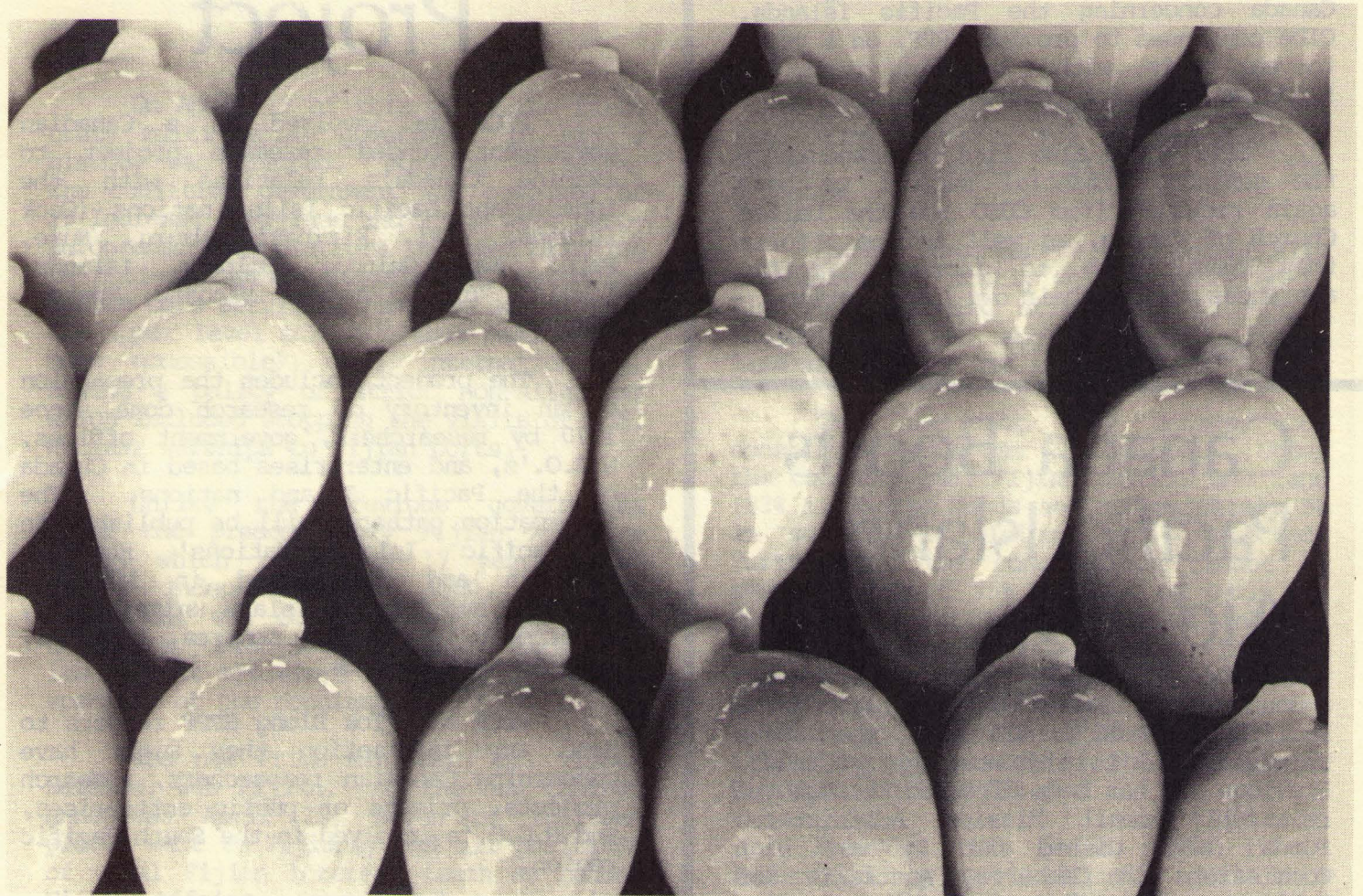


Tok Blong SPPF

July 1987 #20



Shells, Tonga

Elaine Briere

Photo by Elaine Briere

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CIDA Renews SPPF Grant

SPPF is grateful for the continuing support of **CIDA** (the Canadian International Development Agency) in carrying out our educational work within Canada concerning the Pacific Islands. CIDA continues to provide SPPF, on a year-to-year basis, with a matching grant for funds we raise for this work.

SPPF would also like to acknowledge the generous financial support we have again received from **CUSO** and the **United Church of Canada**, as well as the efforts they have taken to increase Pacific awareness within their own organizations.

THANK YOU!

Canada Boosts Pacific Island Aid

The Canadian Government has announced a bilateral aid package for the Pacific Islands. This is the first bilateral aid to this region by Canada. Previous aid has been directed through the relatively small Mission Administered Funds (MAF) dished out by our High Commissions in Canberra, Australia and Wellington, New Zealand. Other funding has been secured by Canadian non governmental organizations for small project work.

The government announced it would be spending some \$10 million over the next 5 years. Much of the money will be for human resource development, such as in the fisheries area.

The MAF funds are also slated to increase from their current value of \$1.5 million per year to \$2.5 million by next year.

By 1988-89, Canadian aid to the Pacific Islands will be triple its previous yearly high.

Pacific Islands Canada Project

PICP is involved in a Canadian government funded research project to examine Canada's relations with the independent Pacific Island nations (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa).

The project includes the preparation of an inventory of research done since 1970 by researchers, government offices, N.G.O.'s, and enterprises based in Canada on the Pacific Island nations. The information gathered will be published in a Pacific Island Nations' Research Bulletin and distributed in 1988 to Canadian and Pacific Island universities, government information centres, N.G.O.'s, and research centres.

PICP asks **Tok Blong SPPF** readers to send any information they might have concerning Canadian researchers, research projects, private or public enterprises, and N.G.O.'s involved in the South Pacific region.

The project is intended to further communication and cooperation between Canadian researchers and the Pacific Island nations. Your collaboration will be appreciated.

CONTACT: Pacific Islands Canada Project, Universite de Montreal, Departement d'Anthropologie, C.P. 6128, Succursale A, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3C 3J7.



Behind the Coup in Fiji

On April 12 of this year, the first truly multi-racial government in Fiji's history was elected. Winning 28 seats, the coalition government was composed of 19 Indians, 7 Fijians and 2 who were part-Europeans. Its platform included bringing in anti-corruption legislation, extending health care services, removing school fees for upper level schools (thus making them more accessible), and, internationally, having a policy of strict non-alignment which included stopping the visits of U.S. nuclear warships to Fijian ports.

Unlike the previous governments under the predominantly Fijian Alliance Party, which ruled for 17 years since Fiji's independence in 1980, the new government was composed mostly of trade unionists, professionals and academics, its support therefore coming from a broad spectrum of the populace.

The new Prime Minister, Dr. Timoci Bavadra, was Fijian. Of the new Cabinet announced April 15, seven of fourteen places went to Fijians, and all positions of vital Fijian interest (such as Lands, Fijian Affairs, Labour and Immigration, Education, Agriculture and Rural Development) went to Fijian MPs.

Soon after the election a series of protests led by Fijian extremists commenced. What became known as the Taukei (land owners) Movement was formed. It was led by a defeated Alliance Party MP - Apisai Tora. On April 19 there was a road blockade and demonstrations. Further meetings, protests and marches were designed to disrupt and destabilise the elected coalition government. A large march on April 24 in Suva was expected to have 20,000 people, but had only 5,000. The march was "good natured and tame" according to one commentator. That same

commentator also spoke of Ratu Mara's (the Prime Minister for the previous 17 years) conspicuous silence at the protests.

