrafts, eco-tourism, nut oil production or dried fish production, are undertaken to earn cash income for school fees, cooking oil and various processed foodstuffs and a range of consumer goods.

Tamarii Tutangata, director of SPREP, says, "Conservation for the sake of conservation has never been a concept close to us from the Pacific."

Imposing tapu on resources for certain periods of time to allow time for regeneration is a historic habit in the South Pacific so the idea of conservation for the sake of sustainable use is not new - but protection was the servant of use.

Tapu and other traditional sanctions "passed on from our ancestors were aimed at community survival," said Tutangata. "Nowadays, they call this process sustainable development."

But the process today often runs on a bigger scale with relatively large areas partitioned off for conservation.

The problem has come to a head because funding from the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP) for SPREP is ending. This will make it virtually impossible for SPREP to manage 17 conservation areas in 12 countries in the region.

Communities now have to come up with ideas to protect the areas while using resources to make money to continue environment protection programmes and support themselves.

Enter the regional workshop of 22 participants held in Apia in September, called Conservation Enterprises and Income Generating Activities: A Skills Development Programme and Workshop for SPBCP-supported Conservation Areas. Tutangata says this will be "the ultimate test of success and represents a very challenging stage of each conservation area."

It's hard, he said, to set up a small enterprise that aims at conserving natural resources while providing revenues because it involves reconciling three key elements: Pacific cultures, nature conservation and hard-core business decisions.

"The odds of setting up a successful business anywhere in the world are already slim. Now imagine that not only are we looking at promoting ventures that are financially viable but they also need to be both ecologically and socially sustainable," he says. "To achieve this we need a bit more than hard work and dedication to conservation. We need a no-nonsense and basic business training and a set of benchmarks."

Learning how to manage conservation areas as a small business started last year at the SBEC training centre with regional conservation area staff shown how to identify potential income generating activities, assess financial and operational feasibility and prepare basic business plans. In the year following the first workshop, five small enterprises in four different conservation areas were being set up, mainly following business plans developed during that workshop.

"I can name a community sea-kayaking eco-tourism enterprise in Ngaremeduu, that's in Palau, two small budding eco-tourism enterprises at Saanapu and Sataoa in Samoa, a Direct Micro-Expelling Coconut oil enterprise in the Huvalu Forest conservation area in Niue and a rainforest beekeeping venture here in Samoa at Uafato. Not bad for a first initiative," says Tutangata. "Now that most of our conservation areas are well established, it is time for us to help our local community partners turn them into sustainable endeavours."

But there is another area that conservationists have to contend with - lack of discipline regarding finances that has caused many small island businesses to fail. Samoa's veteran finance minister, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi says just when a business starts to generate profit, the urge crops up to use it for other purposes.

He says small business operators that fail forget to save part of the profit to keep the enterprise alive. But within the island communities themselves, the business person "expected to give much more than others," Tuilaepa said, and this is helping to kill off enterprise.

But environmentalists and business do have a common ground, he says - the struggle for sustainability.

Apete Meredith, principal consultant of Bioglobal Pacific, one of the workshop trainers, said the communal pressure to siphon profit away from the needs of a business to other communal matters is not just a Samoan problem.

He says it exists in Fiji, Tonga, the Cook Islands and other South Pacific countries where "too often people tend to put social objectives in front of commercial objectives".

The simple answer is awareness, Meredith says, to explain what business is about.

"That's an added (risk) factor in business in the islands," said Meredith. "It's a very difficult issue. And the emphasis is on the per-

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French propose ambitious Pacific satellite television

FRENCH television and radio network, Réseau France Outremer (RFO) has asked TV members of the Pacific Islands News Association for their support in launching an ambitious "regional satellite television" (RST).

In making the offer, RFO's director for international relations, Walles Kotra, described the initiative as "strategic."

He deplored the persisting trend that often saw images from the northern hemisphere flow into the southern one, but not the other way. But recent technological development, and the satellite technology, he added, now allowed for more space available for productions. The new space now remained to be filled with programmes.

"The battle for the contents is now launched ... Operators currently dig into every possible source for contents ... It is therefore easy to see that there are too many pipes and not enough to fill them," he told media professionals from some 21 Pacific countries and territories.

With its latest Pacific satellite initiative, Kotra hoped to boost a real Pacific television

Yet, the Pacific region was still absent from global media broadcasts. With its latest Pacific satellite initiative, Kotra hoped to boost a real Pacific television, which would rely on RFO's three Pacific stations, but also other stations from the region.

"A television that shuts itself is a dying television. We must therefore open our doors and our windows, open our islands and our countries." The first RFO-Sat initiative started two years ago, in the Indian and Atlantic oceans and is to be extended this month to the Pacific region.

"These are images from the South, the images from the communities, from the people and the cultures from the South which are fed back to the North. For the past two years, RFO-Sat broadcasts every day about six hours of programmes on this satellite," he said.

"The problem is, RFO cannot do this alone. Firstly because we do not pretend to represent the Pacific region alone. Secondly because RFO doesn't have enough programmes available to fill a whole satellite channel. So I make the following suggestion: why don't we make a programme together? Why don't we create a Pacific channel together?"

The idea was first implemented in the Indian ocean, where RFO is now working in cooperation with national televisions of Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles and Comores.

Last May, an experimental regional television week was held with all those stations and programmes broadcast on the Canal Sat Indian ocean channel.

"There were schedules made, programmes exchanged, a lot of coordination work involved, but the result was very encouraging. And on that basis, we decided to officially launch the Indian ocean's regional satellite television on December 4."

"For the Pacific, the project is now on the table. But once again, we cannot and must not do it alone."

"With a satellite channel becoming available for the Pacific next month, the regional TV project could technically become real as soon as next year," he anticipated.

He asked for the Pacific Islands News Association's support on the matter. "We feel the RST converges with PINA's efforts for the Pacific media. But also for all of us, the Pacific media, work together to expose our peoples and our countries." Through its New Caledonia and Wallis & Futuna stations in the Pacific, RFO ran some cooperation and training programmes in the past twelve months with Pacific islands' media. (PINA Nius) ■

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son owning the business."

He says one of the responses to crippling requests for money could be: "Ah well, I can't really give it to you because it will cause the death of my business if it's a straight out loan but ... I'll give you some of these products you can sell and make some money out of it".

"Give them alternatives that won't affect the business .... at least cover your costs. There are different ways you can do it but you got to be tactful. It's not easy."

For the sake of the environment, islanders need to learn to put into practice these and other business principles. ■

■ BUSINESS

Shark fin anyone?

By Sophie Foster Hildebrand

HAVE you ever had shark fin soup? It is a delicacy that is much sort-after in Asian restaurants around the Pacific as a starter. But this popularity may be contributing to havoc in the western Pacific as entrepreneurs seek to meet the Asian demand for shark fin.

The issue has become such that Guam's member in the US House of Representatives, Robert Underwood - along with four other members - wrote a resolution to condemn and possibly outlaw "the wasteful and unsportsmanlike practice known as shark fining."

As a result, the US Congress resolved that "the practice of removing the fins of a shark and dumping its carcass back into the ocean, commonly referred to as shark fining, is a wasteful and unsportsmanlike practice that could lead to over fishing of shark resources."

It said that the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, the State of Hawaii, and the National Marine Fisheries Service should promptly and permanently end the practice of shark fining in all Federal and State waters in the Central Pacific Ocean and Western Pacific Ocean. But the issue may not die there.

The US Congress also resolved that the Secretary of State should continue to strongly advocate for the coordinated management of sharks and the eventual elimination of shark fining in all other waters.

This is bound to have some effect on fisheries practice in other areas of the Pacific.

The problem with shark fining is that only the fins are of any real value on the market. But because shark fins comprise only between one to five per cent of the weight of a shark, about 95 to 99 per cent (by weight) of the rest of the shark is thrown back into the ocean.

Underwood's joint proposal said demand for shark fins was driving dramatic increases in shark fishing and mortality around the world.

According to the National Marine Fisheries Service, the number of sharks killed in Central Pacific Ocean and Western Pacific Ocean fisheries rose from 2,289 in 1991 to 60,857 in 1998, an increase of over 2,500 percent, and continues to rise unabated.

Of the 60,857 sharks landed in Central Pacific Ocean and Western Pacific Ocean fisheries in 1998, 98.7 percent, or 60,085, were killed for their fins.

"The life history characteristics of sharks, including slow growth, late sexual maturity, and the production of few young, make them particularly vulnerable to over fishing and necessitate careful management of shark fisheries," the Congressional proposal said.

Underwood and company charged that shark fining was wasteful, should be stopped and was contrary to US fisheries conservation and management policies.

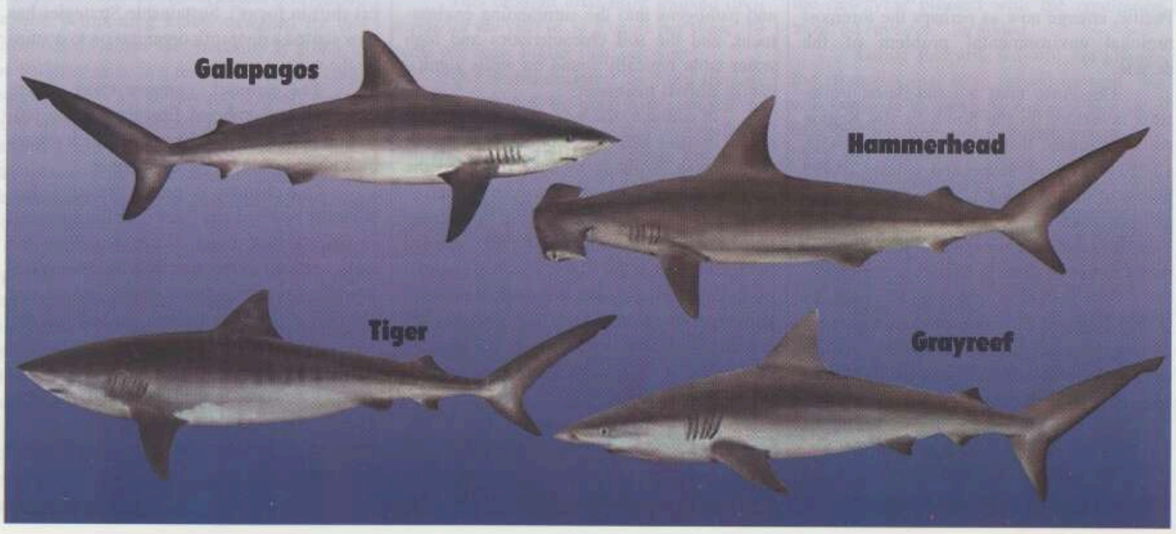
Although shark fining is prohibited in the United States exclusive economic zone of the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean, it is permitted in Pacific waters managed by the federal government.

The proposal cited several pieces of legislation that shark fining was inconsistent with, including the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. It is hope that a prohibition on the practice of shark fining in the Central Pacific Ocean and Western Pacific Ocean will result in the immediate reduction of waste and reduce shark mortality by as much as 85 percent.

With its wide-reaching powers, it is not unrealistic to expect that the US will bring other island countries to task over the issue.

Especially since the argument that the practice is inconsistent with international obligations - including the UN Agreement on Straddling Stocks and Highly Migratory Species - may hold water.

Perhaps this news will see a sudden influx of people to Asian restaurants hoping to savour shark fin before the law forces the menu to change. ■



Sewage - a problem to not be treated lightly

By Sophie Foster Hildebrand

FORGET rising sea levels and deforestation for the moment. The Pacific's biggest environmental problem of this decade is something in everyone's backyard - sewage.

And it is this problem that a project to introduce compost toilets to the region is attempting to address.

A report promoting "sustainable strategies" for controlling waste, by David Del Porto, says nearly every Pacific Island nation has identified critical environmental and public health problems resulting from the disposal of human excrement.

These, he says, have included algae blooms and eutrophication in lagoons, dying reefs, contaminated drinking water wells and outbreaks of gastro-intestinal disease, Leptospirosis and cholera.

"The causes of this pollution include overflowing latrines and privies, water-sealed toilet, septic systems, piggeries and sewage treatment plans as well as the complete lack of sanitation facilities in some places," Del Porto continues.

Even the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) has said that "disposal of solid and liquid wastes (particularly of human excreta and household garbage in urban area), which have long plagued the Pacific, emerge now as perhaps the foremost regional environmental problem of the decade."

Del Porto cites a Land-Based Pollutants Inventory for the South Pacific Region which estimated that 21,675 tonnes of BOD, 12,252 tonnes of suspended solids, 10,499 tonnes of nitrogen and 1,250 tonnes of phosphorous enter the South Pacific Ocean each year from domestic wastewater, making it the major source of these pollutants in the region.

The Federated States of Micronesia's (FSM) National Environmental Management Strategy (NEMS) calls the disposal of sewage along with solid wastes "one of the most troublesome environmental problems..." they face, and cites increasing marine pollution from sewage in almost all state centres.

"A number of studies have found sewage pollution to be adversely affecting coral reefs in the FSM, especially when discharged into lagoons with low circulation. Central wastewater treatment plants constructed with funds from the US environmental Protection Agency in Pohnpei and in Chuuk States have failed due to lack of trained personnel and funding for maintenance," he says.

The problem also extends to the Marshall islands where stagnation of lagoon waters, reef degradation and fish kills resulting from the low levels of oxygen have been well documented over the years. Additionally, red tides plague the lagoon waters adjacent to Majuro.

What's worrying is that the Marshall Island EPA estimated that over 75 per cent of the rural wells tested were contaminated with fecal coliform and other bacteria. Cholera, typhoid, and various diarrheal disorders all occur.

With very little industry present, most of these problems are blamed on domestic sewage, with the greatest contamination problems believed to be from pit latrines, septic tanks and the complete lack of sanitation facilities for 60 per cent of rural households.

Del Porto says that "even the best of these systems in the most favorable soils conditions allow significant amounts of nutrients and pathogens into the surrounding environment, and the soil characteristics and high water table typically found on atolls significantly inhibits treatment."

In addition, the lack of proper maintenance, due to a lack of equipment to pump out septic tanks, is likely to have degraded the performance of these systems even further.

Forty percent of the population in the Republic of Palau is served by a secondary sewage treatment plant in the Koror, which is generally thought to provide adequate treatment. However the Koror State government has recently expressed concern over the possible contamination of Malakal Harbor, into which the plant discharges.

"Some low-lying areas served by the system experience periodic back-flows of sewage which run into mangrove areas due to mechanical failures with pumps and electrical power outages. In other low lying areas not covered by the sewer system, septic tanks and latrines are used which also overflow, impacting marine water quality," the report says.

It says that although there have been an increasing number of septic systems installed as part of a rural sanitation program funded by the United States, there is anecdotal evidence that they may not be very effective.

"Many of the septic tank leach fields may not be of adequate size. In addition, a number of the systems are not used at all, as some families prefer instead to use latrines since the actual toilets and enclosures are not provided with the septic tanks as part of the program," it says.

In an attempt to combat these problems, David Del Porto and Lowell Robinson of Sustainable Strategies, have developed and successfully demonstrated compost toilets on several developing island nations of the Pacific.

But, according to Del Porto, because US funding to the Micronesian islands is drying up now, efforts to build demonstration projects and promote them - "very key with any new technology" - have slowed to a crawl.

He says that even Greenpeace is no longer funding such projects, due to its "radical shift in focus". Sustainable Strategies has now started a nonprofit organisation to continue the work.

The carousel compost toilet system uses a four-chambered fibreglass waste collection tank for batch digestion, which rotates on a pivot inside an outer container.

One chamber is located directly below the toilet pedestal and filled over the course of several months' usage. When it is filled, the tank is rotated so that this first chamber is isolated from receiving fresh wastes, and the next chamber is positioned below the pedestal.

After all four chambers have been filled (about two years with recommended useage) the waste in the first chamber is completely digested into humus and can be removed so that the chamber is ready to be used again.

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The unit can be furnished with an electric fan to ensure adequate airflow through the ventilation system, and an optional heater is available to maintain temperatures for microbial activity in temperate climates.

Aside from normal cleaning, each of the demonstration models requires a minimum of routine maintenance to ensure proper conditions for aerobic digestion.

What this means is that all you have to do is drop a small amount of leaves or shredded coconut husks down the toilet after each use, providing a source of carbon for the aerobic bacteria, as well as a spongy-texture.

What's interesting for the developers of the Carousel Compost Toilet system is that observations suggest that "the Pacific islands climate has significantly enhanced the performance of the treatment process over what is typically experienced in temperate climates".

"Although all of the chambers of a small version of the Carousel would be expected to be filled after a year's use in a more temperate (cooler) country, this process took 2 1/2 years in Yap! A significant increase in capacity," the report said.

Del Porto says in Palau, where composting toilets are located in a park on the Rock Islands, it is "a big success".

"We've been told by several visitors that the park officials proudly show them to anyone who is interested".

In Pohnpei, the demo units were doing well, he says. "Some needed some minor adjustments. What's great is that we saw people independently building composting toilets, including the Nan Markee."

He says the Suva, Fiji unit is said to be doing well. "An eco-resort, Lalati, is installing several composting toilets designed by this firm. Also, Habitat for Humanity is going to be building some in a few weeks. Other composting toilets are in Samoa, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Kosrae. Del Porto says that it is hard to promote a very new way of managing waste without a steady campaign of demonstration projects and an information programme.

But he says that the success of the operating projects has shown "not only that these technologies can work in developing island nations of the Pacific's climate, but that people readily accept them and are willing and able to perform the simple routine maintenance which they require."

Perhaps with a bit more promotion, compost toilets may soon help improve the conditions that many marine life in the islands have to survive in. ■

Qantas profit increases 38 per cent

QANTAS has reported a profit before tax of AUD$662.5 million for the year ended 30 June 1999, an increase of 38.6 percent over the prior financial year. Net profit after tax of AUD$420.9 million increased by 38 percent and included an abnormal after tax gain of AUD$38.9 million relating to sale of part of the investment in the international data network company EQUANT NV.

Excluding the abnormal gain, operating profit before tax rose by 25.9 percent to AUD$601.7 million and operating profit after tax but before abnormal items increased by 25.2 percent to AUD$382 million.