Racial tensions - always potentially explosive, but mostly well accommodated in Fiji - were being stirred up by Fijian nationalists who suggested that Fijian land and culture was under threat.

This was not only untrue, but constitutionally was impossible. Under the constitution, Fijian culture and land (83% in Fijian hands and approximately 9% in government holdings) are protected. Furthermore, the constitution cannot be amended without 75% consent of both the Fijian House of Representatives and the Senate. This amendment is virtually impossible because 22 of the 52 House seats are automatically reserved for Fijians, and over 30% of Senate seats are filled by appointment of the traditional Fijian Council of Chiefs.

However, this point seems little understood by most Fijians, and this ignorance became the fertilizer for an increase in racial fear and tension, whipped up by extremists. It was this fear which was used by Colonel Rabuka as an excuse to take over the country. In a unique rationalization the colonel said that since he had evidence that violence against the government was to be increased, the government had to be removed to stop that violence.

Other facts play into the situation, though to unknown degrees of weight:

* The Fijian Chiefly system has come under increasing criticism by young, urban Fijians, as well as some well-placed Fijians. It has been criticized as a

system which assures control (with resultant economic rewards) to a few, and opportunities to their chosen.

- * Some interpreters see the coup as the reflection of a power struggle in Fiji between the "little people and the Chiefs", with the Chiefs re-asserting traditional Fijian control.
- * Evidence of "irregularities" in the previous Ratu Mara government were suggested, including the writing-off of loans to several cabinet ministers by the Fiji Development Bank. It has been suggested that government corruption would be found on a large scale by the new government.
- * The new Bavadra government was a progressive one with a policy of non-alignment. To some in the previous conservative, pro-western Ratu Mara government, non-alignment is equated with Communism.
- * Inevitable rumours of CIA involvement have surfaced, but there is no hard evidence to suggest involvement. Two weeks before the coup, United States U.N. Ambassador Vernon Walters met with the new Fiji government and joked that, "coups follow me around".
- * Fiji was the first country in the Pacific Islands to get direct military aid from the United States (\$300,000 for guns) in 1984/85. After the New Zealand government of David Lange incorporated its policy of disallowing United States nuclear warships into New Zealand, the U.S. took a more active interest in Fiji as an ally in the Pacific. The Bavadra government's stated policy of not allowing U.S. nuclear ships into Fiji was of obvious concern to U.S. officials.
- * In the Fiji Sun of May 15, Colonel Rabuka stated that "he had been painting a number of scenarios before and after the election (of April 11/12) and had carefully considered the move". Later in the Fiji Times of May 21, Rabuka said, in his reasons for the coup, that the Fiji army been active in two world wars and since "to stamp out ideas that would be detrimental to the

well being of people at large" and now they had to do that at home in Fiji. These statements obviously refer to a coup well-planned in advance, indicating that the ideological question, rather than the racial one, was of more importance.

While some of the background to the coup as well as the involvements of others (perhaps outside Fiji) may or may not come to light, the results of the coup on Fiji are becoming known:

- * According to a Canadian just through Fiji, the Indians of the country look as if "they have just lost their best friend".
- * While it appears rotating store closings by the Indians may be over for now, there has been a promise of Gandhian-style protests on a continuing basis.
- * The sugar harvest, representing 14% of the Gross Domestic Product and worth a projected \$300 million, had not started as of June 25th, partially in protest of the coup. Fully 25% of Fiji's labour force is employed in the sugar industry.
- * Overseas flights to Fiji have been cut drastically, and tourism is in a shambles. Tourism was projected to be worth \$300 million in 1987.
- * The day after the coup an investment promise of \$30 million was rescinded, the first of most likely many as Fiji's reputation as a safe place for investment is damaged.
- * Talk of an exodus of Indians from Fiji continues. This will have long-term consequences for Fiji's business sector.

And what's next?.....

- * The Governor General has set up a 19 member Advisory Council. (Only two seats were allocated to Dr. Bavadra's government and they were turned down.) This Council will run the country until new elections

Death of the Pacific

By DAVID ROBIE

- *.Meanwhile, an 8 member council is looking at rewriting the constitution to ensure Fijian political control of any future government.
- * A new Parliament will be appointed (or elected) by some sort of consensus. This Parliament will have the sole task of amending the constitution. Then new elections will be held under the new constitution.
- * Dr. Bavadra continues (at the end of June) to travel to England, Washington, New York, and Auckland looking for support of his legitimately elected government. It is unclear how much support he can get in Fiji, which is the most important place where support counts.
- * Dr. Bavadra's return to Fiji will, for the most part, tell the immediate final story. Suggestions are he will challenge in court the Governor General's right to dissolve Parliament. There is also talk of him setting up his own government within Fiji.

Whatever the outcome, it is a sad time for Fiji, for multi-racialism and for democracy.



The once Pacific Pacific has died, say New Zealand editorial writers. And conspiracy theorists of the right, left and centre must be having the time of their lives following the recent events of the South Pacific.

"Has the South Pacific suddenly become a seething cauldron of strife, plots and international intrigue?" asked the *Auckland Star*. "The conspiracy theorists — those who see hidden hands behind everything which happens — would say so." But, added the paper, each event was unconnected.

Some of the examples it cited were an anti-nuclear government being overthrown by the military in Fiji, the Vanuatu government talking to Libya and the Soviet Union, the Libyans being thrown out in Australia, another anti-nuclear government in New Zealand is accused of wrecking the Western alliance while at the same time giving the boot to the KGB.... Also, everywhere Soviet fishing boats are seized — and an American one is seized — while the CIA or Moscow is seen behind every move, depending on the observer's viewpoint.

But the whimsical editorial was a contrast to the bitter attacks of most opinion leaders in the country over the Fijian coup. Calling it FIJI'S UGLY, RACE-BASED MILITARY TAKE OVER, the influential *New Zealand Herald* said Lieutenant-Colonel Rabuka's seizure of power was a disaster for the Pacific, Fiji had been regarded as a country where democracy had taken sturdy root. Instead, it had been exposed as "shallow and fragile".

"The signal now given to the world is that where the Indians were prepared to live peacefully for 17 years under Fijian dominance, the Fijians are not prepared to suffer more than a month of the Indians," the paper said. "Fijians have demonstrated against the new government, allegedly committed arson, and indulged in... rabble-rousing. Colonel Rabuka says he acted to prevent bloodshed — the implications look serious indeed.

"The South Pacific, not yet entirely out of the age of colonialism, as New Caledonia bears witness, has now leaped a stage or two into the era of coups familiar, for example, in post-colonial Africa."

A few days later, on May 21, after several increasingly bitter editorials, the *Herald* said the colonel's claim of bringing racial peace by the coup was exposed in an ugly race riot the day before.

The paper was among many which attacked former Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. Defending deposed Prime Minister Dr Timoci Bavadra, it said Fiji already had a democratically elected government. "It also has a thoroughly discredited Opposition in Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara and his Alliance Party, most of whose members — including the leader — were seen to be acquiescing to military rule, if not in the coup to their eyeballs."

But the most scathing attack on Mara came from New Zealand Prime Minister David Lange himself. Lange accused Mara of treachery under Fiji's constitution. The Prime Minister called on the coup leaders to "come clean" on their motives.

However, he was not suggesting Ratu Mara had been involved in corruption. Lange said Ratu Mara had pledged allegiance to the Queen, but had been instrumental in bringing about a rebellion in one of her countries. □

Forum calls for U.N. Referendum

The SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM, the paramount regional body in the Pacific Islands and attended by most Pacific Heads of Government, had the following to say on New Caledonia at its 18th annual meeting held in Apia, Western Samoa, May 29-30:

The Forum expressed grave disquiet about the current policies of the government of France with regard to New Caledonia. It noted that France was pressing ahead with a referendum on French terms in which a significant proportion of the indigenous population had proclaimed, through its representative organisation, the FLNKS, that it would take no part. The Forum completely rejected the referendum. In the circumstances such a referendum would be divisive, futile and a recipe for disaster. The Forum called upon France to abandon its referendum.