The Directors declared a fully franked final dividend of 24.5 cents per share, 17.5 cents higher than the fully franked final dividend for last year. The dividend included two components, an ordinary final dividend of 11 cents per share and a special dividend of 13.5 cents per share.

This brought total fully franked dividends for the year to 32.5 cents per share, 19 cents per share higher than last year.

The Board declared the fully franked special dividend to maximise returns to shareholders by releasing accumulated franking credits and to distribute the profit generated by the EQUANT NV sale.

Qantas chair, Gary Pemberton, said the result reflected solid revenue performance in the second half of the year, continuing the trend evident in the latter part of 1998.

"I said in February that the half year result was, in financial terms, our best result to that date. The second half has added to that outcome and enabled us to continue our unbroken record of profit improvement since listing the company," he said.

"The result for the current year delivers significant value to shareholders through the record earnings, the higher final dividend and, notably, the special dividend. It was achieved in a market which continued to be strongly competitive and under a difficult aviation policy environment.

"During the year we continued with the company's extensive program of investment in product and services. Spanning three years and totalling over AUD$700 million, the investment includes aircraft refurbishment, lounge and terminal improvements and customer service programs. This has enabled us to achieve our highest ever ratings in regular internal surveys of customer service and brand recognition.

"The product investment program and further expansion of the fleet will generate increased depreciation and funding charges against profits in the 1999/2000 year and beyond. These will need to be offset by higher revenues or continuing efficiency gains.

"On the other hand, we enter the new year pleased with the continuing trend on revenue," he added.

"Going forward, we will not change the strategies that have served us well. We will continue to carefully manage our asset base and maintain our emphasis on productivity and efficiency."

Chief executive, James Strong, said the record result came as Qantas celebrated an aviation milestone of 40 years of commercial jet services in Australia, commencing with Boeing 707-138 services in 1959.

"Total revenue for the year was AUD$8.45 billion reflecting growth of more than AUD$300 million or 3.9 percent on the prior year," he added.

"Net passenger revenue also increased by four percent and overall passenger yield improved by 1.8 percent. Excluding the

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favourable impact of movements in foreign exchange rates, yield declined by 0.9 percent.

"Including the adverse impact of exchange movements, operating cost increases were restricted to 2.6 percent. Excluding exchange impacts, costs were stable compared to last year.

"The continued success of our efficiency and productivity programs along with lower fuel prices - although offset to some degree by higher information technology and capacity related costs - also enabled us to improve the margins in our business.

"The operating margin at the Earnings Before Interest and Tax (EBIT) level improved by 20.6 percent." Strong said pressure on revenues continued to be a major issue for the airline.

"The investments we have made in new yield management systems and techniques, in other new technologies and in product and services, coupled with better operational efficiency and the strength of the Qantas brand have all added to the improvement in performance and cushioned the impact of yield deterioration," he added.

Strong said that during the year, Qantas purchased two new Boeing 767-300s from the manufacturer and two Boeing 747-400s from Malaysian Airlines. In addition, Qantas had firm orders for one Boeing 767-300 and three Boeing 747-400s, scheduled for delivery in 1999 and 2000. This additional capacity would be deployed as part of announced schedule changes including additional services to London, South Africa and Auckland, new services to New York from Sydney and the first non-stop services between Melbourne and Los Angeles.

"By the end of 1999 all our major long haul international routes will be serviced by Boeing 747-400 aircraft in the new three class configuration. Reconfiguration of our Boeing 767-300 fleet is targeted for completion by the middle of next year," he added.

"Qantas extended its new restaurant style inflight cuisine from First Class into Business Class cabins in its international aircraft during the year."

Strong said Qantas was on track with a comprehensive program to achieve readiness for the Year 2000 including detailed business continuity and contingency planning. Qantas had also embarked on a Network Redesign Program which would give it one of the world's most advanced telephone, computer, Internet and Intranet networks, connecting all operational sites around the world and providing for a major presence on the World Wide Web.

Domestic operations contributed AUD$256.8 million in Earnings Before Interest and Tax (EBIT), an increase of 20.3 percent over the previous year reflecting the robustness of the domestic economy. Load factors and yields were maintained with capacity growth of 3.8 percent.

International operations contributed AUD$308.3 million in EBIT, up 13.4 percent. Excluding the effects of movements in foreign exchange rates, international passenger revenues declined 1.4 percent and yield was down by 2.8 percent over the prior year. Revenue Passenger Kilometres (RPKs) increased by 1.5 percent on stable capacity resulting in an improvement in load factors of 1.5 percentage points.

Subsidiary operations contributed AUD$136.7 million to the Group's EBIT, an increase of 41.8 percent above the contribution from the prior year. Subsidiary and other operations were a substantial part of the Group's profit performance with all businesses including Catering, Qantas Holidays, Freight and Regional Airlines - particularly Airlink, Southern Australia and Eastern - providing substantial returns.

Strong also announced the Directors had approved a further grant of AUD$1,000 worth of bonus shares to each eligible employee under the Qantas Profitshare Scheme. The total value of this grant would approximate AUD$28 million and was in recognition of the important contribution Qantas employees had made to achieve the record result.

In June 1999 Qantas issued US$350 million of unsecured Notes with a 10 year maturity. This borrowing will be used to fund committed aircraft acquisitions and retirement of debt. Qantas deputy chief executive officer, Gary Toomey, said capital expenditure of AUD$1.2 billion during the year, was funded from internal sources with cash flow from operations again over AUD$1.2 billion.

"As the proceeds from the bond issue were not used at 30 June 1999, the debt to debt plus equity ratio, (including non-cancellable operating leases and on a hedged basis) improved by one percentage point to 39:61 at 30 June 1999," he added.

"Qantas has managed its capital with a primary focus on reducing financial leverage. The success of this strategy has enabled us to deliver significant value to shareholders and to achieve a leverage in line with our target range.

"Having achieved our target leverage, the Directors have decided to suspend the Dividend Reinvestment Plan, effective immediately.

"As part of this active capital management program, Qantas has declared a fully franked special dividend of 13.5 cents per share. A number of methods of distributing franking credits were evaluated, including a share buy-back, with the special dividend being the most effective method of distribution. "This is a continuing process of reviewing our capital needs and the methods of best distributing franking credits to shareholders," Toomey said.

Capital expenditure during the year predominantly related to aircraft acquisitions (including progress payments), aircraft reconfiguration costs, engine modifications and significant terminal improvements in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth.

The favourable foreign exchange effect on revenues was largely offset by an adverse effect on foreign currency denominated expenditures. The net benefit from exchange for the full year was AUD$12 million.

Excluding the unfavourable impact of movements in exchange rates, cost per Available Seat Kilometre (ASK) improved by 0.6 percent in comparison to the prior year. "Lower fuel prices and the achievement of AUD$480 million in benefits through a combination of new efficiency, productivity and non-passenger revenue enhancement initiatives were an important part of profit performance," Toomey said.

Total income tax expense increased by AUD$68.6 million, or 39.7 percent on the prior year due to the higher profits. The Group's effective tax rate was 36.5 percent. The fully franked final and special dividend of 24.5 cents per share is payable December 1, with a record date (books close) on November 3. ■

NZ makes it easier to retire in the tropics

By Sophie Foster Hildebrand

FOR some people, the thought of retiring in an island country, with sunny days and moonlit nights is appealling.

But one problem has been the collection of superannuation.

New Zealand has decided to do something about the problem and from the beginning of last month, anybody living in New Zealand who qualifies for New Zealand Superannuation or Veterans Pension can take their pension with them if they retire to certain Pacific countries.

NZ prime minister Jenny Shipley announced the new initiative in February this year that extended the existing Special Portability Arrangement to include more Pacific countries and increased the rate of payment will be increased for some people.

The new system covers American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Pitcairn Island, French Polynesia, Samoa, Guam, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tokelau, Marshall Islands, Tonga, Nauru, Tuvalu, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Niue, and Wallis and Futuna. According to NZ officials, there are no ethnic criteria.

"Anyone can apply to have their New Zealand Superannuation or Veterans Pension paid to them in the listed Pacific countries. The option is not limited only to people of Pacific country descent," a press statement said.

But retirees have to beware of certain provisions which must be fulfilled to qualify for the deal.

Barbara Gilbert, Manager International Affairs office of Work and Income NZ says "It's important that people are aware that only those who already qualify residentially for a New Zealand pension are included in this change. If they are not sure they should contact us."

Gilbert said "people who usually live in Pacific countries will not qualify unless they already get a New Zealand pension."

"People who are already living in Pacific countries cannot apply for New Zealand Superannuation or Veterans Pension, even if they have previously lived in

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Pricewaterhouse Coopers to monitor Saipan garment factories

By Sophie Foster Hildebrand

The Top Fashion factory in Saipan

THIRTY-ONE of Saipan's 34 garment factories will face comprehensive independent monitoring of their operations under a new programme set to begin at the end of this month.

This follows adverse publicity in the United States and elsewhere about "sweatshop" tactics allegedly used there. Under a contract, signed September 27, between the Saipan Garment Manufacturers Association (SGMA) and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC), PWC will provide monitoring compliance for the

SGMA members with the "Standards for the Treatment of Workers and Working Conditions and Standards for Living" set in the SGMA Code of Conduct.

"Determined to beat a 'sweatshop' image perpetuated by notoriously protectionist garment unions and activists on the US mainland, 31 of the 34 factories on Saipan have joined SGMA to learn from international experts in labour law enforcement," a SGMA statement said.

All the SGMA member factories will accept on-site monitoring inspection visits by PWC beginning November 29. PWC will perform a baseline assessment with follow-up visits when required PricewaterhouseCoopers is one of the world's leading professional services organizations. Drawing on the knowledge and skills of 150,000 people in 150 countries, they are known for helping their clients to solve complex business problems and improve their performance.

PWC was chosen from 12 proposals received after SGMA advertised in the US for qualified monitoring companies.

The scope of their engagement includes collecting and analysing facts and providing assessments of manufacturer compliance with the SGMA Code of Conduct.

The Factory Monitoring Program includes: Prohibition against Forced Labour, Prohibition against Child Labour, Prohibition against Harassment or Abuse, Nondiscrimination, Health and Safety, Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining, Wages and Benefits, Overtime Pay/Hours of Work, Worker Dormitories/Freedom of Movement, Compliance Principles.

PWC will provide its analysis and findings to the individual member companies and to the SGMA. A report will be prepared for public disclosure after the baseline study is complete.

This is expected to be submitted in early January 2000. All reports will list non-compliance with recommended corrective action.

According to economist William Stewart, in a paper titled 'The Garment Industry's Multiplier Effect Of Money Within The CNMI Economy', the total direct contribution of the garment industry to the CNMI economy, both in generating revenues for the government and income for the private sector is estimated to be from $163.3 million (low) to $208.7 million (high), omitting the $79 million in remitted employee salaries.

He estimates annual payments by the garment industry for a myriad of goods and services to total from $96.5 million (low estimate) to a high estimate of $119.1 million annually.

Considering that a five percent business gross revenue tax, (BGRT), is paid on most of this private sector income, from $4.8 million to $6 million is further generated for the government in BGRT.

Major payments by the industry direct the government include: $27.2 million in User's Fees (a form of export tax); $2.6 million in labour and immigration fees; $500,000 in land lease payments; $4.4 million to CUC; $10.6 million in payroll taxes and $4.3 million in other expenses for a total of $49.6 million.

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The majority of garment manufacturers on Saipan have agreed to monitoring

A financial ruck and maul

Smaller nations penalised by rugby's commercialisation

By Sophie Foster Hildebrand

WHEN William Webb Ellis first disregarded the rules of football and ran with the ball under his arm about 176 years ago, he was not to know how far his flight of fancy would be taken.

Today, rugby is a multi-million dollar industry, with players bundled between countries and jealously guarded by clubs. Everything is for sale - players, coaches, sponsorship, clothing contracts, footwear deals - in most cases, to the highest bidder.

But, although sport is touted as transcending all sorts of boundaries, rugby too has its losers - those on the flip side of the marketing coin.

With two notable exceptions - Australia and New Zealand - those on the flip side belong to the "poor south". These are the "boys" from the developing countries in the southern hemisphere who do not attract the big sponsorship deals, nor the jet-setting lifestyle of some of today's big players. It is these teams that are being "penalised" by rugby's commercial takeover.

Fiji, for example, had to virtually break the bank in order participate in the 1999 Rugby World Cup.

The Fiji Rugby Football Union (FRFU) was in such dire straits that the government gave them a grant of about F$300,000 to help make it to the Rugby World Cup.

Before that, the IRB gave special grants to the eight teams competing in RWC that were not represented on its Council.

IRB Chief Executive Officer Stephen Baines said, "Each country was asked to provide details of their requirements and a total of £210,000 has been made available from the IRB Trust. Grants of £30,000 each have been allocated to USA, Samoa, Spain, Tonga, Fiji and Romania with £15,000 each for Namibia and Uruguay as they had already received previous financial assistance from the Board with their RWC preparations."

That funding was used to meet the cost of pre-tournament training camps, kitting-out and allowances for players, many of whom were taking unpaid leaves of absence from work to compete.

Baines said, "We certainly appreciate the problems that have been overcome and the sacrifices that have been made by the smaller unions and their players and we hope this support will go some of the way towards meeting their concerns."

But that amount did little to help meet the cost of taking teams to the 1999 RWC.

The Fiji team had to raise about A$640,400 to cover its RWC expenses - the government grant covered half of this while the other half was raised through an appeal to the public for donations. The team also had the comparatively-minuscule sponsorship dollars of the country's mobile phone operator (about A$95,429).

The amount of funds that the Fiji team has gone through for the RWC would be more than one million dollars in local currency. Considered a large sum of money in the islands, even that may not be enough to cover all the expenses that are incurred by teams participating in the RWC, and the FRFU will still be dealing with the cost for years to come. The same is true for the rugby-playing nations of Tonga and Samoa.

While there has always been a gap between the developed and developing countries in the rugby world, this widened after August 1995 - when the game progressed from an amateur sport to one that intermingles professionals and amateurs.

It was then that the Executive Council of the International Rugby Board, "recognising rugby's growing pressures as in other high profile sports, its popularity and its ever-increasing commercial value," declared the Game "open".

This meant that, for the first time, players could be remunerated and had the opportunity, if good enough, to become full-time professionals.

However, because some developing countries did not have the finances to compete with the deals being offered by bigger nations, a rugby "brain drain" began to occur.

Those who were good enough to play professionally in developing countries found that money lay elsewhere in the rugby world, and greener pastures were almost always overseas.

For the South Pacific triangle of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, a new export product arose - that of young rugby players with huge potential.

Needless to say, the effect this was having on national team selectors was chaotic.

Argentina's Carlos Tozzi brought the issue to a head in 1997 when he called for a new ruling to ensure that once a player has accepted an invitation to play for their national team, or the next level of senior team, they will never be able to represent another country.

Outlining his position Carlos Tozzi told the Council: "For rugby to continue to develop, a country must be able to retain its best players."

But the gap isn't just about having the financial gumshoe to retain players. Another more worrying aspect of "nouveau" rugby is causing greater division - that of developed countries refusing to let their teams play smaller, poorer nations.

Even when a country manages to retain its best players, a snobbish attitude seems to pervade the bigger rugby playing nations, and it is hard for poorer rugby nations to secure games against them.

Fiji's coach Brad Johnstone summed the feeling when he labelled England one of "the greedies" who liked to keep the money and play only each other leaving the poorer nations to fend for themselves.

He described Fiji's RWC quarter-final play-off against England as "a wonderful occasion because England doesn't usually want to know us."

"Last year we toured England and were not even given a game with the A team, or we were but then the organisers cancelled that fixture and gave us Leicester instead.

"That exemplifies the way the big five, 'the greedies' as I like to call them, behave towards the 'poorer' nations and it is not good for the game," he said.

Ironically, in 1997, the same year that advertising was allowed on the playing field and equipment, IRB chair Vernon Pugh said, "As a world governing body we have an obligation to ensure that developing countries are brought up to a standard where they can compete consistently with the top eight countries. That way we can develop a framework of at least 16 competitive nations."

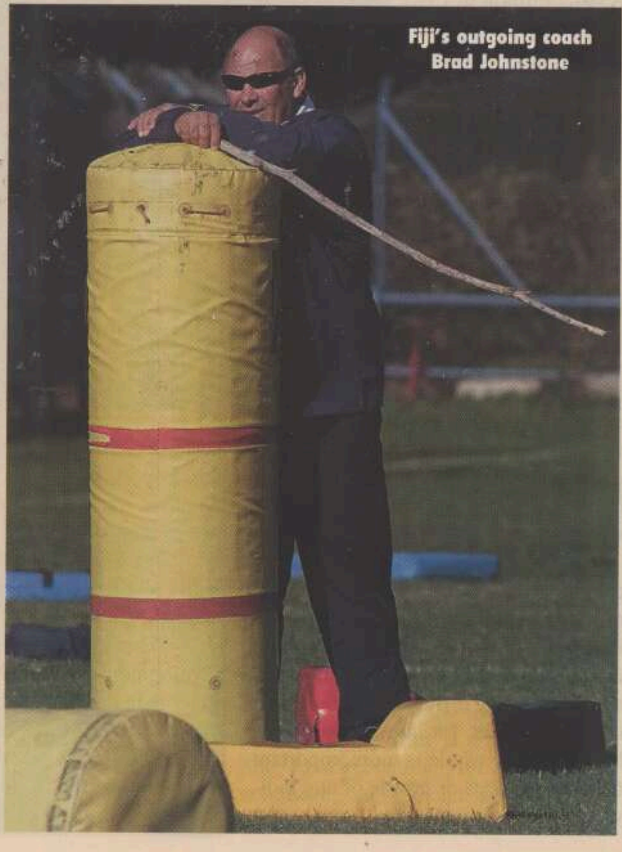
Yet towards the end of the RWC campaign, developing countries are crying foul over the sub-standard treatment they receive.

Fiji's coach, Brad Johnstone has even issued a plea to the IRB to spend money on the development of the rugby in the Pacific.

"At the moment, this team (Fiji) is just boys by world standards," he said. He described the match between England and Fiji in the RWC quarter-final play-offs as "15 guys with fast cars and laptops against 15 guys with only rugby boots."

Over the last four years, using revenue generated by Rugby World Cup, the IRB has provided development grants of more than £16 million to rugby-playing countries around the world.

Funds are allocated to this programme through a trust, and are used to



Fiji's outgoing coach Brad Johnstone

support coaching competitions, development programmes and other activities that will lead on to greater participation and improved playing standards.

But one of the biggest controversies of the current RWC is that profits from ticket sales will go to the five nations hosting the tournament and not split amongst the participating countries nor placed in a development trust.

In a climate where the profits from ticket sales are estimated to have increased almost seven-fold (A$75.34 million - up from A$11.3 million in 1995), the developing countries that play rugby are beginning to get agitated.

The other source of funds from the RWC is profit from broadcasting, sponsorship and other commercial deals, which should run into A$113 million (up from A$44.2 million in 1995 and just A$2.51 million at the inaugural 1987 World Cup).

This money will go into a pool which the IRB will then distribute to both rich and poor rugby playing nations.

Two years ago, Pugh (IRB chair) said that "we need to make sure that in the pursuit of commercial gain, we do not sacrifice the very thing that has helped to make the game so attractive to participants, public broadcasters and the commercial world - namely, that 'special ethos'."

Pugh regards it as "a distinct camaraderie, and of having respect for others involved in rugby, be it at playing level or in any other capacity. There is a special feeling of being involved in something quite different, largely based on that respect for the game and a belief that the whole is more important than the interests or profile of any individual who plays it."

It was this love of the game that was cited in an IRB statement after questions about the distribution of profits.

While the IRB declined to comment specifically, it said, in a statement, that countries "enter the World Cup for the honour and enjoyment of taking part, rather than financial succour from their triumph."

But when players see some countries raking in the profits, while others are struggling, it is bound to ruffle some feathers.

Canadian captain Gareth Rees said, "Most of our players aren't paid and it is increasingly difficult to compete at the highest level. We are not bitching or asking for more money. But it is important for the World Cup for countries like Canada and Namibia to able to compete."

The Samoans perform a battle dance before taking on Wales in the Rugby World Cup

The Rugby World Cup generates nearly all the finance the IRB has at its disposal.

"That income is distributed to the development of rugby worldwide rather than going to feed those who are already strong," Pugh claims.

"Thankfully, there is an acceptance among the eight major unions who generate most of that money, that this will continue to be the right course if Rugby Union is to continue to prosper."

But this acceptance seems to be valid no more, with five of the top eight now taking a slice of the RWC profits.

There is also the criticism that the IRB has bowed to commercial interests tampering with union laws for the sake of 'quick-fix' entertainment. This criticism is levelled at the introduction of the substitute and extended half-time laws.

While saying that those laws did not represent any fundamental change to the game, Pugh did not deny they were primarily introduced to accommodate television interests.

"That cynical view is probably right in that the commercial benefits have speeded up the decision. A case for extending the half-time break came from commercial interests, but it brings more money into the game which ensures its development and vitality. I don't think there's any thing wrong with that, just as long as it doesn't damage the game - and I don't think it does."

But when Fiji's substitutes were ordered to stop warming up during a RWC match because they were obscuring advertising hoardings, rugby donned its full gear as bean-counter.

Fiji's Johnstone said, "I would have thought that the health and welfare of our substitutes was more important than advertising hoardings not being seen. But the game is now run for commercial benefit."

Ironically, the same weapon that the IRB has been wielding to change the game is now being wielded against them.

In the last Chairman's Report, the IRB was seriously concerned about the "consistent central attack, viz, to effectively reduce or even eliminate the present control exercised by the governing bodies."

"This, itself, has had one dominant objective, and that is the control of and access to the huge revenues produced from that most captivating and powerful of media, television and also the increasing influence of these broadcasters," the Chairman's Report said.

Event and competition organisers challenge the entitlement of Unions to own and market sponsorship and broadcasting rights.

The regulations are being challenged in different areas including the control of players, of stadia and facilities, the organisation of events and competitions.

Agents are now a part of the game, something the IRB thinks it needs to licence in order to ensure the quality of people involved.

Fiji's players jump into the air after performing the "cibi"

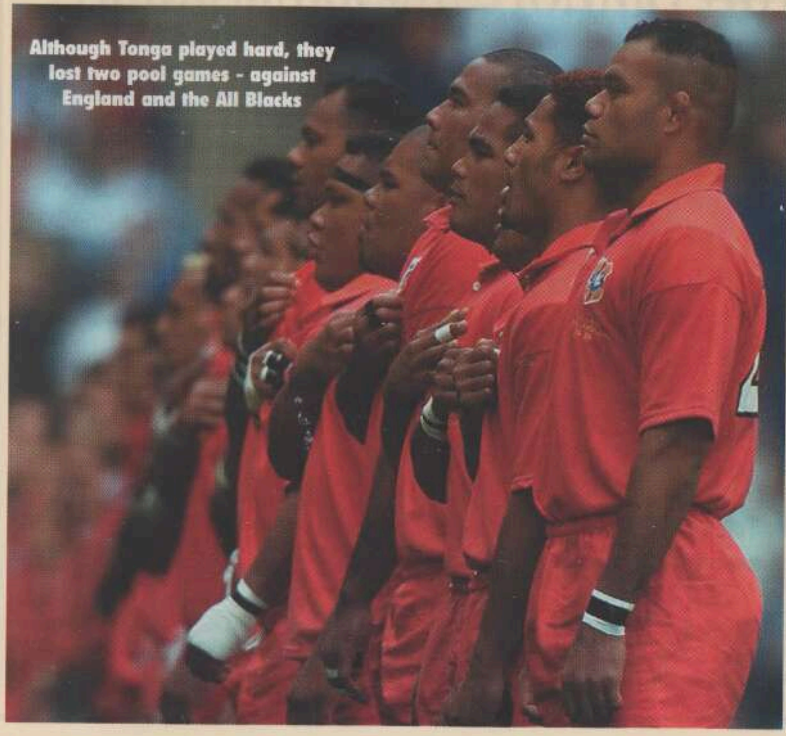
Media giants and sports/clothes manufacturers now play an "aggressive and acquisitive role", the Chairman's report says, "as they seek to first own and then control players, clubs and competitions."

It said there is large concern about global companies acquiring the right to require the playing of international matches - even outside the IRB's Schedule.

"The danger to the traditions of our sport have never been so strongly signalled nor, indeed, the consequences. It comes in the clothing of Santa Claus and bearing priceless gifts, but unless we recognise it for what it is and afford it the rightful place which it can and should enjoy in our sport, then it will very soon own much more than we should rightfully and responsibly give away," the IRB says.

Fiji's coach, Johnstone says "the rich countries run the game to suit themselves".

"It is ludicrous that we nearly had to bankrupt our union just to get here (RWC) when the organisers are talking of making profits of A$113 million." Johnstone has become quite a vocal critic of the way that rugby has become structured and the disadvantages that this places many rugby-loving nations in.



Although Tonga played hard, they lost two pool games - against England and the All Blacks

After years of hammering away "smaller" nations have won one battle.

For the first time, Fiji, Japan, Romania, Tonga, and Samoa will finally feature in the Internationals fixture list.

The Six Nations have agreed to make arrangements for Autumn games involving Japan, Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, USA and Romania - teams that until now have been unable to count on regular fixtures against rugby's top teams. For their part, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia have committed to annual games against Argentina and, will also undertake fixtures on an equitable basis against Canada, Japan, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and the USA.

Although this is a major win for the smaller nations for international exposure, the financial war is far from over. ■

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New Zealand. Pensions will not be granted to people who come back temporarily to New Zealand in order to apply." To qualify for New Zealand Superannuation or Veterans Pension, people must have reached the qualifying age (currently 64).

They must have lived in New Zealand for at least 10 years after the age of 20, five years of which must be after the age of 50. People must be ordinarily resident in New Zealand when they apply.

Another condition is that to be able to take their payments to the Pacific countries, people must be going to live there for more than 52 weeks.

They must apply to Work and Income NZ for overseas payments before leaving New Zealand.

"Most Pacific countries are covered by the changes, but people should check with us before making any decisions about their future," said Gilbert.

The payments are calculated by several formulae. Those who have lived in New Zealand for 20 years or more after the age of 20 will receive the base rate of New Zealand Superannuation or Veterans Pension overseas.

People who have lived in New Zealand for 10 years will get half the base rate of New Zealand Superannuation or Veterans Pension overseas.

However, the New Zealand government will not pay any supplementary payments overseas. This means there will be no Living Alone Allowances, Disability Allowances, or Accommodation Supplements paid overseas.

According to the NZ officials, the payments will not be taxed in New Zealand.

"Payments will not have New Zealand tax deducted from them. People will receive New Zealand Superannuation or Veterans Pension at the gross rate. The country the person has retired to may tax the payment.

It is the person's responsibility to pay any tax due in the country to which they have retired. People should check with the tax department in the Pacific country they are retiring too before they leave New Zealand," an official statement said.

The pension will be paid in New Zealand every two weeks, or into the overseas bank account of the retiree every four weeks. The NZ government says the overseas bank account must be in the person's name (or a joint account) in the country in which they usually live.

People can travel away from their stated "home" country for up to 26 weeks without their holiday affecting their New Zealand Superannuation or Veterans Pension.

If a person returns to New Zealand for a holiday, then their New Zealand Superannuation continues at the overseas gross payment rate. This is particularly important when a person returns to New Zealand for medical treatment.

The officials says that if a retiree decides that their return to New Zealand is permanent, then they revert to domestic New Zealand Superannuation or Veterans Pension.

For further information, call Work and Income NZ International Affairs office on 0800 777 117. ■

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In examining the contribution to the private sector, the annual payroll is $92.9 million. Assuming industry workers send 85 percent of their wages to their home country, there is still $13.9 million in circulation, he says.

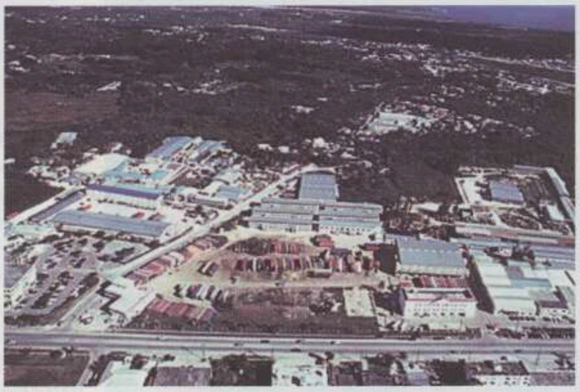
Richard Pierce, SGMA's director says "what counts most about having standards is their enforcement. If we wish the public to view our Code of Conduct and independent monitoring as genuine self-regulation, we must live by the rules we set for ourselves.

We have proceeded to do that through a compliance mechanism built into the Code of Conduct."

Introduced in December of 1998, the SGMA Code of Conduct was patterned after a model derived from the Clinton Administration's Apparel Industry Partnership (AIP).

The code encompasses high international standards for fair and humane treatment of workers and working conditions; standards for living conditions; fundamental rights of employees; standards for transshipment and country of origin of garments; and compliance and enforcement principles.

Training required for the full implementation of the Code of Conduct was presented at three separate training conferences held in January, February and August 1999. Sessions were presented by Business for Social Responsibility, a San Francisco-based human rights and educational non-profit organisation, and US federal government offices including the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Wage & Hour Division of the Department of Labour.



The United International Corporation factory in Saipan

Employing nearly 15,000 people, garment manufacturing is a driving economic force in the US Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands - the only other major industry being tourism.

The most recent OSHA statistics show that in fiscal year 1998, Saipan's apparel factories had a 70 per cent better compliance rate than apparel factories elsewhere in the United States, despite the fact that they were among the most frequently inspected.

Saipan, the capital of the US Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is part of a chain of 14 islands located in the western Pacific some 150 miles north of Guam and 1,300 miles from Tokyo.

Although more closely tied to the economy of Asia, the Northern Marianas is a US territory with a democratically elected local government. ■

Cost-U-Less sales on the increase

COST-U-LESS' Suva, Fiji store has been acknowledged for helping its parent company gain a 25 per cent increase in total sales for the third quarter of 1999 over the previous year's result.

A company statement said that the sales increase was primarily due to two new stores opened after third quarter 1998 - the Suva, Fiji store which opened in fourth quarter 1998 and the Curacao, Netherlands Antilles store which opened in first quarter 1999.

Net income was $753,000 in second quarter 1999 year-to-date, compared to $387,000 for the same period in 1998.

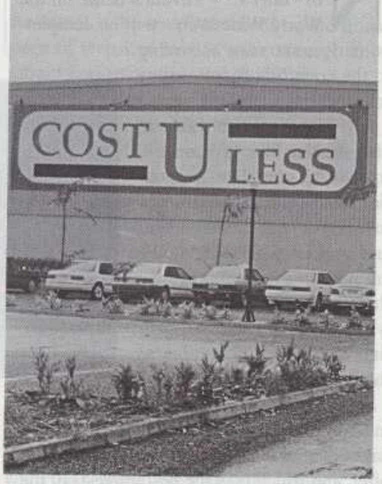
"This represents an increase of $365,000 or 95 per cent over second quarter 1998 year-to-date," a company statement said. For the first nine months of 1999, same store sales increased nine per cent compared to the same period in 1998.

The company also announced several management changes in September. Jeffrey Meder was named president and chief executive officer, replacing Michael J Rose who retained his title as chairman of the board.

Roy W Sorenson was named chief financial officer, replacing Martin Moore, who had served as interim chief financial officer since mid-July. Moore remains controller of the company.

Founded in 1989, Cost-U-Less is a leading operator of non-membership warehouse "club-style" stores with 11 locations: Hawaii (2); Guam (2); the US Virgin Islands (2); Fiji (2); Curacao, Netherlands Antilles; American Samoa and Sonora, CA. ■

The Cost-U-Less outlet in Suva, Fiji



Negotiations over "dotTV" almost complete

NEGOTIATIONS over the future use of "dotTV" - Tuvalu's name on the World Wide Web - will be completed early next year, according to the country's deputy prime minister Lagitupu Tuilimu.

"Over the next four to six months, the government intends to complete negotiations and contractual arrangements for the management and marketing of 'dotTV'. We are now in the final stages of this process in what we hope will ultimately yield substantial, new financial returns to the country.

"But we will not enter into any deal until we are confident that we have secured the best deal the market has to offer, and which is in the best interests of the country," he said.

Tuilimu, who is also the country's finance and economic planning minister, said the government was looking for new tax relief measures to help boost private sector development.

Amongst these, it was considering the re-introduction of accelerated depreciation allowances.

But Tuilimu said they were seeking out potential new sources of revenue from foreign exchange, which would offset the current need for domestic taxation.

Apart from the 'dotTV' sale, the government is also looking into sale of unutilised satellite space that has been allocated to Tuvalu, and redesigning the Investment Passport Scheme in an effort to boost returns.

"Although our income base has widened considerably over the last decade, only about 50 per cent of the government's recurrent revenue is derived from fundamentally reliable sources such as taxation and service charges. All of our overseas licensing revenue is dependent on commercial contracts, or, in the case of the Trust Fund, its portfolio performance in the international market in any given year.

"The continuation of income from these sources depends largely on sound business relationships and on the successful marketing of our products in an ever changing world-wide marketplace," he said.

Tuilimu said that current estimates suggested that existing revenue sources will support annual employment growth of about 1.5 per cent annually.

But the country faces an ongoing shortage of highly skilled technical and professional people.

"Even if recurrent, annual revenue is high we are limited in our ability to use this revenue, and earn the benefits derived from it, unless we can increase our productivity. To do that will require training and then retaining higher numbers of skilled professionals to fill the gaps in the labour market," Tuilimu said.

One area the government is pursuing is financial viability of the Tuvalu Maritime School.

With international donors, the government is constructing new training facilities at TMS, such as the engine room simulator and building, at a total cost of over $1 million.

The government intends to corporatise TMS, but there is a risk that a corporatised TMS will not generate sufficient revenue to cover operating costs.

To overcome this, the government is evaluating options to ensure that the proposed TMS Corporation has a secure financial future, Tuilimu said, including the possibility of scholarships for trainees to attend TMS, and corporate support from international maritime industry.

Tuvalu's main mechanism for lifting national productivity is reform of the public sector.

Tuilimu said "despite unforeseen set backs in implementing several key initiatives", some progress had been made.

These included the adoption of a new financial management information system, using an array of new computer hardware and software, and the establishment of a government assets register.

The current estimated value of the country's assets - including buildings, ships, tractors, trailers, generators, computers - is $46.2 million, with a total replacement value estimated at $104.6 million.

Corporatisation of the Broadcasting and Information Office will take effect January 1 next year, following the bills final reading in Parliament next month.

The first reading of the bill to corporatise Wharf and Port Services is scheduled for the March 2000 session of Parliament, with corporatisation expected to occur by year-end.

Interestingly, though, the number of establishment posts in government increased from 482 to 710 between 1995 and 1998, with the number expanding again this year.

Public service wages, salaries, and allowances have also increased by about $1.5 million, representing a real wage increase of over 20 per cent over the same period. In addition, a new housing benefit has been introduced for all public service employees.

If this seems contrary to the reform process, Tuilimu sums it up: "Although the government strives to meet the needs of every citizen, we simply do not have the resources or the capacity to meet the demands and expectations of everyone ... but, we are trying." ■

The Internet: it's all about addressing market demands

By Debbie Singh

A PACIFIC Island Internet expert says the challenge for island nations is to use information technology appropriately and in a manner which works in our time.

Taholo Kami, Manager of the Small Islands Developing States Network (SIDSnet), acknowledges that many Pacific Island media organizations do not have the resources of their international counterparts but urges media personnel to integrate partnerships to address market demands, and obtain greater outreach through innovative use of current mediums of communication.

Kami, one of the few Pacific Island Internet experts, and the man responsible for taking the Tonga Chronicle newspaper from a smudged fax to a website, made the comments while discussing electronic commerce (e-commerce) at the annual Pacific Islands News Association Convention (PINA) in Fiji.

"Partnerships within the media industry are happening and tend to be driven by private enterprise. Pacific media organisations need to integrate partnerships that will address market demands," he urges.