Noting that the current French government has based its policies for the future of New Caledonia on the referendum and that referendum would now be an empty exercise, the Forum questioned what steps France then intended to pursue.

Stating that New Caledonia represented a continuing and compelling concern for the South Pacific Region, the

Forum emphasised its commitment to dialogue and expressed its wish to send a Forum delegation to New Caledonia to discuss the situation with all parties. It also indicated its strong interest in discussing the issue with France in Paris and stood ready to dispatch a delegation for that purpose should France be genuinely interested in a dialogue to achieve a peaceful resolution. The Forum reaffirmed its 1986 decision that the Forum Chairman was authorised to enter into a dialogue on its behalf with the FLNKS to further that process.

The Forum also called upon the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation to recommend to the 1987 United Nations General Assembly, a U.N.-sponsored referendum in New Caledonia consistent with the universally accepted principles and practices of self determination and independence.

[From: The OFFICIAL FORUM COMMUNIQUE]



Political
Graffiti
in
Noumea—
Photo by
Ingrid
Kircher

New Caledonia: A Dialogue With the Deaf

by Donna Winslow, Universite de Montreal

The Chirac government's policy is jeopardizing New Caledonia's chances of reaching a peaceful, negotiated settlement that would lead this Territory towards a statute which would take into account the native Kanaks' rights and aspirations.

Both the French Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, and the Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories, Bernard Pons, have expressed the desire for 'constructive discussion' with all communities. However, the fact remains that all the steps they have taken have only served to further marginalize the Kanaks and maintain a colonial economy to the advantage of the most affluent and influential whites. These whites are, for the most part, supporters of the conservative R.P.C.R. political party in New Caledonia which is allied with Mr. Chirac's R.P.R. Some of the consequences of the Chirac government's policy in New Caledonia have been: the stifling of the powers of the regions run by pro-independence representatives; the deployment of French military troops over the entire Territory; the resumption of land expropriations; etc. These are the agressions which the pro-independence regional representatives exposed in a letter to the French Prime Minister. Below you will find some excerpts.

Mr. Prime Minister,

The policies which your government insists on applying in New Caledonia lead us to believe that our message, however forceful, has not been understood. Because the situation is deteriorating rapidly, we, the elected representatives of the North,

Central and Island Regions, feel it is our responsibility to inform you, once more, of the gravity of the situation.

While relying on the countryside's apparent calm, which is in fact a result of the Kanaks' sense of responsibility and determination, you are creating a situation of cultural genocide. This is the result of the Kanaks' loss of identity and the widening gap and inequalities between the countryside, where the majority of the Kanaks live, and the urban area of Nouméa.

The economic boom which you claim exists is an illusion. The boom actually consists of a resurgence in economic activities which benefit only the most privileged white interests in Nouméa (real estate, import-export trade etc.). In spite of the encouraging official speeches, New Caledonia has not seen any productive investments over the last few months. Furthermore, the efforts made since 1982 to introduce real structural reform and restore the economic balance which is crucial to the Territory's development, have all been reduced and cut back. Since March 16th, 1986, the regional institutions have been progressively stifled. These institutions, according to the French Constitution, are supposed to be decentralised collectives of the Republic. This situation is a result of:

1. Administrative Barriers

- (a) instructions given to territorial services to 'freeze' regional development dossiers
- (b) procedural blockages in the execution of decisions taken at the

regional level

2. Financial barriers

- (a) refusal to grant the Kanak regions the development funds promised by the 'Exceptionnal Aid and Development Fund'. This was done by using the argument that the Kanak regions would be unable to repay these loans.
- (b) It is interesting to note that the Southern Region (where the R.P.C.R. is in the majority) is not subjected to the same treatment. On the contrary, the Southern Region has been granted substantial funds for such important things as the enlarging of the 18-hole golf course and the improvement of luxury hotels in Nouméa. Moreover, certain para-military organisations have been given money in order to hire young men as 'development trainees'.

We therefore feel that your policy has only served to further colonize the Territory, disregarding the rights of the Kanak people. This disregard is further evidenced by increased police intervention and arbitrary arrests of Kanaks and the new policy of military 'nomadisation' which has blanketed the countryside with military units (there are now 6,000 military personnel present in New Caledonia which is a ratio of 1 for every 10 Kanaks).

Furthermore, and contrary to your engagements, you have consistently refused to discuss the future of the Territory with the native peoples. There is a need to discuss the conditions of the upcoming referendum on Independence and the redistribution of regional responsibilities. Your chosen policy is clearly reactionary and partisan. It even goes so far as to undermine reforms which have been in place since 1974.

In spite of all these barriers, we continue to respect our commitments and sincerely hope that we will be able to engage in some sort of constructive dialogue with the French Government in order to ensure a peaceful future for our country.

Sincerely,

J.M. TJIBAOU, L. JOREDIE, & Y. YEIWENE

Presidents, North, Central & Island Regions

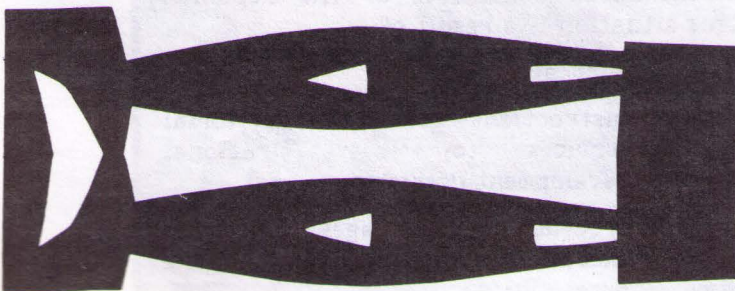
POSTSCRIPT: On May 28th & 29th the Kanak liberation front - F.L.N.K.S. - held its 6th congress. It was decided that the F.L.N.K.S. would boycott the upcoming referendum on Independence. This decision was taken because the French government refuses to discuss the conditions of the referendum with the native people of New Caledonia. The future of the Territory seems more uncertain than ever.

New Caledonia Referendum Set

France has set September 13 as the date for a referendum on independence in New Caledonia. France says it will send police reinforcements to its colony for the referendum.

French police and military have been busy in the colony the last few months mapping rural pathways in Kanak villages, as well as gathering information on Kanaks and otherwise harassing people.

Most observers feel France is setting the stage for a violent confrontation in New Caledonia.



SPPF to Support "Marasin Meri" Program in Papua New Guinea

SPPF has agreed to raise funds for the "Marasin Meri" program in the East Sepik region of PNG.

The **MARASIN MERI** program (meaning 'Medicine Woman' in Pidgin English) is a newly initiated primary health care program which plans to take selected women from remote villages in the East Sepik Province who are leaders among their people, and train them in one-week courses at the Maprik Hospital. It is envisioned to train approximately 100 women during the year of this project in germ theory, general health education, the causes of the main diseases in the area, and how to administer common medicines to treat them. The courses will be approximately one week in duration and held at the hospital for practical experience in the administration of medicines and recognition of various illnesses. These women will then be given a supply of medicine and return to their villages.

They will be responsible for administering treatment, referring seriously ill patients to the hospital (many villagers wait too long to go to the hospital and therefore are beyond treatment and die soon after arrival), and talking to the villagers on general health care and what they can do to improve their own health conditions (nutrition, sanitation, medicines). Most of the women selected will be strong leaders among their own village women's clubs and are therefore expected to also use their acquired knowledge to teach other women members about treating sicknesses.