"E-commerce is about making money electronically. But (in identification of the market) one must ask, How big is small? Is it national, regional or global?"

"Some market issues include changing expectations, development of networks beyond the computer, different cultural perspectives such as moving from traditional values to hip-hop urban ones and of course, willingness to pay."

And how does one make money via the Internet?

"Subscriptions and advertising work," says Kami. "But sponsorship (of websites) is the key. Classifieds on the front page of websites have a wide outreach and attract non-traditional investors."

"E-commerce is about identification of the market, reaching that market, selling a product, and of course, receiving money," he says.

Connectivity in the Pacific has been hampered by the cost of dial-up connections, identification of efficient service providers, slow connections and small local online markets.

However, this has not hindered various Pacific regional media organisations from hooking up, and news services such as PACNEWS, PINA and the Pacific Islands Report, including newspapers such as the Papua New Guinea National, Independent and Post Courier, have all gone online.

Fiji's Daily Post newspaper is also online and accessible from the front page of the Fijivillage.com website, and Wansolwara, a newspaper published by the University of the South Pacific journalism program is also online.

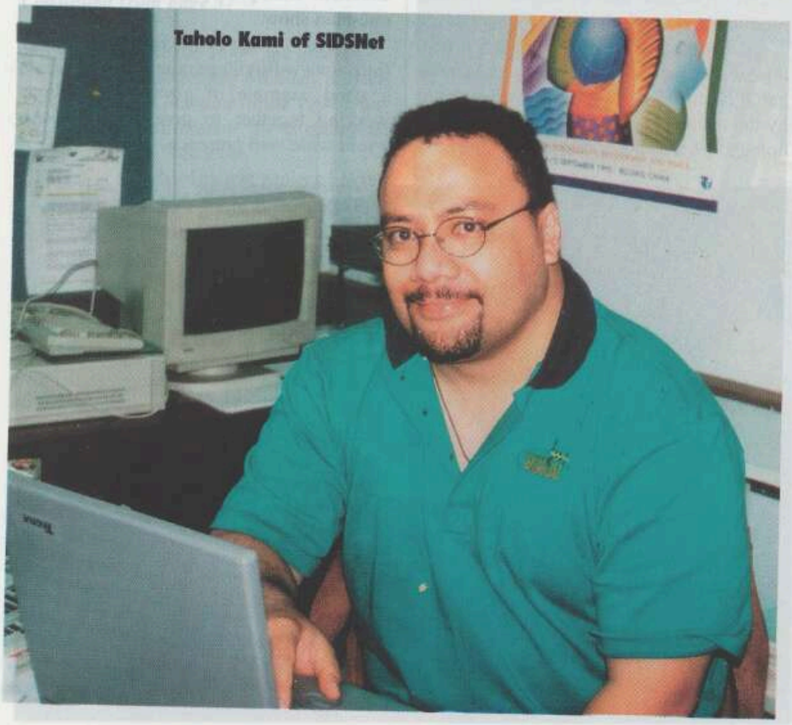
Kami says opportunities for new players in the market are considerable and international portals such as CNN will soon make inroads into the Pacific.

Use of the Internet is growing daily with currently 130 million users, dispelling past misconception of the Internet being only for computer junkies, techies and geeks.

Time magazine (September 27, 1999) says it's all about the money and says geeks are history; they're all capitalists now.

Says Time: "Some might argue that it's not all about the money. If you're an entrepreneur, why waste your time in the old world, worrying about manufacturing things and dealing with unions, when you can put your company online in three months ... but mostly, it's about the money."

In the United States, adults over 16 years comprise 30 percent of users, 43 percent of users are women, and 50 percent of



Taholo Kami of SIDSNet

Continued on page 39

Internet development just the tip of the iceberg

By Erin Phelan

THINK of a journalist 40 years ago. Tapping away - with luck on an electric typewriter - until the wee hours of morn', a flask of whiskey aside, scattered notes strewn over the desk, a rotary phone like a heavy paperweight, ringing loudly with the scoop of the day.

Now, think of a journalist in 1999. Information saved into folders in Word or Mac, websites saved in bookmarks, interviews interfaced through cable wires with unmet subjects thousands of miles away.

No technology has been more pervasive this century than the computer, and no information medium more revolutionary than the Internet. In fact, every 100 days the volume of traffic on the Internet doubles.

Media and information have become instant and, without sounding trite, if you want to compete you've got to get with the programme.

According to Mike Marasigan, chief operating officer for BusinessWorld Online, news media today aren't prevalent unless they have a website, and the Internet has fast become a predominant source for news information.

"The craze started exactly five years ago when the World Wide Web was born and became a very popular segment of the Internet. It is the fastest-growing medium in the history of mankind and has, in fact, the ability to consolidate or merge all media into one web site," said Marasigan, in a fitting electronic interview from Manila.

Marasigan is a regional expert on the Internet and the evolution of the media. He has been a central force in the development and success of the Philippines-based BusinessWorld Online. It's a spin-off company from the successful Manila newspaper BusinessWorld. Marasigan was news editor of the print edition before launching the online edition, for which he is also still editor.

Marasigan has spoken throughout Asia-Pacific on related subjects, and this year marks his third appearance as an invited speaker for the annual Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) convention - held in Suva last month.

He says: "The Internet has also enabled media companies to distribute their products cheaply and more speedily. Five years ago, some media companies could not fully grasp what the Internet could do for them, but for the last two years, almost every media outfit - print, TV, radio - wants to have a web site. Give it another five years - all media companies will be on the WWW."

During the Kosovo crisis, traffic on the Internet increased by 40 percent. Websites such as CNN and MSNBC have incorporated video and audio into their sites, blurring lines between mediums. Marasigan says that BusinessWorld Online makes money by selling subscriptions and by selling advertising. They have also begun to venture into e-commerce selling products and services.

But with technology changing fast, it is often a race to the finish. Says Marasigan: "Right now, we are all overwhelmed by the technology, but like any other technology, the Internet is just another tool and that's how we should look at it."

Some critics are less optimistic. They envision a time when sound bytes and headlines stream across the computer screen, focused on immediacy rather than accuracy or content.

Marasigan disagrees.

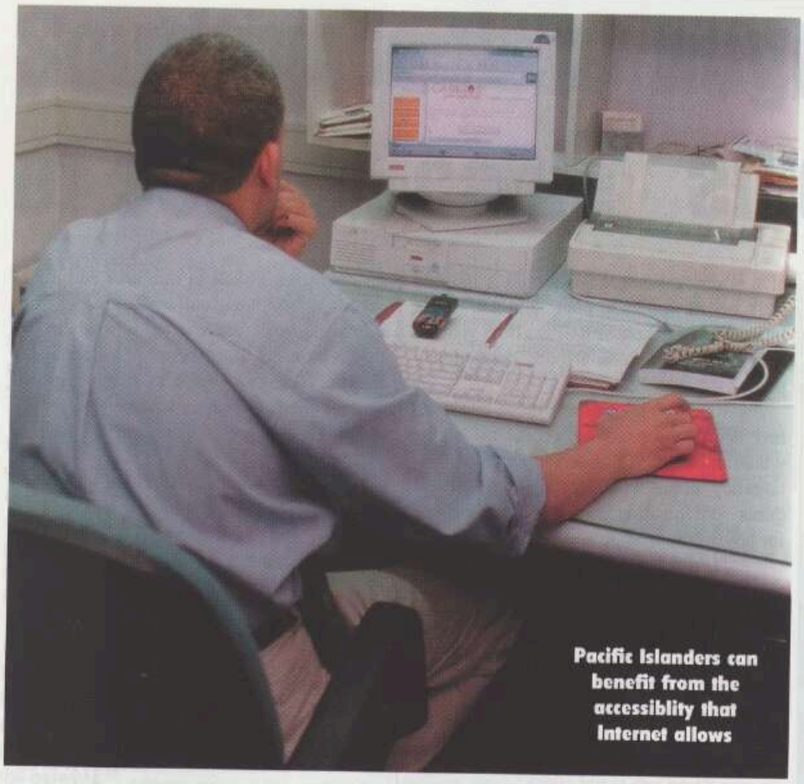
"Eventually, media will no longer be limited to providing news articles, feature stories or opinion columns. They will go into a full e-commerce mode, selling everything they could through the net. The media will be a force to reckon with."

The Pacific Islands media are well established on the Internet, and the traffic is growing.

Marasigan says he keeps up to date with Pacific news via several websites everyday. Marasigan cites the French Polynesia-based Tahiti Pacifique (http://www.tahiti-pacifique.com/) as an excellent example of a website run by a one-man show.

He says Fiji Village (http://www.fijivillage.com/index.html) is a good example of news organisations working together to give the Pacific a world wide web presence.

While "surfing" is child's play to some, others find the technology baffling



Pacific Islanders can benefit from the accessiblity that Internet allows

"During the early days of the world wide web, people were saying: everybody can be a publisher. That's true and that's how I understand the way the Internet has democratised the media," said Marasigan.

"Everybody can publish what he wants to publish even if it is garbage. The Internet can give anybody the power to express or distribute information whether it is useful, relevant or otherwise."

Is there the threat of the traditional newspaper becoming obsolete?

"I don't think so, but maybe their reach and influence will be reduced," said Marasigan. "We must remember that some developing regions do not have access to electricity or computers."

Not entirely true. Recently Somalia became one of the last countries in the world to get connected, however access to phone lines - required for the Internet - is limiting the reach. The Pacific suffers from the same problem and in many countries - such as Fiji - one company has a monopoly on the cable wires.

Opening up the market for competition will allow the Internet to grow - and it is growing fast.

Says Marasigan: "We ain't seen nothing yet." (PINA Nius) ■

Continued from page 37

users are between the 16-34 age bracket.

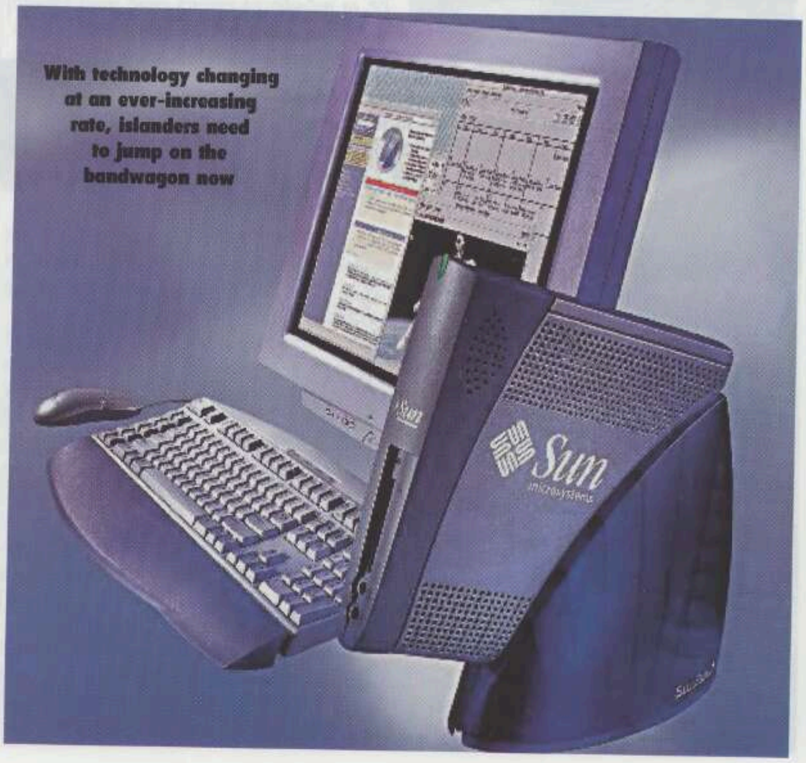
Kami manages the SIDSnet project, which is a direct outcome of the 1994 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Barbados.

SIDSnet is a global Internet project linking 42 small island states in the Pacific, Indian Ocean, African and Caribbean regions.

In its first phase, which expires next month, the project is providing training in the use of the Internet in 12 Pacific countries.

The SIDSnet front page mirrors sites of various regional organizations such as the South Pacific Forum Secretariat, South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, SOPAC, University of the South Pacific and the Caribbean Conservation Association.

The site and its news wire cover various themes such as trade, biodiversity and climate change and search engines allow users to search popular websites. The popularity of the site has been demonstrated by its increasing number of hits, which have jumped from 103,000 to 200,000 in the past three months. ■



With technology changing at an ever-increasing rate, islanders need to jump on the bandwagon now

Pacific moves to deal with marine spills

FIVE Pacific Island countries, which have all recently suffered oil spills in their waters, have decided they cannot wait for a final version of a model marine spill contingency plan.

Instead, they have taken draft planning guidelines prepared by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme's Pacific Ocean Pollution Prevention Programme (PACPOL) and drawn up their own national contingency plans.

PACPOL program manager Steve Raaymakers said Pacific Island countries received a draft template for national contingency plans for dealing with marine spills in December last year, and guidelines were finalised early October.

"However, some countries wanted to move faster," Raaymakers said. "Tuvalu has already taken the initiative to work out their national contingency plan; Fiji has just asked SPREP to review its guidelines; Vanuatu's national marine spill contingency plan is almost completed; Samoa is about to start on its national plan; and the Cook Islands have asked SPREP staff to visit, to help develop a Cook Islands contingency plan."

Raaymakers said all these countries had been motivated by recent oil spills, which made them realise the value of contingency plans which detailed the procedures, organisation and resources needed for any future marine spills.

"If you've already planned what you need to do in the unfortunate event of a marine spill, you can act much more rapidly and decisively, and have a better chance of limiting the damage."

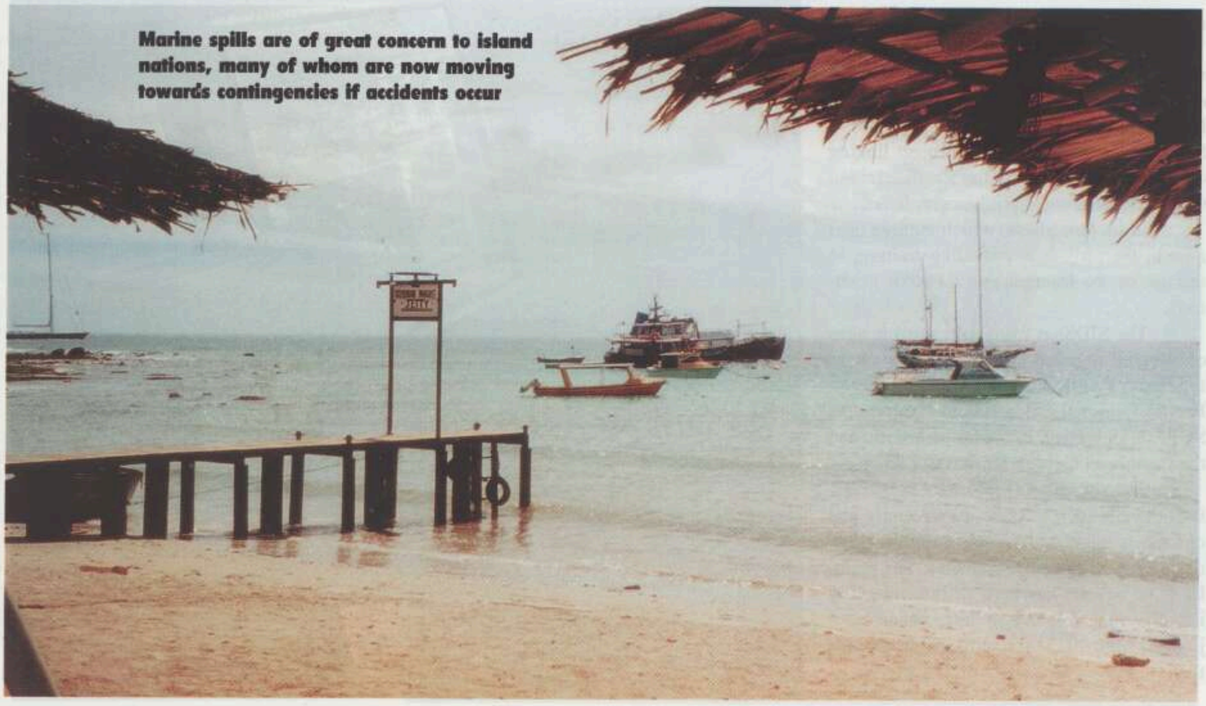
He said it was impossible to overstate how important coastal and marine environments are to every aspect of the lives of Pacific Island communities.

"The impacts of marine spills constitute a major concern for all Pacific Island peoples. And because the ocean connects all countries, a spill in one area can affect others, as pollutants and contaminants from a marine spill are carried elsewhere by ocean currents. It is therefore essential for Pacific Island countries to make regional arrangements to deal with marine pollution. No single country in the region can address this problem in isolation."

PACPOL has collaborated with international and regional agencies, and with the shipping and oil industries, to draw up a regional marine spill contingency plan that establishes clear procedures for regional cooperation in the event of a major spill.

Raaymakers said countries without a national marine spill contingency plan were not eligible for external assistance in the event of a spill.

"In addition, once a country has submitted its national plan to SPREP, it is eligible for a grant of US$5000 to help it put its plan into action." ■



Marine spills are of great concern to island nations, many of whom are now moving towards contingencies if accidents occur

Southern Cross begins laying of second cable

SOUTHERN Cross Cable Network has begun laying its second cable between Australia and the United States, with the landing of the two 3-kilometre shore ends at Laucala Bay in Fiji late September.

The two shore ends will be gathered from the seabed in April 2000 by separate cable laying vessels. One will continue laying to Sydney, the other to Hawaii. The return connection from California to Sydney via Hawaii and Fiji (Phase Two) is scheduled for service in October 2000, with Phase One due for completion in June 2000.

"This is a very important milestone for the Southern Cross project," says Ross Pfeffer, Marketing Director Asia Pacific for Southern Cross. "These landings are particularly significant because they mark the beginning of cable laying for Phase Two of the network."

All others areas of Phase Two construction are also now underway. More than 50 per cent of the construction work for the four Phase Two cable stations has been completed, along with 20 per cent of network equipment and 15 per cent of Phase Two cable manufacturing.

The construction of a second Phase enables Southern Cross to configure a triple ring, loop network.

"Phase Two will deliver our customers the protected capacity they need for business growth and business security," says Ross Pfeffer.

"Both cables will have 120Gbit/s of capacity between Australasia and California. Our Phase Two link effectively exists to provide protected capacity. The same signal will be transmitted down both sides of the network so that, in the unlikely event that one cable is physically broken, service will continue around the other side of the network."

If a cable breaks, it is typically out of service for 12 days, but if the break occurs in depths greater than two kilometres, repairs have been known to take up to 50 days. "Links with the Internet are of such importance to Australasian businesses that the risk of these sorts of delays is unacceptable," says Mr Pfeffer.

"Southern Cross has found an overwhelming preference in the market for the additional security of protected capacity.

Ninety-five per cent of capacity commitments at our second Data Gathering Meeting in August were for protected capacity." ■

The Southern Cross cable will enable faster access to the internet for schools and businesses

'Use' POMSoX to privatise

THE sale of government assets under Papua New Guinea's proposed privatisation programme should be carried out using the Port Moresby Stock Exchange (POMSoX), chairman Sir Anthony Siaguru said.

Sir Anthony told the Post-Courier that this would help create wealth within PNG and keep it there.

"We (POMSoX) want to become a real player in creating wealth and keeping it onshore," Sir Anthony said. "We want the sale of government assets to come through our exchange, we want to encourage people to buy and sell shares in these companies, on our exchange."

POMSoX chief executive officer Graeme Faulkner, who is expected to take up the post this month, will be a commissioner on the Privatisation Commission.

Sir Anthony also expressed satisfaction at POMSoX's progress to date, saying "things are going like we expected it to."

"We are happy with the progress so far. Like all pioneering enterprises, the stock exchange has been building a base. We wanted to make sure that the foundation was firm before we started to expand," Sir Anthony said.

He was speaking as POMSoX waited for PNG miner Highlands Pacific to lodge its application to list on the local bourse late last month. Highlands Pacific is already listed on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX).

Other dual listed companies are Steamships Trading, Orogen Minerals, Lihir Gold, Mosaic Oil, Cue Energy, Oil Search and Cardia Technologies.

Sir Anthony said the recent listing of Canadian company InterOil was "very significant and a first" for the local exchange. InterOil is the first international company which is not listed on the ASX to list on POMSoX.

Sir Anthony said while they were pleased with the companies that had signed up to list, they were encouraging more new companies to consider listing.

"The stock exchange is looking to the future with great anticipation. We will be starting with a new chief executive officer (this month). We will look at new listings, and we will encourage the Bank of PNG to consider trading government instruments as soon as possible," he said.

The Bank of PNG is one of three foundation members of POMSoX. The other two are Kina Securities Ltd and Capital Stockbrokers Ltd. (Post Courier) ■

Health protests shake up Marshalls' capital

By Giff Johnson

HEALTH services at the main hospital in the Marshall Islands were repeatedly shut down in August and September in a dispute between health staff and government leaders that was still unresolved as of September 18.

The dispute is pitting doctors, nurses and administrators against the Public Service Commission and the Minister of Health.

Although the issue at the core of the dispute is the Ministry's demand to have personnel management authority transferred from PSC to the Ministry, the unprecedented protest in the Marshall Islands may have significant ramifications for the national election set for November 15.

The Marshall Islands capital, Majuro, was greeted Monday morning August 30 with a sight it had never seen before: a large group of Ministry of Health staff and their supporters picketing on the road outside the Nitijela (parliament).

It had been a week of upheaval, following a Ministry ultimatum the previous week that an agreement transferring personnel management from the Public Service Commission to the Ministry be implemented after four years of delays.

Health staff maintain the PSC has repeatedly interfered with and obstructed the Ministry's efforts to provide good health care, leading to a steady decline in services. In memos to government leaders, the Ministry listed numerous examples of unreasonable hiring delays by the PSC. Majuro hospital has been without an administrator for nearly a year. The national health planner position has been vacant for years. The ranks of the dental office are so reduced that some basic services provided in the mid-1990s have been halted.

Basing their demand for the transfer of authority on a 1995 Nitijela law mandating the delegation of authority, the Ministry staff said the hospital would shut all services, save emergency room, beginning Friday, August 27.

Secretary of Health Donald Capelle said, simply, that a continuation of the status quo in which hospital services were on a steady decline was intolerable and could no longer be accepted by health staff. When their ultimatum, like earlier appeals to government, did not produce results, health staff cut off most services at the main hospital for two days at the end of August.

The PSC's response was to immediately fire Capelle - who has been permanent secretary for nearly seven years - and four others, including medical chief of staff Dr. Masao Korean, and Sandy Alfred, the only trained pharmacist in the country.

In response to the government's sacking of five health leaders, the hospital began discharging non-critical patients. They said they were going to completely shut down the facility in Majuro, which serves the capital's population of more than 25,000.

"The present escalation of the long-standing crisis between the Public Service Commission and the Ministry of Health is a direct result of the provocative action of the PSC," said Capelle at the time. "The situation is now beyond negotiation between the PSC and the Ministry of Health and the lives, health and welfare, and, indeed, the destiny of our people, lie in the hands of the President, his Cabinet and the Nitijela (parliament)."

The health staff also escalated their demand from transfer of personnel management authority to include reinstatement of those terminated. They also wanted the removal of the Minister of Health, Tom Kijiner, who had signed PSC's termination papers, and the two PSC commissioners.

Capelle said the "unjustified" termination "threatening language" used by PSC in warning all hospital staff to report for work as usual or face "serious consequences" was "not helpful in resolving the current crisis." As a result, he said, "all Ministry staff are more determined than ever to maintain their position that services will not be reinstated until the agreement (for transfer of personnel management) is signed."

The discharging of patients was halted in the early morning hours of August 29 and workers agreed to return to provide emergency room and in-patient services. This followed a promise from the Minister of Finance that five top staff members would be reinstated and other action would be taken Monday to resolve the issue.

Finance Minister Tony deBrum met twice with health staff on the day they were moving to close the main hospital. He promised Cabinet action on the problem on

With a banner reading: Nitijela (parliament): Health is in your hands, Ministry of Health workers and their supporters staged an impromptu protest march

Monday and appealed to the workers to return to staff the hospital.

His first appeal was rejected but after the second meeting with deBrum shortly before midnight Saturday, health staff met and agreed to return to limited service, taking a wait and see position.

On Monday, August 30 a government-appointed committee, which included deBrum, agreed to reinstate the five workers and have the personnel management agreement signed. This satisfied the Ministry staff sufficiently for them to re-open all services on Tuesday.

Part of the plan included appointing Kjnja Andrike, a former Marshalls ambassador to Japan, to be the new PSC chair. He would then help with approval of the agreement transferring personnel management authority to the Ministry.

But fewer than 48 hours later, everything - except emergency room services - was again closed briefly on Wednesday. This was in protest of what they said was an attempt by the minister of health to change the deal reached earlier in the week.

Capelle said that the Minister of Health was proposing to change the personnel management agreement - a move that Capelle said was totally unacceptable to health workers.

Angered by this change in the agreement, the hospital again shut down all services, except emergency room. Wednesday. But an hour and a half later, the hospital was back to normal, with the Cabinet's committee intervening to get the agreement back on track, according to Capelle.

Staff from the hospital, which is located across a sports field from the parliament building, walked over to the parliament Wednesday morning while it was in session. Government leaders immediately recessed the session so that they could, for the second time that week, intervene and get health services turned back on.

Assurances from Finance Minister Tony deBrum and Vice Speaker Jurelang Zedkaia that the agreement would be on Capelle's desk for signing had health staff back to work by midday Wednesday.

But that wasn't the end of the matter by any means.

The following week, government leaders told health officials that instead of signing the agreement transferring personnel management authority from the Public Service Commission to the Ministry of Health, the Nitijela leaders instead planned to introduce legislation to repeal the 1995

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Small Islands gain support at special UN session

SMALL islands are facing a "serious risk of marginalisation," and current trends in globalisation "will have a crippling effect on our economies," Samoan prime minister Tuila'epa Sailele Malielegaoi, who is also Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), has warned.

He made the comments at the two-day Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on small islands in late September.

Some 120 countries that particpated in the talks agreed that more should be done to assist small island nations confront increasing threats of rising sea levels and natural disasters, as well as the forces of globalisation.

In a declaration and text agreed by a negotiating group, the Special Session called for increased financing, technology and assistance to the small islands.

Countries renewed their support for a Programme of Action forged five years ago at the Barbados Conference on small islands, which provided the foundation for a global partnership to tackle island challenges.

Small island leaders welcomed the UN Special Session as an opportunity to draw attention to their concerns. These include the generally bleak economic prospects for the islands as a result of globalisation and the elimination of trade preferences that have helped sustain their economies in the past.

Nevertheless, many small island representatives voiced concerns that the international community had not been forthcoming with the support that had been promised at the Barbados Conference. While applauding the role of the UN in convening the Special Session, St. Lucia minister of foreign affairs and international trade, George W. Odlum, said, "The failure of developed countries to enter into the spirit of international cooperation has withered the dream. Our hopes have withered, like a raisin in the sun."

He pointed out that as a result of the recent World Trade Organisation (WTO) ruling against preferential treatment for small island bananas, St. Lucia's exports had declined by half between 1992 and 1997, and the country's ranking in the UNDP Human Development Index, which ranks countries according to their economic and social progress, fell from 58th place last year to 81st place this year.

Acknowledging the islands' fragile position in the world economy, the Special Session asked the WTO and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to take into consideration the effects on the islands of the erosion of trade preferences and their difficulties with diversification and market access.

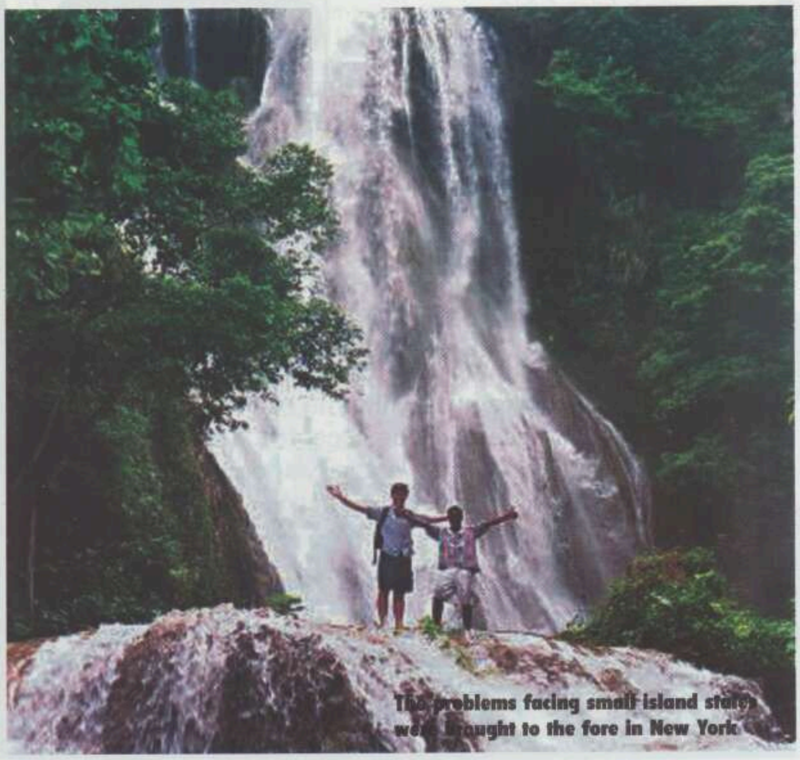
In a sympathetic spirit, developed countries stressed that they would continue to work in partnership with the islands. Speaking for the European Union, Satu Hassi, Finland's Minister for the Environment and Development Co-operation, noted that the EU is "by far, the largest development partner for small island developing states," and pledged to make the poorest, and women, its highest priority.

The EU also hoped that a new trade agreement would serve as "a flexible instrument of cooperation and partnership for the coming decade and beyond."

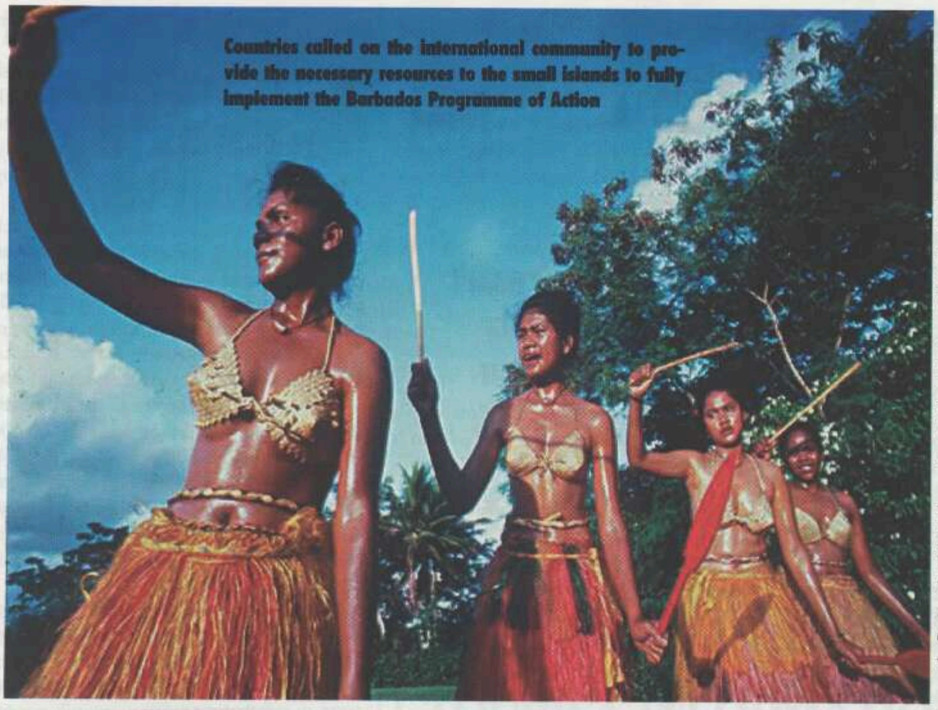
Japan said it remained committed to providing assistance despite its recent economic problems.

United States Under Secretary of State Frank E. Loy, while acknowledging that globalisation "strikes fear in the hearts of many," said small islands still had much to gain from the process.

While noting that the small islands had already taken many steps on their own to deal with their problems and had made "perceptible progress" in the past five years, the Special Session found that



The problems facing small island states were brought to the fore in New York



Countries called on the international community to provide the necessary resources to the small islands to fully implement the Barbados Programme of Action

Assessing the outcome of the Special Session on behalf of AOSIS, Ambassador Tuiloma Neroni Slade of Samoa said, "We've waited a long time since Barbados for our voices of concern to be heard. People assume that small islands have small problems, but I think we've shown this isn't so.

This Special Session has again raised international awareness of the serious challenges that threaten the very survival of small islands.

The agreement reached outlines some pragmatic steps to be taken, and we look forward to working with our partners in the international community to put these words into action."

The Barbados Conference was mandated by the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, where over 100 Heads of State agreed on a plan for global sustainable development, balancing economic growth and environmental protection.

The small islands action plan was seen as the first test of the Rio agreements. ■

these efforts had been limited by financial constraints and by global economic and environmental factors.

Countries called on the international community to provide the necessary resources to the small islands to fully implement the Barbados Programme of Action. The Special Session did not put a price tag on the small islands action plan, and donor countries generally did not pledge specific amounts of assistance at the Special Session.

The small islands have particularly sought international assistance to deal with issues that are often well beyond their control, yet which seem to affect the islands first, and hardest - such as natural disasters and climate change.

The Special Session agreed that these problems required urgent action, and recommended that greater assistance be provided to help small islands weather disasters and adapt to rising sea levels and other climate impacts.

One of the more contentious issues at the Special Session was the shipping of hazardous and radioactive wastes in sea lanes that pass near the islands.

Barbados deputy prime minister Billie Miller said it was difficult to accept assurances that the movement of radioactive waste through the Panama Canal en route to Europe for processing was safe.

At a press briefing she said, "You can't create a mess without any idea of how we're going to clean it up."

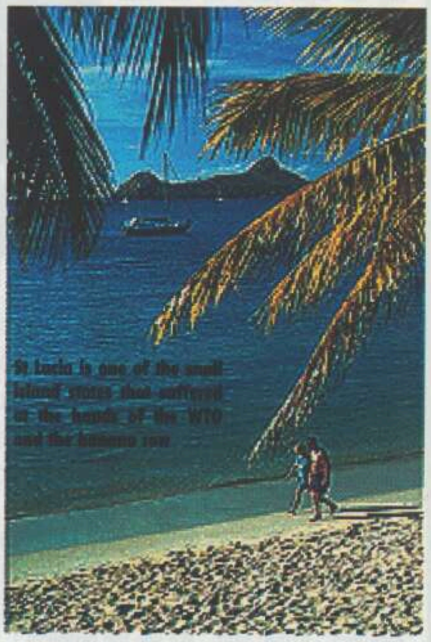
In the negotiations, the small islands pressed for stronger limits and controls over such shipments, but many developed countries maintained that the question was already covered by existing treaties.

Ultimately, an agreement was reached that called on countries and international organisations to address questions of safety, disclosure, liability and compensation in the event of an accident, recognising the island position that these issues are not adequately dealt with under the Law of the Sea Convention or the Basel Convention on hazardous waste.

The small island developing States, while often small in size and in population, nevertheless represent an important global constituency.

Representatives of AOSIS pointed out that their group consists of 43 countries, 36 of which are UN members, accounting for 19 per cent of the total UN membership and 26 per cent of all developing countries.

Yet, they maintain, small islands are poorly represented in many important global organisations and have had little access to important WTO negotiations.



St Lucia is one of the small island states that suffered at the hands of the WTO and the banana row

Disney subsidiary announces US$300 million investment in New Caledonia

DISNEY'S subsidiary, Buena Vista, will invest some 300 million US dollars in a entertainment and hotel resort in New Caledonia, the largest investment ever made on the French Territory by a foreign investor, daily newspaper Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes reported.

The project is to be located in Païta (Southern province, 25 kilometres South of Nouméa) on a 160-hectare site, on two joining bays, with a 255-metre high "Turtle Peak" in the background.