This project has already been run successfully as a pilot project and over 25 women already trained; however, there is a need for increased and continual training of the women so that at least

every one of the more than 100 villages in the district can have an active Marasin Meri. There is also a need for improved back up support whereby the medical staff from the hospital can regularly visit the women to supply the medicines and to give refresher courses.

Because of worsening government budget constraints, the Maprik Hospital has access to only one vehicle to be used only for emergencies, i.e. transferring critically ill patients. There is no transport available for staff to offer any primary health care services to the district.

It is envisioned that this project will be able to support partial costs of a cooperative vehicle to be shared with the Maternal Child Health clinic program in order to allow an active program of Primary Health Care to the villages. The vehicle would be used for supporting the Marasin Meri program and village health committees, transporting staff and villagers to workshops and training courses in water supply, toilet construction, village health, etc., carrying Maternal Child Health teams into the villages to support the Marasin Meri work, and also as a back-up ambulance to transfer patients from the villages to the hospital when needed.

In addition to a vehicle, this project would support the cost of the Marasin Meri training for an additional 100 women during the year, provide them with medicine boxes and medicines to carry out their village work.

The Marasin Meri Program idea originated with the very active Maprik Women's Association and with the help of the staff at the Maprik Hospital. The

program was in response to a village expressed need to have better access to common medicines.

Maprik Hospital serves a population of over 160,000 in an area of 25,000 sq. km. in the Ambunti and Maprik districts of the East Sepik Province. This is one of the poorest regions in Papua New Guinea, being covered by either rugged mountains or lowland sago swamps, yet the area supports one of the highest population densities in the country. It was this area that had the worst malnutrition statistics in the National Nutrition Survey of 1982.

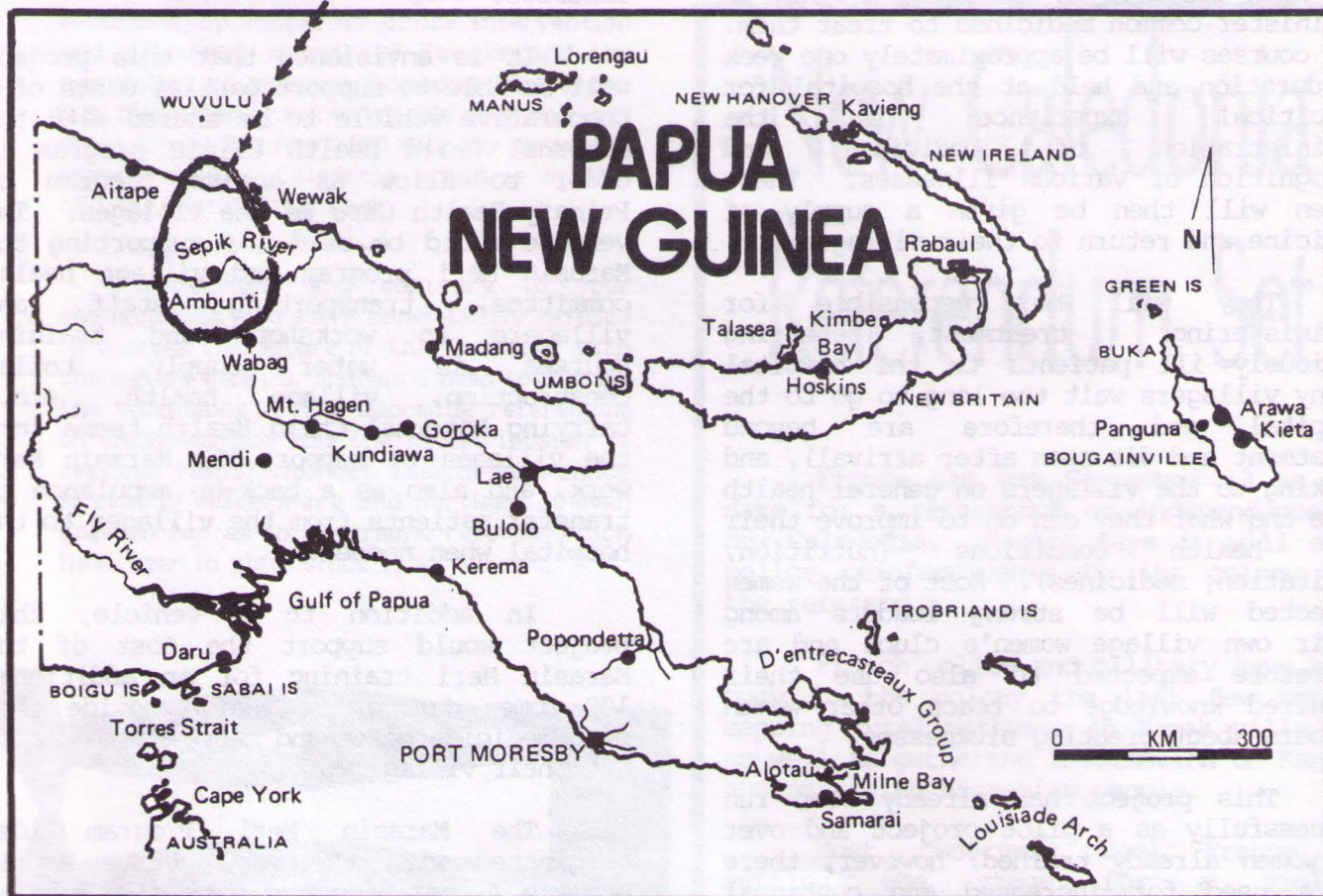
Most of the people are subsistence, "slash and burn" farmers, although some income is earned through growing Robusta coffee. Staple crops are yams, bananas and sago. Besides high malnutrition there

is a very high morbidity rate. Malaria is hyperendemic in the area. Pneumonia is the most frequent cause of death. The infant mortality rate is as high as 240/1000 in some villages.

The overall goal of the Marasin Meri Program is to improve the health care of the villagers in order that they can lead a more productive life. They plan to do this by completing the following objectives:

- 1) Make medicines for simple diseases readily available to the people right in the villages;
- 2) Reduce the incidence of scabies, ringworm, sores and enlarged spleens in the villages by educating the people as to the medicines available and prevention possible;

Site of the Marasin Meri Project



- 3) Promote the building of village toilets and the use of safe, clean water in the villages;
- 4) Make villages take responsibility for the running of projects to promote good health in their villages (i.e. fencing pigs and chickens, draining stagnant water, etc.).

Because the villages choose to participate in the project, it will be a sign that they are ready to learn a self-help way to improved health care. And because the women chosen for training are selected by the villages, they should have the respect and leadership necessary for carrying out the objectives of the program.

Partial assistance for the Marasin Meri project has been promised by **ALCHERINGA**, a retail business in Victoria, B.C. **ALCHERINGA** is an importer of East Sepik art, and its owner, Elaine Monds, has travelled to the East Sepik twice. Having witnessed first-hand conditions in the region, Mrs. Monds is interested in helping improve the health of the East Sepik people.

SPPF is also asking for your help to reach our fundraising target for this project. We need a further \$1,000 to meet the full request of the Marasin Meri project. These funds are then matched on a 3:1 basis by **CIDA** (the **CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**). All donations are tax deductible and should be sent to **SPPF**, 409-620 View Street, Victoria, B.C., Canada V8W 1J6. Please indicate in a note that the donation is for this project. Thank you!



plaiting coconut leaf

Soviets sail in

THE first Soviet fishing vessel to arrive in Port Vila, Vanuatu, under the 12 months fishing agreement between the two countries, berthed there on April 13.

The ship, the *Tanga*, had been fishing in the vicinity of Efate, the island on which Port Vila is located, for about four weeks, according to Albert Carlot, of the Vanuatu Fisheries Department.

He said the *Tanga*, carrying a crew of 32 and capable of carrying 721 tonnes of fish, was one of six Soviet ships fishing inside the Vanuatu exclusive economic zone under the access agreed.

The ships are permitted to use local ports for crew recreation and the replenishment of fuel and supplies.



Dramatic shift in Pacific disease patterns

Changes in diet and lifestyle are leading to an upsurge in the South Pacific of chronic degenerative diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease and cancers, normally associated with affluent, industrialised countries.

According to a recent review of the current state of health in five Pacific Island nations — Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and Western Samoa — the dramatic shift in disease patterns coincides with the adoption of Westernised lifestyles.

The review entitled, "Health and Nutrition Problems and Policy Issues in the Pacific" by Ms Abby Bloom of the University of Sydney's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, notes that prevalence rates of diabetes in the Pacific Islands are now among the highest in the world, although as recently as 15 years ago the disease did not constitute a significant problem in the region.

Research indicates a ten-fold increase in diabetes among urban Fijians in a ten-year period between the late 1960s and late '70s, while diabetes and cardiovascular disease combined now account for one-third of all deaths in Fiji. Diabetes also occurs two to six times more frequently among urbanised Polynesians and Melanesians in Fiji and Western Samoa compared with traditional rural populations.

Although data on the incidence of cancer in the South Pacific is sparse, says Ms Bloom, it appears that rates are lowest in "less developed" Pacific Island countries and highest among more "developed" islands. Cancer is the

second leading cause of death in Tonga, accounting for 16 to 18 per cent of all deaths, the third cause among Melanesian Fijians, and the fourth among Western Samoans.

Cardiovascular diseases, the most important being coronary heart disease and hypertension, are the leading reported causes of death in three of the five nations reviewed — Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa.

The rates of these diseases and associated major risk factors such as lack of physical exercise, smoking, and stress, while varying among nations are rising throughout the region.

Increasingly, the South Pacific is also falling victim to those other ills of modern society — alcoholism, domestic violence, accidents, and suicide. According to the report, recent evidence points to a startling increase in the rate of accidental and intentional death due to drinking paraquat, a commonly available and especially toxic herbicide. The trend is most common among 15 to 25-year-old males in Western Samoa and Fiji, although there is a high rate of suicide among young Indian females with the chemical.

Complex social and economic factors such as frustration over limited employment opportunities, friction between parents and children, and the "intolerable treatment" of young Indian brides by their in-laws are believed to be the major causes.

A move away from traditional food habits — particularly in urban areas — to a diet heavily reliant on imported and processed foods — underlies the region's principal health problems, says the report. While

these foods have the advantage of often being more accessible, more convenient to prepare and eat, and cheaper, they have contributed to a serious decline in nutritional standards.

The paper notes that the contemporary diet contains excessive animal fat, salt, and calories and that traditional high fibre root vegetables such as taro, sweet potatoes and yams, are being replaced with less beneficial bread, rice, tinned meats and fish.

A 1980 survey in Fiji revealed that 7.9 per cent of Fijian children and 24 per cent of Indian children under the age of five years suffered protein malnutrition. But among the adult population of Fiji, 40 per cent of males, 20 per cent of Indians of both sexes, and 80 per cent of Melanesian women in Suva were obese. A similar survey in Vanuatu in 1982, showed that 23 per cent of under-fives had protein deficiencies.

A decline in the length of time babies are breastfed and bottlefeeding have contributed to malnourishment of young children. Studies show a correlation between early weaning and malnourishment among children in Western Samoa and the Solomon Islands, while malnutrition occurs more frequently among bottlefed Fijian children. Bottlefed children are also more likely to succumb to gastroenteritis.

Among the crucial factors believed to contribute to the deterioration of health are:

- A more sedentary lifestyle.
- Inadequate housing.
- Poor employment opportunities.
- Expenditure of low in-

comes on goods and services other than food.

● Emulation of elite cosmopolitan lifestyles.

While life expectancy at birth is generally better than the global average and appreciably better than other developing regions, the paper says the five island countries experience poorer health overall than other South Pacific nations. Life expectancy ranges from 54 and 56 years among men and women in Vanuatu to 60 and 66.2 in Fiji, compared with an average combined life expectancy of 74 throughout the region.

Until 1950s infectious diseases, such as measles and influenza, and other diseases associated with inadequate water supplies and unhygienic waste disposal, were the leading causes of illness and premature death. But the shift since World War 2 from rural, structured, homogenous, village-based economies to more fluid, heterogeneous cash-based economies has coincided with the emergence of non-communicable degenerative diseases. The paper argues that by the mid-1980s, virtually all island countries had been affected by this "evolution" and there is now a perceptible gradient among them from those characterised more by infectious diseases — Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands — to those in which non-communicable diseases dominate — Fiji, Western Samoa, and Tonga.

According to the review, most of the island nations allocate between 11 per cent (Vanuatu and Tonga) and 15 per cent (Western Samoa) of government expenditures to health or between \$20 and \$80 per capita. While this appears

generous relative to other less developed countries, there has been a "distinct urban bias" in the provision of health facilities and personnel. In many cases, the health sector is underfunded and there is little money for expansion and innovation or for increased attention to rural health needs, it says.

The paper also points to the scarcity of trained people at all levels of the health systems of the five countries, including "acute shortages" of doctors. In the Solomon Islands the ratio of people per doctor is 6500, Vanuatu 4300, and in Fiji 2200. Maldistribution of human resources compounds the problem. Of the 31 doctors in Vanuatu, 24 are located in urban centres, while in Tonga 71 per cent of all GPs are employed in a single hospital.

It is critical of the lack of objective, population-based measures of the effectiveness of existing health services which it says are "sorely lacking". Information on non-health sector resources which impinge on health was even more limited.

It recommends that at a minimum each nation undertakes the analysis required to specify:

- Health sector policies reflecting national development priorities.

- Actual versus planned public sector health funding levels.

- Epidemiological profiles on a regional or district basis.

- Quantified health objectives.

- Inventories of facilities, personnel and material identifying deficiencies and future requirements.

- Revised health sector policies and priorities and projected foreign aid requirements.

Ms Bloom said one of the most persistent themes to emerge from the review was the need to plan carefully for the use of extremely limited human and financial resources in the health sector.

The confounding trends of population growth and urban concentration, shifting disease patterns and growing dependence on external influences

made imperative choices among competing objectives and efficient use of domestic and external financing.

"Health investments in the region can be justified on humanitarian and human capital grounds, and should accommodate the peculiar balance between diseases of underdevelopment and diseases of 'Westernisation' found in each island group," she said.

"But major investments in health and health-related measures should be prefaced by a thorough analysis in each setting of the managerial, administrative, and financial foundations of the health system."

Dr Richard Taylor, an epidemiologist with the South Pacific Commission, said he

believed there would be progressive urbanisation throughout the South Pacific and countries would move through the spectrum of diseases. While readjustment was often painful, he said conditions were not as bad in the Pacific as those in Britain and France during rapid urbanisation last century.

The health status of Pacific countries could be taken as an indicator of its "development", he said. Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Kiribati were characterised by infectious diseases and nutritional problems and the life expectancy was between 50 and 60. At the other end of the spectrum were American Samoa, Guam, and the Cook Islands with a predominant pat-

tern of degenerative diseases, and in the middle Fiji, Western Samoa, and Tonga with a combination of both.

He considered the undersupply of trained health workers in rural areas could be overcome by training more Pacific Island doctors and nurses at the Fiji and Papua New Guinea Schools of Medicine, as well as extension of village health worker systems.