It is promoted locally by a Sea Park International company.

It will feature a 250-boat marina facility, 250 bungalows on the sea, 90 houses, a 250-room hotel, a casino, a 18-hole golf course, two swimming pools, a fitness center and a wharf capable of hosting big cruise liners.

The houses are to be marketed on a "time-share" basis, allowing holiday-makers to spend time in resorts around the world.

Building permits were granted last July by authorities in New Caledonia. Building works are to begin by the second half of next year and should take three years before completion. (PINa Nius Online) ■

Annual black pearl auction totals US$9.6 million

SOME 176 lots of French Polynesia's famous black pearls were sold in a week, at the Poerava Nui international auction, totalling a turnover of 963 million French Pacific Francs (US$9.6 million). During this 22nd Poerava, which was held at the newly-build Outrigger hotel (near Pape'ete) by the Tahiti Pearl Producers' Association, initial bids were topped by 60 per cent for the 160,000 pearls sold.

Representatives of some 24 Japanese wholesale pearl dealers took part in the auction.

Average price for a single pearl was estimated at 6,000 CFP, with a price per gramme of 3,200 CFP.

Meanwhile, French Polynesian customs seized mid-October some 1,669 black pearls, totalling 2.5 kilogrammes. The pearls were about to be smuggled out of French Polynesia into the United States by three Tahitian brothers.

They were carrying other black pearls, which they declared to customs. But they also carried another stock. The pearls, packed in small bags, were taped on the three's bodies from chest to foot, and were found after a police search.

The three were arrested and the pearls confiscated. They are facing a heavy fine and export taxes of around 600,000 CFP for the undeclared goods.

"We have increased our checks on passengers because there is in French Polynesia a traffic, exchanging pearls for cocaine from the United States," Customs head Gérard Deutscher said.

He also mentioned the impact of smuggling pearls on the world market prices. French Polynesia is the world's second largest exporter of black pearls. In 1998, it totalled 6.56 kilogrammes exported. (PINA Nius Online) ■

Continued from page 37

law that requires the transfer of authority to the Ministry, removing the legal basis for the Ministry's demand that this authority be transferred, he indicated.

"It's frustrating and disappointing," Capelle said. "The bottom line is we're asking to be given the opportunity to provide better services to the people."

But, he said, "we were probably naive to think that these were reasonable people who were concerned with the well-being of the people."

This process has shown that the leaders involved are "only concerned with retaining their power."

Health officials said that after new PSC chair Kinja Andrike signed the agreement after his appointment, they expected it would move forward. But the two other commissioners - Francis Horiuchi and Donald Matthew - who had fired the five health staff refused to sign.

"People here who know their jobs appealed to the proper authorities about a problem," Alfred said. "We see the problem here as major, but they don't believe we have a problem. (Our complaints) didn't ring a bell with them."

Flanked by police officers, Marshall Islands health staff march into the grounds of the Nitijela (parliament) to press their demands for action.

Hospital staff continued working - including the five "fired" leaders - through the first two weeks of September despite the lack of resolution. After appealing in a letter to President Imata Kabua on September 13 to resolve the issue, the staff voted to shut down all services, except emergency room and the inpatient wards, beginning September 15.

"We're back to square one but minus one," Alfred said. "We're still fired."

The shutdown of regular hospital services in Majuro, capital of the Marshall Islands, was continuing with negotiations in progress but offering no immediate sign of a resolution.

PSC Commissioner Horiuchi responded to the latest shut down by ordering the five top health staff fired at the end of August vacate the Ministry and "refrain from entering the Ministry of Health offices in order to destabilise the work force."

Late that day, newly appointed PSC Chairman Andrike softened the order to vacate the Ministry by saying that the commission would act on reinstating the five if they make a public apology for their actions.

But at a Friday (September 17) meeting, hospital staff reaffirmed that they had no intention of apologising for shutting down all regular services, except for emergency room, for two days in August, said Alfred.

Capelle said that the hospital staff were not taking this action - which included an unprecedented demonstration at the Nitijela (parliament) late last month - to get salary raises or other personal benefits.

"It's for the benefit of the other people," he said. ■

Main nickel producer to boost production by 5,000 tonnes by 2001

NEW Caledonia's Société Le Nickel (SLN) is to boost its annual nickel production by 5,000 tonnes per year by 2001, SLN President Yves Rambaud said late October.

"Our short term target is to produce 62,000 tonnes yearly, as opposed to 57,000 in 1999, with a production cost 15 per cent lower compared to 1998," Rambaud said after SLN's annual general meeting of the Board of Directors.

World nickel prices have recently gone up from a less than two US dollars per pound to a current 3.2 dollars.

Rambaud estimated the current world demand on nickel was slightly above the one million ton mark.

"In the middle run, in between three to five years, SLN will increase its production to a yearly 70,000 tonnes," he pointed out.

"We will spend most of the year 2000 studying the feasibility of such a target, because this will impact on the company's strategy for the next ten years," he said.

Costs could be reduced through a downsizing of the workforce.

SLN's main nickel melting plant is located in Noumea, with extraction sites throughout the territory.

Two other projects, one in the South, promoted by Canadian group Inco, the other in the North, led by another Canadian investor, Falconbridge, are currently under construction.

SLN's mother group, Eramet, was privatised in February this year, with the French government becoming a minority shareholder (30 per cent), the rest being now held by private interests.

Through exploitation of manganese, nickel and special ores, Eramet, which employs 17,000 people worldwide, has made a turnover of 17 billion French Francs (over three billion US dollars) last financial year. In the past ten years, Eramet's turnover has increased eight-fold. (PINA Nius Online) ■

French Polynesia to get more self-government

French Polynesia will have greater self-government, including the right to negotiate agreements in the Pacific, following a vote in the French Senate.

The Senate approved a bill passed in June by the Lower House, the National Assembly, that widens Papeete's powers while falling short of independence from France.

Under the bill, the archipelago of 110 islands dotted across a territory as big as Europe but with only 220,000 inhabitants, will be considered by the French administration as "an overseas country" - a new term in French political lexicon - rather than an "overseas territory".

That means the establishment of "Polynesian citizenship" as well as the right of the Papeete government "to engage negotiations with Pacific states on international accords".

The new status, which can only be enacted after a reform of the French Constitution, provides for Paris to continue to manage areas such as foreign affairs, defence, currency, law and order, electoral laws and justice. Unlike legislation last year concerning its sister South Pacific territory, New Caledonia, the bill does not provide for an independence referendum.

Instead it states that "French Polynesia govern itself freely and democratically within the (French) Republic."

It is now up to French President Jacques Chirac to convene a special meeting of both houses of the French parliament, expected in January, to amend the constitution in line with the bill. AFP ■

HIV positive Maire Bopp wins Pacific media Freedom Award

MAIRE Bopp, an HIV-positive Tahitian journalist working for Radio Tefana has won this year's Pacific Media Freedom Award presented by the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA).

Bopp, 24, a former University of the South Pacific journalism student who earlier this year won the USP journalism programme Storyboard Award, was presented with her award at the closing dinner for the PINA convention in Suva last month.

She has spoken out widely in the news media on living with HIV/AIDS and the issues facing many young Pacific Islanders.

A new 40-minute documentary film about her life, Maire, directed by USP journalism lecturer Ingrid Leary and produced by the Secretariat for the Pacific Community and the University of the South Pacific premiered at a Suva cinema last month.

A surprised and delighted Bopp said the recognition showed that the media was receptive to issues she had addressed.

"I am thankful to the media for giving me the support and legitimacy in what I have been doing to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS," she said.

"I am proud that the media in the Pacific has taken the initiative to show the rest of the world that they are not only there to make headlines but it is also responsible for making people understand themselves and the problems they face."

Fiji's Daily Post was given a Special Commendation for Best Newspaper in the Pacific at the awards.

PINA life member and Radio Tonga Managing Director Tavake Fusimalohi said the judges believed the newspaper deserved special recognition for its efforts in promoting the free flow of expression and better journalism in spite of being constrained by limited resources.

The Fiji government took a controlling 44 per cent interest in the Daily Post in February this year but it has remained editorially independent and outspoken. PNS ■

Tax change threatens gas project

THE Australian federal government's proposed abolition of accelerated depreciation may have thrown another spanner in the works of Australian Gas Light Co's plans for a A$3.7 billion natural gas pipeline from Papua New Guinea to Queensland.

AGL managing director Len Bleasel, speaking at the company's annual general meeting last month, said the elimination of accelerated depreciation in the new tax proposal would place significant pressure on AGL's decision whether or not to proceed forward with the project.

"One can only read into the proposed tax package that there are sufficient comfort words that would encourage us to believe that the accelerated depreciation would still be retained by that pipeline," Bleasel said.

"It's an asset builder for the nation and I would be more than disappointed if they did not allow the accelerated depreciation ... we have not got anything formally from them."

He said if the accelerated depreciation was not allowed it did not mean the pipeline would be scrapped.

The proposed 2100km pipeline is to be built in conjunction with AGL's joint venture partner Petronas of Malaysia.

Bleasel said AGL had factored in accelerated depreciation when early economic studies into the project were completed.

He also re-raised the spectre of future coal-fired power stations placing the project at risk.

"The PNG pipeline has many elements to it before it's commercially successful," he said. "My very clear message to the federal government and to the Queensland state government is that there are two outstanding issues, one, the issue of accelerated depreciation and the other one is the success or otherwise of coal-fired power stations being built in Queensland."

Bleasel in September called for a delay in approvals for new coal-fired power plants in Australia pending an in-depth study of the ramifications of different types of electricity generation.

AGL's annual report, released September, noted that the pipeline was continuing to build momentum.

"A number of regulatory hurdles have been cleared, sufficient gas reserves have been committed to the project, very competitive tariffs on the pipeline have been offered and support from the PNG, Queensland and Federal governments is strong," the annual report said.

AGL said all that stood in the way of the pipeline was the commitment of foundation customers and final regulatory approval. (Post Courier) ■

A 'read' letter day for Tonga

By Michael Field

Tonga's Princess Pilolevu, caught in a political storm

IT was one of those sad, ill-fated affairs of the heart few are blessed or cursed with, doomed to fail and inevitably leaving deep, slow healing scars.

She was a princess, he was a cop and a commoner. They met in 1985 in an Auckland hotel and the rest ... well it was their affair and no business for the rest of the world.

Except High Royal Highness Salote Mafile'o Pilolevu, 48, only daughter of King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV and sixth in line of succession, is involved in a fierce power-struggle in the Kingdom of Tonga. She is vulnerable to attack for that alone; she makes it harder for herself by preaching to her subjects on morality, God and service.

And then there is, too, the strange story behind the other man, one Josh Liava'a, now manager of a Sydney nightclub, renowned within the Tongan community for his relationships with the royals.

Way back in 1969 Liava'a met a 21-year-old university student in Auckland and after a short romance, they married. She was Princess Mele Siu'ilikutapu, eldest daughter of Prime Minister Prince Tu'ipelehake, 13th in line to the Tongan throne. When word got back to Nuku'alofa, her uncle, the king, annulled the marriage and ordered her home. By some accounts Liava'a determined to get even the royals.

Pilolevu married a noble, Tuita, and together they produced three daughters. During the 1980s he was Tonga's High Commissioner to London.

Liava'a went on to marry again and have a family. Then Liava'a and Pilolevu met and had what was essentially a private romance which lasted until 1996. Many people will say today that they knew of it then, but nothing was said at the time. A couple of things happened to change the picture.

Pilolevu became immensely rich, more or less overnight, when she took the controlling stake in Tongasat, the government-owned but now Hong Kong-based satellite slot leasing company. Although the operation was based on Tonga's sovereign rights to geostationary satellite orbiting slots, Pilolevu had no apparent reservations about turning it into personal wealth.

The US-based Fortune magazine estimated four years ago that she was worth US$25 million. She has been careful more recently not to disclose what she is worth, but it is considerably more now. This has prompted questions in Tonga's Legislative Assembly for proper accounting of what she is doing.

Meantime she has won the battle with her brother, Crown Prince Tupuoto'a, for virtual control over her ageing father. It was her and her private satellite interests that got Tonga to switch from diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China. It will add to her wealth, although she said she did it "as a means of spreading the Lord's words to China."

"When China opens its doors to Christian evangelists, Tonga should be right there by the door."

There is also a deeper battle over succession to the 81-year-old king.

Tupuoto'a, unmarried, without any known heirs and irritable in his premature old age, is resisting calls from his father to become prime minister. He just wants to make money and appears to be tired of the royal family and its religion.

Pilolevu, by default, has become the grey eminence of Tonga.

Liava'a, who had gone on to become the first Tongan sergeant in the New Zealand police force and then became bankrupt, moved to Australia. His marriage broke up. And then, seemingly in the battle over Tongasat and power, a 10-page letter from Pilolevu to Liava'a entered circulation in Tonga. Every member of parliament received a copy. They seemed to pass it on to their 10 favourite constituents and onwards. Every top civil servant had a copy; even the local media had it. They did not publish it - mainly because, as one senior journalist put it, "we do not know how to publish it."

For a couple of months, stories about the letter floated to NZ, although not many had seen a copy. It was apparent it was causing turmoil within the very highest ranks of Tongan society. The Royal Family knew that everybody else now knew what had happened.

Several sources finally leaked the letter. Written questions to the Royal Palace and the Prime Minister's Office over it went unanswered. It is virtually impossible to verify it now, although Liava'a had admitted it was to him and he clearly believes it came from her.

Beginning "My Darling Josh" the letter has a sad, forbidden, failed love tone to it. Without much doubt the author - identified only as "P" - was smitten by this man. She was giving her heart to him; even though it could not, would not work.

" Josh, I tried so hard to forget you; even going to the extent of flirting with two chaps in a win bar, anything to get you out of my system, so to speak, but to no avail!"

She speaks of astonishment to find that she is a normal human being who "can love a man and feel the hurt and desolation of being apart."

Some of it, in a Tongan setting, could be seen as explicit; but between two adults it has a naturalness that brings sympathy rather than distaste.

"I was bought up NOT TO FALL IN LOVE, so that when the time came for my marriage to be arranged, the idea of it would

Continued next page

Get serious about having fun

HEY you, lighten up! Mary Jeanne Vincent wants people to bring more fun and passion into their everyday life.

Vincent, 43, a trainer and coach, is in the business of helping individuals rekindle their life passions and find the cosmic chuckle that may have gotten lost somewhere along life's highway.

Serious is the key here, said Vincent, who has given hands-on workshops for businesses and individuals for the past decade. Her topics: how to jump-start your creative brain, hot tips for speakers, speaking up at work and making career changes.

Laughter and play are among her favourite topics, and participants easily get into the groove, she said. She gets them to rate their fun quotient, revisit their childhood and play the "lying game".

"When we were kids, we were told to finish our work before we could play," she said. "As adults, we're still carrying that around with us. We've forgotten how to play".

The lying game gives clues to our true dreams, and it is fun, she said. In this game, groups of three take turns making up fantastic fibs about themselves. "It loosens you up and gets close to those passions you never talk about".

Ideally, work and play should be mixed to give relief from the serious, said Vincent, waving a hand toward a table scattered with brightly-coloured toys. Playing with these Slinkies and weird-shaped puzzles gives people a chance to be a child again for a little while. But more important, it opens the heart and mind to humour.

Among her 21 tips for "de-stressing, re-energising and enhancing creativity" is the key word "colour".

"When was the last time you cracked open a new box of 64? She asked. "Get yourself a colouring book, and spend some time adding colour to your life".

Taking a day for oneself is important for the renewal of spirit

Vincent got into the business of motivating others after the death of a family member. She went back to school and got a master's degree in human resource management, and then found her niche in workshops for businesses and consulting with individuals.

Those who have been downsized out of a job are hurting, she said. Although it may not seem possible at the time, they often go on to better and higher paying jobs.

Time wasting is another of her favourite topics, but it all comes down to making time for things that really matter. This means not allowing yourself to get trapped into a job that doesn't fit, she said. If you want more time with your family, a job that requires long hours may not be the best one, she said.

Have some new experiences, change your philosophy to allow more fun, she advised. Take action when you are job hunting or when stress hits, she said. "Make a call, send out another one, get out there and network. Do something!"

Many believe they are too busy to take time out for pleasure, lunch with friends or even a walk on the beach, she said. Taking a day for oneself is important for the renewal of spirit, and it doesn't have to cost anything, she said.

"Resign as general manager of the universe," she said. "Laugh some more. Kids laugh hundreds of times a day. By the time we are adults, we are lucky if we laugh 10 times a day".

Vincent and her husband, Richard Gadd, executive director of the Monterey Museum of Art, are believers in taking time out for new experiences. They follow the flip-chart method of listing what things they would like to try. It can be something as simple as reading a good book or taking a nap, or it can be all-out like a cruise. Make that list, she said. "How hard can it be? Otherwise it's back to the movies again".

Picking up a Slinky in the same lavender tones of her fingernail polish, Vincent laughed at the Easter-egg hue. The colour was her niece's idea, she said with a smile. "Then I thought, why not?" KRT ■

Continued from previous page

not be distasteful to me. My husband was also raised in a similar fashion. Duty, responsibility, and loyalty to king, family and country, was our daily bread. So the purpose of such a marriage as mine, is to beget a son to ensure the line of Tuita. I have as yet to fulfil this obligation.

"So, when you hear that I have become pregnant or given birth again, its not that I have forgotten you (for I never will), its just the normal performance of such duties that are expected of me."

Later in the letter she appeals for an end to the affair, saying they have to get on with their lives and they both have children to love.

"Even though we are lovers also regard you as a valuable and trusted friend."

She ends recalling the blues singer Sade and her song "Your love is king."

Liava'a told the Sunday Telegraph that the letter was in circulation to make the princess look bad. People were resentful of her Tongasat revenue.

"They all thought it was a big joke until it started making a lot of money. Now everybody wants to get into it," he said.

"I have deliberately kept quiet all these years out of respect.