While the commission was conducting nutrition education programs, there were a lot of economic and marketing problems for governments to overcome in order to bring locally produced foods from outlying islands to urban centres more cheaply than imported foods.

— Liz Glasgow



Spraying of DDT to prevent Malaria.

Things Go Better With Coconuts

by Nancy Rody

Yap District is a group of seventeen inhabited islands with a population of 7500, located in the Western Caroline Islands of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands [now part of the Federated States of Micronesia-edit.]. It consists of two distinct groups of islands: the four high volcanic islands of Yap proper, and the numerous low, sandy, coral atolls of Yap's outer islands. Each of these two areas has a distinct population - unique in language, dress, social structure and problems.

The outer islands are largely coral and sand with limited agricultural possibilities. The closest outer island to Yap proper is 100 miles away; the farthest is 500 miles. The district's erratic field trip ship service is the only form of inter-island transportation.

Life centres around the village, the extended family and its lands. In recent years there has been a steady migration from the outer island to the District Centre; however, the people of Yap continue to depend largely on the land and sea for their staples (fish, coconut, taro and other tubers, and various types of bananas and seasonal fruits). Since these islands are subject to periodic typhoons which heavily damage breadfruit and coconut trees, the sea was the most reliable source of food until the advent of the trading ship laden with rice. Even though the Yapese consider themselves the elite of Micronesia, in that they place high value on the preservation of their traditional culture, including long revered food customs, food imports have increased 253% over the last two years.

Average income is less than \$2,000 per family group (often consisting of 15 to 20 individuals), and the prices of most imported foods are prohibitively high. A recent survey indicated that imported food prices in Yap's District Centre average 74% above retail food prices in Guam,

whose prices are higher than any of the 50 US states, including Hawaii and Alaska. Prices in village stores are higher than in the District Centre because of transportation costs and because most sales are made on credit. The most popular imported foods are polished rice, sugar, soft drinks, bread made from bleached flour, noodles, and canned fish. Many of these foods are imported from eastern countries and are not enriched.

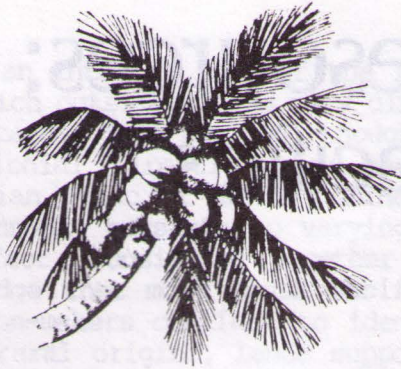
Costs of local agricultural and fishery products are very low in relation to imported food prices but are not readily available. The Trust Territory government is attempting to develop cash crops such as copra and black pepper for export but no program has been initiated to reduce the importation of foods.

Nutrition problems are increasing, particularly in areas that are becoming urbanized. Greatly increased incidence of nutritionally related disorders such as diabetes, dental caries, cardiovascular disease, obesity, intestinal parasites, gastroenteritis, prematurity and toxemia of pregnancy are reported by the Department of Health. Sub-clinical malnutrition is prevalent among children in urban areas where rice has almost entirely replaced the variety of locally produced foods once considered the proper diet for young children.

The Nutrition Education Program described here has attempted to couple conventional techniques and materials (posters, flannel graphs and flip charts) with more unorthodox motivational techniques to achieve change in attitudes and practices.

"IT'S THE REAL THING"

One aim of the program was to promote the popularity of coconut juice over soft drinks. The active promotion campaign included school curriculum



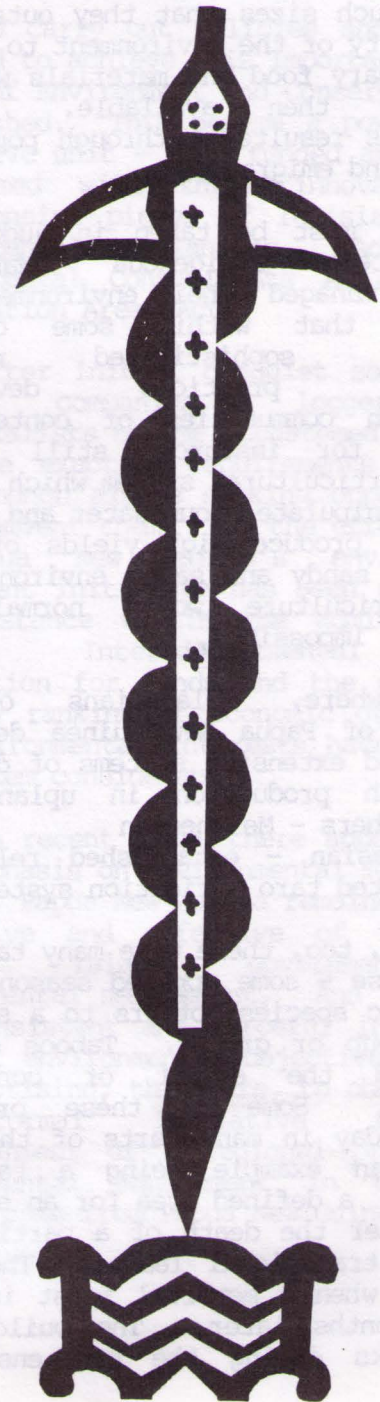
Every part of the coconut tree (*Cocos nucifera*) can be used. The husk provides cord, mats, brushes, and fuel, the leaves thatch, baskets, and fans, and the trunk building material. Food and oil from the nuts are the greatest prize. A healthy tree will produce 50 nuts a year for over 60 years.

drinks in the first year of the program. Complete figures for the following year are not yet available, but through the third quarter they totaled only \$88,478.00.

[Reprinted from: PLES, No. 1-1985. PLES is an environmental magazine for the South Pacific Region funded by the South Pacific Commission. This article originally appeared in "Teaching Nutrition in Developing Countries or The Joys of Eating Dark Green Leaves" edited by K.W. Shack and published by Meals for Millions Foundation, Santa Monica, CA., USA]

materials with a locally produced comic book and bar graphs illustrating the relative nutritive value of coconut juice and soft drinks. Attention was also given to the fact that sale of this local product is advantageous to the Yapese economy. A photo in the local newspaper of a drinking coconut adorned with a metal pop top was run with the purloined caption, "It's the Real Thing!" A depiction of a well-known soft drink was captioned, "It's the Artificial Thing." A newspaper political cartoon strip, which was not originated by the nutrition staff, has reflected local attitudes toward the imported beverage. The imported beverage is depicted as a character representing unpopular foreign influence while the drinking coconut character represents Yapese sentiments.

The most prominent grocery store agreed to display posters promoting drinking coconuts alongside advertisements for soft drinks in the store. Cold drinking coconuts have been served as refreshments at local meetings instead of coffee and soft drinks. This campaign has resulted in most stores keeping coconuts in their refrigerators. Coconuts often out-sell soft drinks and go for half the price. Individual stores report average sales of 1000 coconuts weekly. Also, coconuts are now served in a local restaurant and are sold in the concession of the local movie theater. Total imports of soft drinks two years ago totaled \$450,216. One year ago they totaled \$198,447 [1894-ed.]. This represents a 58% reduction in the importation of soft



Environment and Resources: Managing the South Pacific's Future

by Graham Baines

Over the past few thousand years the people of the South Pacific Islands have enjoyed a harmonious relationship with their environment. Life was not always easy, however, and sometimes communities grew to such sizes that they outstripped the capacity of the environment to produce the necessary food and materials with the technology then available. Harsh adjustments resulted - through population decline, and emigration.