"I am going to speak up, and I am going to take this up with the government." ■

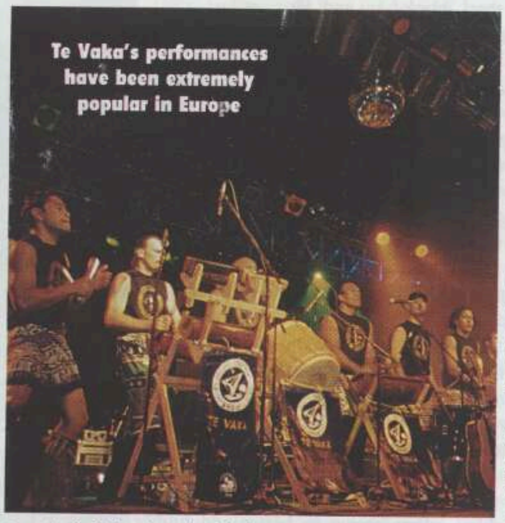
Te Vaka returns after third successful Euro tour

By Giff Johnson

MOST of the European audiences that have thronged to hear Polynesian contemporary music group Te Vaka on tour over the past three years had previously never heard of the remote South Pacific Tokelau Islands where the music stems from.

But they love the irresistible log drum rhythms, resonant vocal harmonies and sensual dances performed by the 10-strong Auckland-based group who have become the darlings of world music festivals around the globe.

With their second album just out, fans are not just dancing along to the mix of primal sounds with a high-tech twist, but are starting to take an interest in what the songs - all sung in Tokelauan - are about, says the group's lead singer/songwriter, guitarist and percussionist, Opetaia Foa'i.



Te Vaka's performances have been extremely popular in Europe

"It's quite important that we are telling a story, a message about Polynesia," says Foa'i, who was born in Samoa to Tokelauan and Tuvaluan parents. "The greatest satisfaction is that people are waking up to it. Te Vaka is not just there to make popular music and sell lots of Cds."

Among the songs on the latest album, titled 'Ki Mua' which means 'to the future', are themes about global warming and rising sea levels that threaten the existence of tiny islands and atolls in the Pacific, or the impact of Christian missionaries on traditional Polynesian society, to a celebration of the great Polynesian canoe fleet and even the simple joys of kaleve (coconut honey). Conversations with family elders about island life, history and myths furnish Opetaia with ideas for songs.

Te Vaka, meaning 'The Canoe' - a symbol for taking their music to the world, they say - have just returned to New Zealand from their third consecutive and hugely successful European tour where they spent nearly four months performing across the UK and the continent, from all sorts of venues including an ancient castle in Poland to the Shakespearean Globe Theatre in London.

Audiences have got to know them and many travel out of their hometowns to see them perform live. Everywhere they go, local television and radio stations want to interview them, including the BBC's Andy Kershaw show - one of the most highly rated music shows in the UK. They recorded six live tracks for his two-hour show they featured in.

"The team is very professional now," says manager Julie Foa'i, Opetaia's wife. "They can go in and do something like this very well. That's what's appreciated." Festival organisers have been impressed by Te Vaka's refusal to use backing tracks when they perform, ironically still unusual in the world of so-called 'live' performances.

Resorting to backing tracks would make the music "not real. You might as well listen to the radio," says Opetaia.

Like musical pioneers, they are the first professional group to have made such an impact world-wide with distinctly Polynesian sounds and rhythms overlaid with modern technology in the form of electric guitar and keyboard.

It all began when Julie and Opetaia, both professional songwriters, included a Polynesian-style track sung in Tokelauan on an album they recorded several years ago. When the track was well received, producers asked for more. So they assembled assorted family members and a couple of white musicians they knew and voila! - Te Vaka was born. The world-wide release of their first album won them rave reviews and chart-topping success on the world music scene, invitations to world music festivals throughout Europe and the UK, as well as an invitation to record at Peter Gabriel's studios.

Having zoomed from the obscurity of being fringe ethnic musicians three years ago, they are now wondering how they can fulfill all the invitations to perform overseas in the year 2000, says Julie.

"We've made the Pacific area hip!" laughs Opetaia.

Back home, they are in huge demand too. They returned from Europe just in time to perform for world leaders at the APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) forum that Auckland hosted in September. And this week they performed during the opening of the high-profile America's Cup yachting regatta, and will be among top-billing artists at the millennium celebrations in Auckland on New Year's Day. They will be in Fiji in May to perform for an Air New Zealand event and hope to do other shows while there and around the Pacific later next year.

And before the millennium is up, they will brave freezing temperatures to represent Tonga and Tuvalu at an international charity show in Helsinki this December, where they will join the likes of Mariah Carey and The Corrs for a finale song. So much for coming home for a rest after their exhausting tour.

Julie is besieged with international e-mails from fans, and sometimes radio stations, wanting copies of their CDs, the first of which is about to be re-released with an

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America's Cup underway with vibrant Pasifika flavour

THE America's Cup regatta got under way mid-October with a distinctly Pasifika flavor. The opening ceremonies commenced to the sound of conch shell trumpets with the arrival of a Pacific Islands voyaging canoe. The opening concert in the America's Cup Village was a Pacific Islands showcase. The concert launched a Pasifika Week at the America's Cup village during which daily performances by Pacific Islands dancers and entertainers were enjoyed by the public.

The Auckland-based South Pacific Trade Commissioner, Parmesh Chand, said that the Pasifika input recognised Auckland's prominence as the biggest city of the South Pacific and its strong links with the Pacific Islands.

He said that the place given by the America's Cup organisers to Pasifika was recognition of that place, and this was much appreciated in the Pacific Islands.

Chand paid credit to Captain Paiau Pirake and the crew of Te Au O Tonga, the double-hulled voyaging canoe which they sailed all the way from Rarotonga to Auckland for the opening ceremonies. He thanked Ngati Whatua for the warm welcome they had extended to the canoe since its arrival. He said that the canoe's presence at the world's greatest sailing event was homage to one of humanity's finest sailing traditions - the Pacific Islands voyaging canoes that were the first to people the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

Chand noted that many of the super yachts which were coming to Auckland for the America's Cup would be going to the Pacific Islands as part of their South Pacific experience. He assured them of a warm welcome in the Islands and said that a Pasifika Shop has now been opened in the America's Cup Village to provide the super yachts and the general public with a facilitation service for visiting the Pacific Islands.

The opening concert at the America's Cup Village was billed as "Stars of the Pacific" and featured the Tokelauan group Te Vaka, recently returned from a successful European tour. The concert also featured Classical Polynesia, Temaeva from Tahiti, Na Mag Banks from Vanuatu, the Cook Islands Tourism dance group, Fijian Methodist Choir and a finale of Samoan fire dancing.

Chand said that he hoped the visitors to the America's Cup Village had enjoyed the Pasifika input to the America's Cup and encouraged the public to view the displays

mounted in the Pasifika Shop by the national tourism offices of the Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tonga, and Vanuatu. He took the opportunity of the opening ceremonies to thank the Centre for the Development of Industry in Brussels and the Government of New Zealand for the aid funds they had supplied the South Pacific Trade Commission to assist in maximising economic benefits from America's Cup Challenge for the Pacific Islands. ■

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additional new song. Or university students from the USA and Austria who are studying their music.

She also organises their tours and finalises contracts for gigs which means not just the ever-increasing fees they are offered but the finer points of ensuring they get food they like - raw fish, fresh meat and plenty of water - to sustain them during hectic tour schedules.

Meanwhile, Opetaia locks himself away in his homegrown recording studio with the latest sound equipment, walls bedecked with tapa cloth, in their rustic home among the native bush in west Auckland.

Making music is very much a family affair, with both parents at the helm and all four children involved.

Alana, 17, sings and dances and is the gorgeous young woman on the cover of the second album, while Manase, 15, plays the pate liki (rhythm drums) and pate toa (double log drums). Matatia, 9, and Olivia, 4, sell CDs,
T-shirts, flax baskets, posters during shows and occassionally get up on stage to dance. Three other members of the group are from the Foa'i extended family, including lead female vocalist Sulata Foa'i who has recently taken time out to take care of her second child. Andrew Dukeson, on drum kit and log drums, and Neil Forrest (on percussion, electric guitar, rhythm and double log drums) are both Pakeha (white) New Zealanders
with a flair for Polynesian music.
Surprisingly, tensions remain at bay despite the pressures of being 'on the road' for long periods. This year they drove from gig to gig between England, Scotland, Germany, Holland and Poland, in two vans they have bought.
Severe flu' when they first arrived, and numerous mechanical problems that led to hilarious encounters with German mechanics whose verdict on their problem was 'kaput!' didn't dampen their spirits. On the contrary.
"The only thing I can accuse them of is laughing too much," quips Opetaia. ■

Cruising Ku-ring-gai

Story and pictures by Sally Andrew

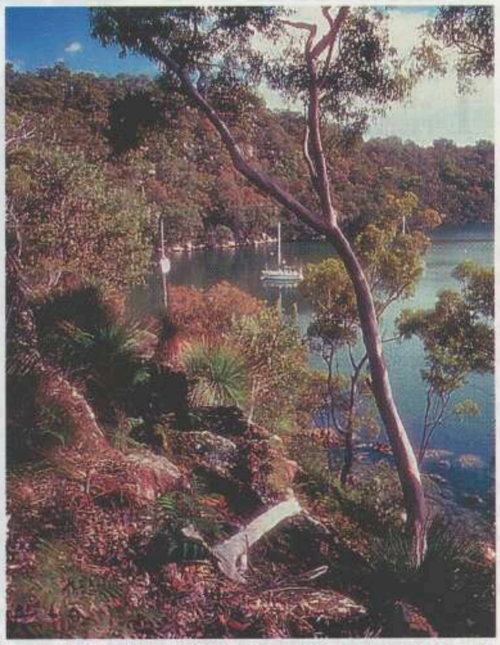
"HOW can one get queasy on an easy daysail?" I demanded. Fixing lunch in the galley as we rolled north from Sydney on long greasy swells was probably to blame. Broken Bay beckoned, and we couldn't wait for wind. I was anxious to explore Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, in the heart of which lies a fantastic array of quiet inlets and bays with waterfalls, streams and trails.

Entering Broken Bay, one is confronted with waterways in all directions. Pittwater, to the south, is a popular yachting centre. To the north, but off limits to deep draft vessels is Brisbane Waters. To the west, but restricted to sailboats due to a low bridge, is the Hawkesbury River system. Our destination, the many inlets and bays of Cowan Creek lay dead ahead, beyond Lion Island.

Once inside Cowan Creek, we fled to a gratuitous park mooring alongside cascading waterfalls in America and Refuge Bays. Following a bush-trail lined with tiny, yellow, pink, purple and scarlet coloured Autumn flowers, we found fabulous Aboriginal rock carvings - a twenty-foot wallaby with a three-foot penis, and a big whale with Jonah'fied male and female figures.

Around the corner from America Bay, Hallett's has a pretty swimming beach, good anchoring and several moorings. Behind the shore, scrambling over rocks and through the bush, we found a soft waterfall, like a shower of spring rain, falling on a flat rock. I sat still - meditating upon the tiny refractive rainbows inside each tiny water droplet.

Nearby, a huge lyre bird pranced around, flashing its tail like a peacock. Although colourful, peaceful, wet and wonderful, we weren't lulled into dropping our snake and spider watch! One close call with a red bellied black snake at America bay was enough! But here, our scare came from the sky. A fish! Freshly plucked from the sea and still quivering, it must have fallen out of the claws of a sea eagle.



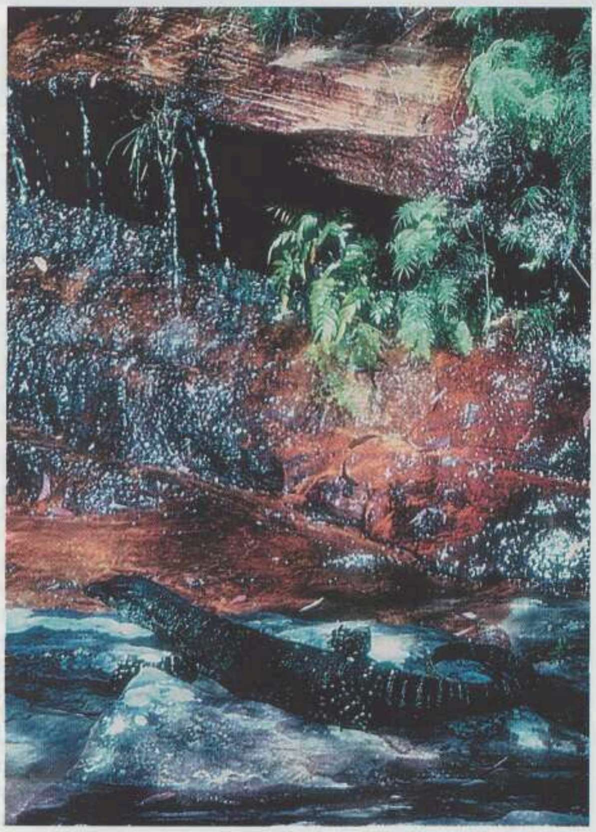
Our destination, the many inlets and bays of Cowan Creek lay dead ahead, beyond Lion Island

Half a mile west of Hallett's, an enormous sandstone outcropping marks a bay known as Cottage Rock. Two small waterfalls drop directly into the sea at high tide, but a sandy beach appears at low tide. An inquisitive goanna with a hyperactive tongue hangs out above the falls. We beached our dinghy at the base of the waterfall using it like an inflatable bathtub - a great way to keep cool on a bright blue day! Afterwards, we scrubbed dirty clothes, a drudgery somewhat ameliorated by the lovely location!

Hallett's Beach is a wonderful way to spend the day

Deeply set in surrounding hills and bush, Castle Lagoon is an almost fully enclosed quiet bay with several park moorings and a small stream and waterfalls at the head of the bay. Skirting along the base of the rocks, then up a crack, and back towards the stream again, we encountered hundreds of gigantic spiders and even bigger, creepier webs before attaining a 360 degree view of Ku-ring-gai.

Setting off from castle Lagoon, we sailed past Yeoman's Bay, stopped at Cottage Point for ice cream, then cruised down Coal and Candle Inlet to the D'Albora Marina complex at Akuna Bay. The



An inquisitive goanna with a hyperactive tongue hangs out above the falls

marina has bait and ice, a cafe, restaurant, laundry, gymnasium, chandler, yacht charter base. Cruising Cowan Creek with no destination in mind, we eventually stopped at Smiths Creek.

Deep inside Cowan Creek, Lords Bay has well-maintained trails along the shoreline which run in both directions. High tide makes it easier to land ashore where you can walk north to Waritah Bay, or south to Apple Tree bay and Bobbin Head. The track was pleasant with an immense amount of shell midden along the route and the remains of an old house boat right across from House Boat Bay. But oh my!

We'd been forewarned about leech hitchhikers and checked our shoes, socks and backpacks before coming aboard. But not good enough. In the galley that night, the mother of all leeches was walking - no running - across the fibreglass in the galley!

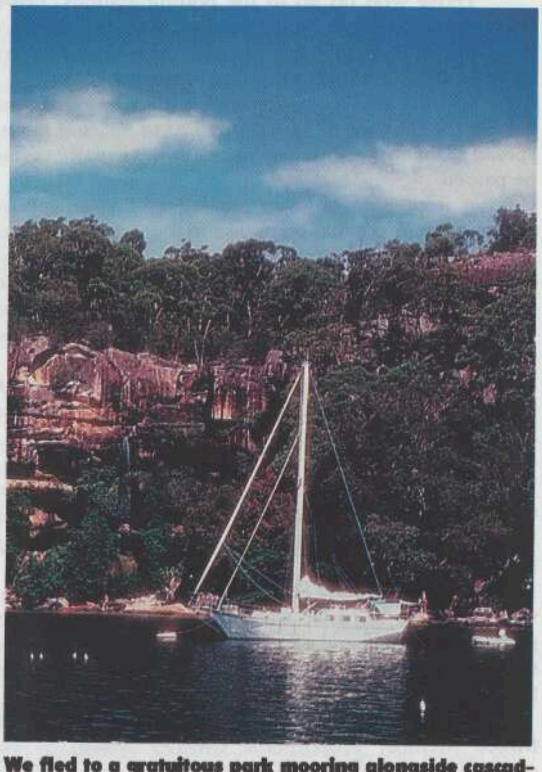
Jerusalem Bay has an evil appeal. If you arrive at low tide you can see the mud flats and avoid them. But on a falling tide, houseboats often run aground. A sailboat came to a noisy halt, too, as he crashed full speed into the mud bank ... his rig screaming in agony, hull flexing like an old oil drum. Soon afterwards, two speed boats roared past fellowship, merrily throwing up big waves before suddenly coming to a blazing halt as they hit bottom in the river. Whoops!

We never lacked company. If there were no other boats, a currawong would sit on our lifeline, or a pair of ducks would come for oatmeal snacks, or kookaburras would beg for sausages. If we wanted human companionship, we headed back to Refuge Bay. Many of our best afternoons were spent visiting with friends aboard cruising yachts Insatiable, The Alice Colleen, Constance, Yarandoo II. Cristata, Iron Butterfly, Sourdough, Antares, Jan Van Geht. Or we'd head back to populated Pittwater to watch the local sailors' twilight racing.

Australia's a dangerous place - ask any Aussie. Bush fires, heavy rains and frightening winds, hail storms, lightning storms, snakes, spiders, ticks mozzies, leeches, crocodiles, sharks, jelly fish. Mother Nature can be a mother. But the Sydney Storm of '99 took us by surprise. After a sunny flat calm day, a virtual nonstop blitzkrieg lit up the night sky. We were buffeted by gusts to 50 knots and short bursts of hail that bullied and heeled us over. One man, fishing in an aluminum boat near Cronulla, was killed by lightning. Sydney reported cricketball-sized hail and damage estimates at $300,000,000!! Twenty thousand houses damaged and 60,000 cars!

We escaped damage and felt there was no better place to be. No better place indeed - smack in the middle of sandstone cliffs, eucalypt forests and extravagant birdlife. And always the magnificent waterways of Ku-ring-gai .. a superb backdrop to a cruising week or ten.

Besides, we wondered, where else in this world can you be alternately scared silly by lightning and hail storms, amused by goannas and lyrebirds, awed by Aboriginal rock carvings, spooked by snakes and spiders, then cleansed in an endless number of waterfalls and streams? ■



We fled to a gratuitous park mooring alongside cascading waterfalls in America and Refuge Bays

OPINION

Don't vote - it only encourages them!

David Barber
Wellington

NEW Zealanders will go to the polls this month in a general election that has the entire political system on the line just as much as individual Members of Parliament, their parties and the next government.

At the time of writing, the general feeling could be summed up by that old slogan: "Don't vote - it only encourages them."

Such is the dissatisfaction with the political process that a few weeks out from polling day, more than 400,000 eligible voters had not even bothered to put themselves on the electoral roll. Of particular concern was the fact that most of these were young - under 30-year-olds with the country's future in their hands but who clearly have little taste or respect for politics and politicians.

Those who do go to the polling stations, however, will have a chance to let the politicians know exactly what they think of them this time - in fact, the opportunity to sack 21 regardless of which party they represent.

For this year's election will include a referendum on cutting the number of MPs from 120 to 99, and the widespread dislike of politicians means it is virtually certain to be passed.

Cutting it to nine or even abolishing Parliament would probably be as popular an option in the current climate.

Not that voters will necessarily get their way. The referendum was forced by a petition signed by nearly 300,000 voters, well over the 10 per cent of the electorate required under the Citizens' Initiated Referenda Act, but it is indicative only.

That means the incoming government does not have to act on the result, though it would do nothing to enhance its credibility or the political image generally if it was ignored. Primarily, this election is about whether the National Party, which has run a centre-right government for the last nine years, gets a fourth term in office or the Labour Party takes the country into the new millennium with a centre-left administration.

National's Jenny Shipley became New Zealand's first woman Prime Minister when she toppled Jim Bolger as party leader at the end of 1997, but would dearly love electoral endorsement. Labour's Helen Clark is no less keen to become the first female elected to the top job.

But of equal importance in this poll is the future of the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system of voting copied from Germany and used for the first time in 1996. This was designed to end the National-Labour duopoly which enjoyed a stranglehold on government for more than half a century, give minor parties more seats and the chance to share power and broaden the representation in Parliament..

It worked three years ago, giving Winston Peters' New Zealand First party 13 per cent of the vote and enough MPs to hold the balance of power, and bringing more Maori and women into the political decision-making process.

After keeping National, Labour and the rest of the country guessing for nine weeks, Peters plumped to go to the right, forming a coalition with National and picking up the deputy prime minister's and treasurer's jobs in the process.

It has been all downhill for MMP ever since. Much of the blame rests with Peters' scandal-plagued party which dropped out of the coalition in August last year when his fractious relationship with Shipley finally ended.

National backbenchers, fed up with the NZ First tail wagging the dog, shed no tears and the party soldiered on with a minority government. But it was propped up by a motley crew of minor parties and independents, including defectors from NZ First and although Shipley claimed it was MMP at work, it did not make for stable or good government.

With 13 MPs now sitting in Parliament representing parties different from those they belonged to at the election, including a handful elected not in their own right but on the party list, MMP has fallen into disrepute. So much so that another referendum on the voting system right now would probably send it packing along with those 21 MPs destined for the sack.

The Electoral Act requires Parliament to review MMP before the 2002 election, but if Shipley is re-elected and has her way in the new government, she plans to give the people their say on the system early next year.

She proposes an initial referendum offering four voting alternatives - the old first-past-the-post system, preferential voting, supplementary member and the single transferable vote. The winner of this ballot would then line up against MMP in a further referendum deciding the method to be used in 2002 and future elections.

Shipley says there is uncertainty overseas, especially among potential investors, about whether New Zealand has gotten its electoral system right. She wants to settle it once and for all.

Predictably, she has been accused of wanting to get first-past-the-post back to restore the National and Labour parties' advantage and the minor parties are crying foul.

They say, with some justification, that MMP has not had a fair chance yet and it would be wrong to ditch it because of all the shenanigans in its first three years.

The turnout in this election will give some idea as to just how fed up New Zealanders are with politics. The outcome - a smooth transition to stable government or another period of uncertainty, opportunism and political musical chairs - will decide the future of MMP. ■

OPINION

In a savage land - review

From Brisbane, Max Quanchi reviews the latest film set in Papua New Guinea's Trobriand Islands and one he thinks is set to become a minor classic and international box-office success

IN a savage land, just released in Australia by producer and director Bill Bennett, has the appearance of a formula film. With a set piece lovers triangle, exotic location, missionaries, traders and ending with key characters caught in the onset of World War II in the Pacific, it has a plot and characters instantly recognisable to theatre audiences.

Movie goers will like the naked villagers, the jungles and coasts of Papua New Guinea, strange and amazingly photographed rituals and a sort of boys-own adventure full of stereotyped villains, heroines and heroes. Two anthropologists, a young and recently married Australian couple, arrive for fieldwork in a coastal village in the Trobriands in 1941 and earnestly start asking questions, taking photographs, scribbling down observations and interviews in notebooks and then tapping away at the typewriter.

It is a simple enough story and has a ring of historical truth about it with references to the anthropologist Malinowskis earlier fieldwork on the same island. In 1923, a young woman had travelled from South Australian to Papua and when Philippa Bridges reported back to the Royal Geographical Society branch in Adelaide she noted cynically that in Papua there was "a population of 2000 white people of whom 1782 write articles about anthropology for the Sydney Bulletin."

When Philippa Bridges was in Papua, Frank Hurley was also there filming Pearls and savages, which went on to screenings in Australia, England and the USA with considerable box-office success. A book with the same title was equally popular. Outsiders still write articles and books, and now they make feature films.

As the anthropologists In a savage land, Evelyn and Phillip, progress from being outsiders to being accepted into the village's secret, customary rituals, exchanges and ceremonies, they confront the island's resident pearl trader, the resident Scottish missionary and the local patrol officer and government administrator.

Audiences will be intrigued by sequences of swirling, noisy Trobriands style cricket, dances, mourning rituals and village architecture, cooking and games. This is convincingly depicted and verges on a documentary style of filming.

Wandering conspicuously through this panorama are the two anthropologists, their marriage gradually falling apart as the woman rejects her gendered subordination in both the marriage and the couple's research work. In seeking information on the role of women and sexual relations in the village, eventually her behaviour threatens the traditional position of power held by village men.

A sub-plot revolves around the two anthropologist's relationship with other European residents, though these scenes are a little overladen with posture and cliché. But an argument with the trader on the verandah of their house in the village, another during a courtesy call on the Magistrate and one with the missionary over burial procedures, while presented in a simplified and confrontational manner, do indeed raise controversial issues common in the colonial era. The Missionary wants to avoid secular and territorial challenges to his evangelical work; the District Officer and Magistrate wants to prevent ideas from circulating that might upset the established colonial order of master-native relationships and the trader ignores everything except profit in pursuit of better pearls and favourable bartering terms.

The trader, Mick, is portrayed as a friend of the villagers even though he is clearly exploiting them over pearl prices. Mick is helpful and attentive to villagers and anthropologists alike, and early in the film, just gets on with his business of making money. This characterisation differs from the cameo violent, drunk, psychopath or pathetic trader of film and fiction.

Mick's role salvages traders from the list of colonial era bad guys and may indeed be historically closer to the actual relationship resident traders had with indigenous communities.

The film also raises a debate only recently resolved by regulation in Island nations, regarding the relationship between indigenous intellectual property and foreign researchers. When Evelyn secretly photographs a couple making love in a cave is she exercising the legitimate right of anthropologists to gather evidence?

When Phillip argues that he is adding to the world's knowledge of itself, does this excuse his prying, intrusive behaviour and ultimately his appropriation of this villages indigenous knowledge?

He argues that his altruism is preferable to the trader's bartering of mouth organs for pearls. The trader replies that at least he pays the villagers and questions the anthropologist for using details of village rituals and practices to gain a professorship or to publish a best selling monograph. These debates about fieldwork have raged for much of the 20th century. The film also has a feminist critique running through all these events, starting with the marriage (mostly of convenience) necessary to get a university grant for the fieldwork and surfacing in debates over their respective research work.

It is also the agenda behind some over-the-top utterances from the District Magistrate and Phillip's obsessive behaviour as the marriage disintegrates. Evelyn's subsequent experiences alone in another village, her adoption of Trobriand mourning custom when Phillip dies of dysentery and her later assertion of her own sexuality could have been easily trivialised, but instead become the central motif of the film.

It is a film about Evelyn. The role should make Maya Stange into the next Australian acting success story. Theatre audiences might miss these nuances, derived as they are from earlier and current anthropological and historical debates. Readers of Conrad and Kipling and students of the colonial era will immediately recognise that the plot is a reasonable reconstruction of documented and similarly ambiguous meetings on the frontier between indigenous peoples and

Continued next page

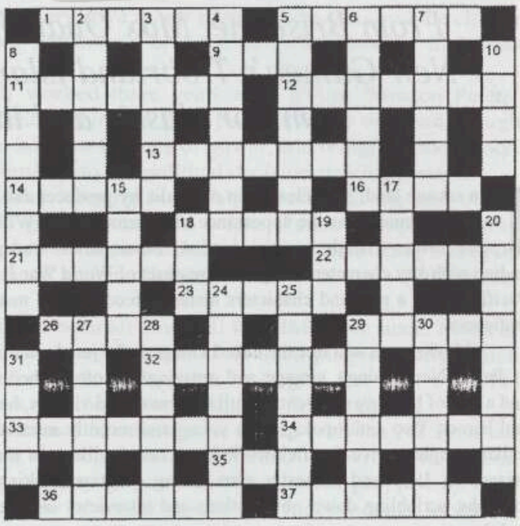
PACIFIC PUZZLE

ACROSS:

1. Navigation light
5. FSM's island of the Sleeping Lady
9. Small southern Fiji island in a constant state of shock?
11. Cook's title
12. Island of pines discovered by 11 Across in 1774
13. Out Tim's confused about promising Pacific industry
14. Catalogues the way boat heels over
16. Wharf
18. New Zealanders
21. Canal gateway to the Pacific
22. Old name for "cluster of eight" country
23. Island "loyal" to New Caledonia?
26. Rusting relics of war found on many Pacific islands
29. Beneficial book if you haven't got a clue
32. Spot to steer at sea
33. Fiji's Rewa River town
34. Rig Toni changed after troubles in Noumea in the 1980s
35. Initially, nutrition universally tasted in the Pacific
36. Futuna's friend
37. Tuvalu collectibles

DOWN:

2. Long-term island residents from far, far away
3. Woodcarving, weaving ... and whalers?
4. Kiribati's first president, Ieremia Tabai, called this island north of Tabiteuea home
5. Raft Thor Heyerdahl sailed from Peru to the Tuamotus (3,4)
6. Prawn's little pal
7. Southernmost Tungaru island
8. Tasty molluscs which make beautiful borders
10. Pieces of wood used to walk on water
15. In his book Following the Equator, this author said of Fiji's beachcombers: "They lived worthless lives of sin and luxury ... Only one of them had any ambition; he was an Irishman named Connor. He tried to raise a family of 50 children and scored 48. He died lamenting his failure."
17. Small cove
18 Tongan island, north of Tofua, sounds like it won the boxing bout
19 Koro or Coral
20. Nudibranchs (3,5)
24. Reef's pincushions
25. Outgoings that bring in the money
27. Marquesas island east of Nuku Hiva (2,4)
28. Dolphin college?
29. Paul Gaugin's resting place on Hiva Oa, the Marquesas
30. The de Brums call this island in the Marshall's Ratak Chain home
31. More eager to have some Papua New Guinea cash



ANSWERS TO THE OCTOBER PACIFIC PUZZLE

ACROSS: 1. Rugby. 6. Clams. 9. Aranuka. 10. Roofs. 11. Shoal. 12. La Perouse. 13. Crabs. 14. Markets. 16. Economy. 18. Air. 19. Artists. 21. Resorts. 23. Franc. 24. Fumigates. 27. Aloha. 28. Ariki. 29. Sarigan. 30. Trust. 31. Ovens.

DOWN: 1. Rural. 2. Grouper. 3. Yasur. 4. Marquesas. 5. Nurse. 6. Cash crops. 7. Avocado. 8. Sulus. 14. Moa. 15. East coast. 16. Erromanga. 17. Yes. 20. Tuamotu. 22. Ratline. 23. Feast. 24. Fer.y. 25. Guano. 26. Ships

Continued from previous page

anthropologists, traders, missionaries and colonial officials.

In this context, In a savage land will earn a place alongside Black Robe and At the play in the fields of the Lord and others as a critical film of the first contact, white-meets-black genre.

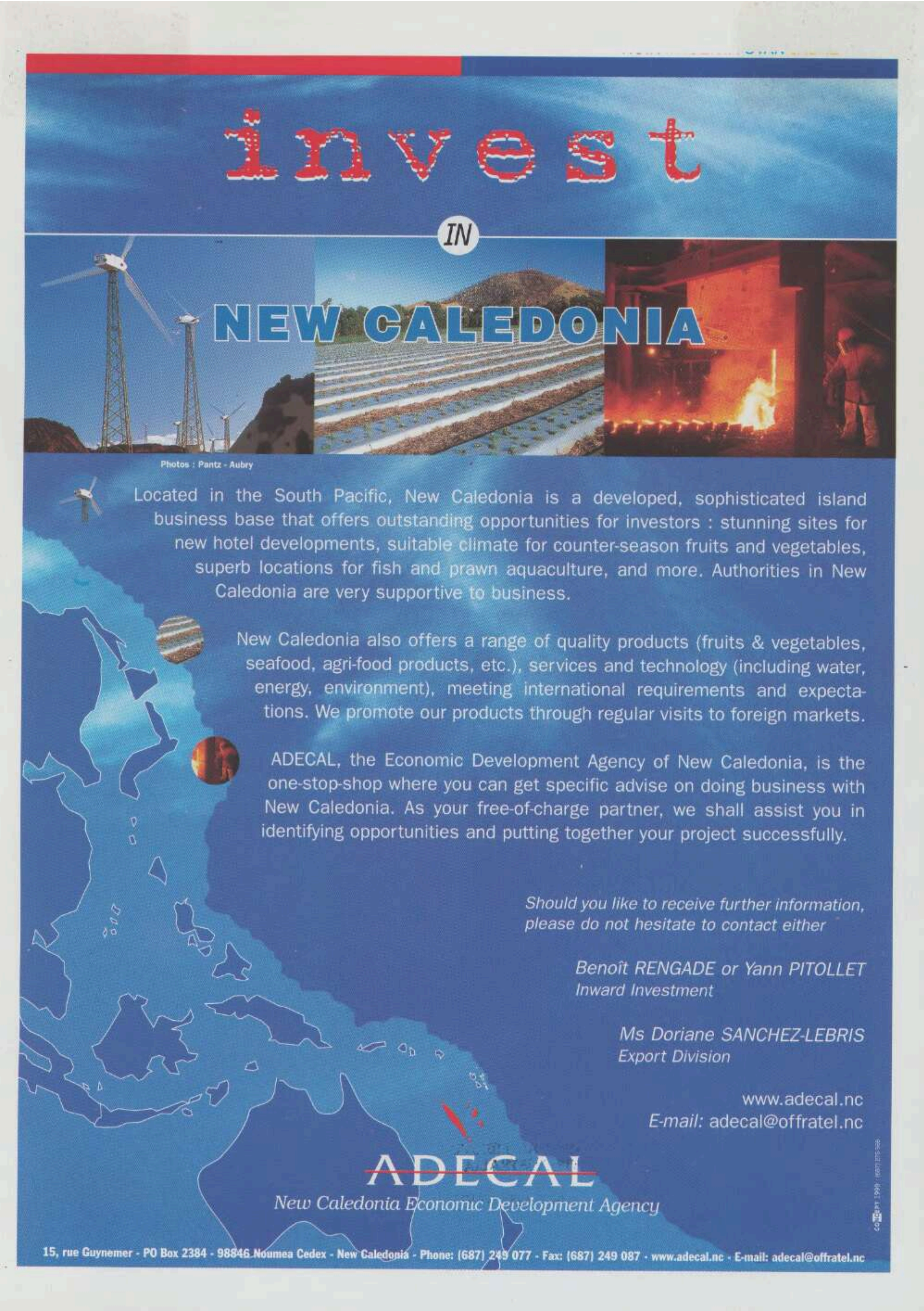
On the popular level, the majority of viewers will respond to the idea of expeditions in foreign lands, the romance that develops between Evelyn and the trader and the complications that arise with the approaching Japanese invasion.

The opening in Adelaide is conventional and a little forced, as the student falling for her professor is a familiar movie ploy. The action quickly moves to the tropics.

The ending involves a jump back to post-war Australia and Evelyn's successful but lonely life as a best-selling anthropologist. It is a stock-in-trade twisting, romantic ending that audiences will have seen before, but will still enjoy. When an early cut of the film was screened at a conference in Sydney in July this year it was severely criticised by anthropologists including many indigenous scholars. Producer and Director Bill Bennett admitted at a pre-release screening in Brisbane in October that he had been tinkering with details of the films for most the year so it will interesting to see how the final version is received.

In a savage land will no doubt be criticised for exploiting indigenous wisdom, traditions and culture and the amateur actors, and for misrepresenting the Trobriands, but these crimes, surely to be debated further, will not detract from the film's popular reception in suburban theatres.

* Max Quanchi is a senior lecturer in the Asia-Pacific Studies Program, School of Humanities and Social Science, QUT. ■


invest
IN
NEW CALEDONIA
Photos : Pantz - Aubry
Located in the South Pacific, New Caledonia is a developed, sophisticated island business base that offers outstanding opportunities for investors : stunning sites for new hotel developments, suitable climate for counter-season fruits and vegetables, superb locations for fish and prawn aquaculture, and more. Authorities in New Caledonia are very supportive to business.
New Caledonia also offers a range of quality products (fruits & vegetables, seafood, agri-food products, etc.), services and technology (including water, energy, environment), meeting international requirements and expectations. We promote our products through regular visits to foreign markets.
ADECAL, the Economic Development Agency of New Caledonia, is the one-stop-shop where you can get specific advise on doing business with New Caledonia. As your free-of-charge partner, we shall assist you in identifying opportunities and putting together your project successfully.
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