Care must be taken in judging to what extent indigenous communities actually "managed" their environment. It is true that within some cultures relatively sophisticated resource management practices developed. Micronesian communities of contemporary Kiribati, for instance, still use an ancient horticultural system which enables them to manipulate groundwater and organic wastes to produce high yields of giant taro in a sandy and salty environment in which agriculture would normally be considered impossible.

Elsewhere, Melanesians of the highlands of Papua New Guinea developed complex and extensive systems of drainage for starch production in upland peat soils. Others - Melanesian and Polynesian - established relatively sophisticated taro irrigation systems.

Then, too, there were many taboos on resource use - some applied seasonally or to specific species, others to a specific social group or groups. Taboos such as these had the effect of conserving resources. Some of these practices persist today in many parts of the South Pacific, an example being a taboo on fishing in a defined area for an extended period after the death of a particularly important traditional leader. The taboo is lifted when a memorial feast is held, perhaps months later. The build-up of fish stocks during the ban ensures a

good harvest for the feast. Though this practice has a conservation effect it would be misleading to conclude that such practices are evidence of a fundamental conservation ethic built into South Pacific island cultures.

Until very recent times, most South Pacific island communities probably did not face overall resource shortages which might have made them conscious of resource limits. This is particularly the case in Melanesia where there are greater land masses and often extensive tropical rain forests.

Traders, whalers and other foreign opportunists of the nineteenth century, however, brought new concepts of resource uses and values to the Region. In a region where the impact of man on his overall environment had been small these intruders probed the limits of resources. Sandalwood was eliminated and is today a rarity. Whale and turtle populations were drastically reduced and have not recovered.

This environmentally and socially turbulent experience was followed by the relative stability brought by colonial administrations. A one-sided, exploitative attitude towards resource use, rather than conservation, has continued to this day. Exceptions to this general trend can be found, for example conservation legislation in certain colonial fisheries. These were not so much expressions of colonial policies formulated in London, Paris, Canberra, Berlin, Wellington or Washington as they were initiatives taken by the few perceptive colonial administrators of those times.

A strong sense of man-land interrelationship is fundamental to South Pacific island cultures. Members of indigenous communities consider themselves

to be an integral part of the land, in a way which outsiders find very difficult to understand. This feeling, though weakened by colonial directives and the Judaeo-Christian ethic of man's domination over environment, persists to varying extents. This fact, considered together with the knowledge that most South Pacific island decision-makers continue to identify with their rural origins, lends support to the hope that a firm and practical environmental management philosophy for contemporary resource development can be developed and sustained.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT TODAY

The five year "development plan", as formulated by economists and other specialists, has become politically popular among South Pacific island governments. Whether explicitly or implicitly, these development plans incorporate, in some form, a government's policies on natural resources management. Experience shows, however, that the level of a government's commitment to environmental management is unlikely to be revealed by a development plan. Commitment is determined rather by fluctuations in political will, the allocation of financial and manpower resources, and the relative level of environmental empathy which South Pacific island decision makers can maintain in a "Western" urban context.

All recent development plans have made some reference to environmental management; directly, in terms of specific policies and programs, or indirectly through references to the desirability of maintaining an attractive environment. At best, a whole chapter of a development plan is devoted to environmental management¹. The weakness of such isolated efforts is that their basic elements have not been integrated with the policies and programs of the various economic sectors of a development plan.

Papua New Guinea's Initiative

An excellent and innovative environmental management initiative was taken by Papua New Guinea when it took over control of its own affairs from Australia in 1974. Its first independent

government, humanitarian and idealistic, found itself saddled with a giant open cut copper mine which had been negotiated and approved by the colonial administration without reference to environmental safeguards. For this, and other reasons, the fourth of the Five National Goals of the National Constitution of Papua New Guinea was expressed:

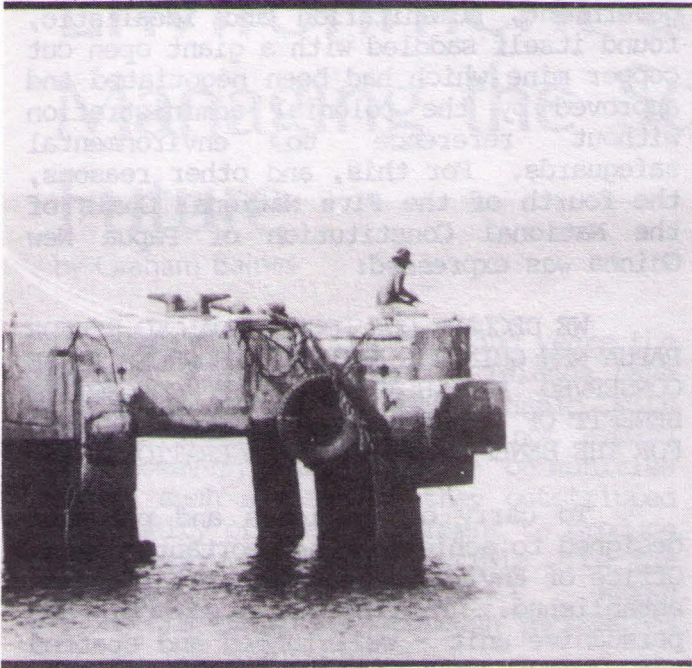
WE DECLARE OUR FOURTH GOAL TO BE FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S NATURAL RESOURCES TO BE CONSERVED AND USED FOR THE COLLECTIVE BENEFIT OF US ALL, AND TO BE REPLENISHED FOR THE BENEFIT OF FUTURE GENERATIONS.

To carry out policies and programs designed to achieve this important goal an Office of Environment and Conservation was established. This became a powerful and persuasive unit - well funded and staffed and armed with three innovative and comprehensive pieces of legislation: the Environmental Planning Act, the Environmental Contaminants Act, and the Conservation Areas Act.

After initial disquiet some of the mining companies, loggers and industrialists became accustomed to living with the exacting requirements of these laws, though always seeking opportunities to circumvent them. But the effectiveness of Papua New Guinea's environmental management initiative has been undermined by resistance within the administration itself. Inter-departmental rivalry, competition for funds and the consistent priority ranking of economic over social and environmental interests have weakened the system considerably.

In recent years there appears to be less emphasis on environmental management. Even so, Papua New Guinea remains the most innovative and effective of the South Pacific island governments in environmental management. And it is the most consistent and forceful in pursuing regional environmental objectives. It is not surprising, therefore, to observe that the formal initiative for the establishment of a regional program for environmental management in the South Pacific came from Papua New Guinea.

Fishing in Majuro's Polluted Lagoon



Fiji's Uncertainty

Fiji, on attaining independence in 1970, immediately adopted a bold stance of opposition to contamination of the South Pacific regional environment by radio activity from French nuclear weapons tests in the Tuamotu Islands². Though this firm commitment to protection of the regional environment continues, Fiji's commitment to environmental management within its borders is somewhat less enthusiastic. A strong "free-enterprise" philosophy of development prevails, in which economic considerations are emphasized, and environmental and social concerns are considered peripheral.

For over a decade the issues of environmental protection, balanced resource use and nature conservation have been debated in Fiji, and various environmental management initiatives have been taken. In Fiji's development plan for 1976-1980 a "Development and Environment" chapter outlined a philosophy of environmental management. Yet the environmental management administration, promised in that development plan, has yet to be set up. The only environmental amendment has been the establishment of an interagency committee limited to discussing environmental issues for the sake of better environmental understanding. It is to be hoped that the current status of environmental management

in Fiji is greater than is implied by the current (1981-1985) development plan in which a few lines on the importance of maintaining Fiji's attractive natural environment have been inserted into a secondary section entitled "Leisure, Recreation and Environment".

Despite the official reluctance to recognize the importance of environmental management for Fiji's future, some gains have been made by interested individuals and agencies. Certain public health and physical planning legislation has been used effectively by enlightened administrators to promote environmental management. A long-running struggle to protect mangrove ecosystems against pressures for waste disposal and reclamation continues, with some success. In another notable example, *Pinus caribbea* forests replaced degraded and fast-eroding grasslands in Fiji's dry zone.

Agencies and individuals working hard to promote environmental management in the face of official indifference are receiving assistance from the South Pacific regional Environmental Program.

Vanuatu's Hesitation

When Vanuatu was granted independence from an obstructive British-French colonial administration in 1980, the people of Vanuatu inherited a bizarre complex of three administrations - British, French and Condominium (a joint British/French administration) and three separate systems of law.

Responsibility for environmental management matters rests temporarily with a department primarily interested in geological survey and rural water supplies³. There is considerable potential in the South Pacific Regional Environment Program for assistance in establishing an effective approach to environmental management in Vanuatu.

Solomon's Unpreparedness

Even before gaining its independence from Britain in 1978 the Solomon Islands had an administrative focus for environmental matters, and a coordinating

inter-agency committee. However, interest in building on this foundation and firmly establishing environmental management, administratively and legally, has fluctuated. Presently, the environmental management focus is located within the Office of the Prime Minister. However, only one officer has been appointed for this work, operating within a Physical Planning Division.

Meanwhile there is growing concern over the logging of tropical rain forests and the potential of future mining and other developments to disrupt the environment, with which the rural population (comprising 90 percent of the country) closely identifies. A popular T-shirt sports the slogan **STOP THE KILLING: SAVE OUR TREE.** Effective administrative and legislative measures for dealing with these problems are lacking. Here, again, the South Pacific Regional Environmental Program is seen as an avenue of guidance and assistance.

Outside Interference

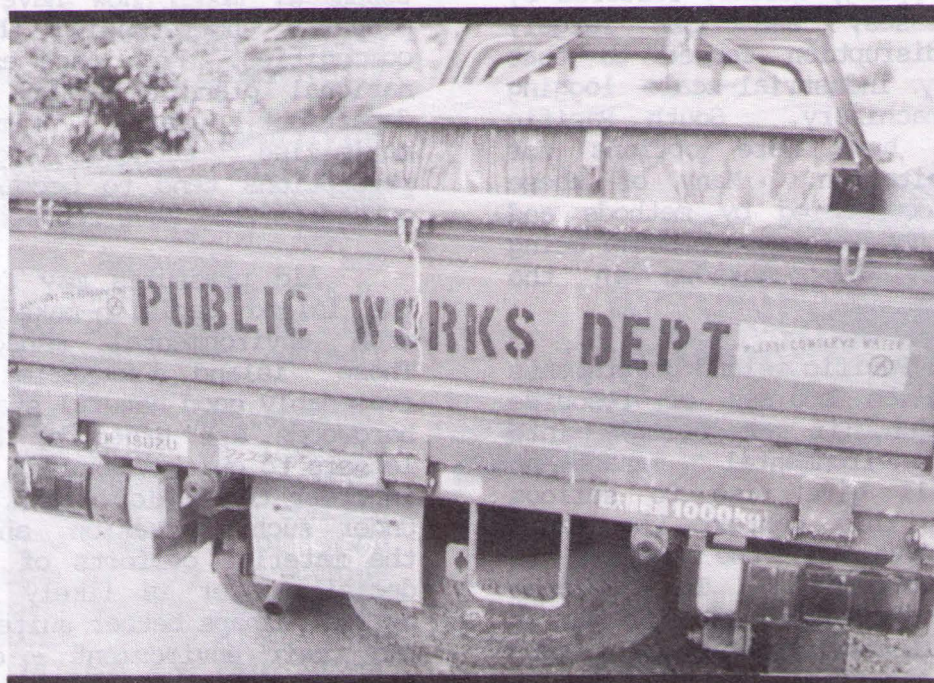
While the majority of South Pacific islanders are now free to make their own decisions and to determine what form of environmental management best suits their circumstances, some have to contend with policies imposed from Paris or Washington.

This is unfortunate for the people of New Caledonia, where prospecting for and extraction of nickel ore causes rivers to run thick and red with sediments scoured from open cut mines and a very extensive network of bulldozer tracks and drill holes in prospecting areas. The few existing legislative provisions for environmental protection are used very infrequently by the French administration in an island where the interests of the nickel industry - world's third largest - are paramount.

The failure of French colonial administrations to provide effective environmental management for those islanders they rule is dramatically demonstrated in French Polynesia. Here, the demands of the French nuclear weapons testing industry override all other considerations. Though public concern about the hazards of radioactivity escaping from the test site is great, debate about the problem is stifled and information suppressed.

Borrowed Legislation

South Pacific islanders in areas administered by the USA continue to suffer various environmental, political and social abuses. However, because at least some of the provisions of the US National



Conservation Bumper Sticker in Pohnpei

Environmental Protection Act apply in American-administered territories, some legislative powers and an essence of environmental management exist.

American Samoa had early success in this respect following the establishment in 1970 of a post concerned with environmental matters, based within the Office of the Governor. A long standing pollution problem created by a fish cannery in Pago Pago harbor was quickly brought under control.

PROSPECTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

The great hope for environmental management in the South Pacific Region is the environmental empathy of the islanders, drawn from cultures shaped in the tropical island context over many centuries. It does not follow, however, that South Pacific governments will be able to develop effective environmental management systems from that base alone. Profound changes have been worked in island cultures by colonial, missionary and, more recently, economic development influences.

Furthermore, the scale of environmental manipulation today is much greater than before. Consider, for example, the difference between the patchy disturbance of tropical rain forest by subsistence cropping, quickly restored by natural processes, and the largely irreversible disruption caused to that same forest by industrial-scale logging using heavy machinery. South Pacific islanders now have more options for resource exploitation. Many of these options are accompanied by methods and materials (not the least troublesome being chemicals) previously unknown in the Region.

All South Pacific island governments are proceeding on courses of resource development which, if not brought into line with environmental management principles, will give rise to serious problems. In this context the rapid population growth of the region is particularly worrying. The Solomon Islands, for instance, are facing a burgeoning population, growing at a rate of 3.4 percent annually.

Effective environmental management for the South Pacific Region should, wherever possible, incorporate relevant elements of the South Pacific island tradition. However, some environmental management concepts and methods developed in other cultural contexts must be introduced, and carefully modified to suit the special characteristics of South Pacific island societies.

In considering the prospects for environmental management it is important to note that there is a widening gap between decision-makers, who determine the nature and extent of resource development, and the majority of the peoples, rural communities identify strongly with their land and depend on its resources for their survival.

Much emphasis is given, with good reason, to placing responsibility for resource development policies and decisions in the hands of South Pacific islanders themselves, rather than with outsiders who may have the technical skills and experience but lack the essential "feel" for island people's needs and aspirations. But in this respect there is a growing problem which few recognize. Some islanders, having foregone a traditional informal village education in order to take up opportunities for education on a foreign, technical mode, now have difficulty in properly understanding their own rural communities. And, once established in a national planning office or a forestry department geared primarily towards maximizing economic growth, their perceptions tend to become those of the outsiders they have replaced.

Aid pressures may further distract the island decision-makers and planners from environmental management ideals. Those island countries which have reasonably good natural stands of tropical hardwoods are urged by aid donors and lenders to quickly exploit these resources in order to develop their cash economies. Under such persuasion, and living among the material comforts of the capital, a decision-maker is likely to overlook an option perhaps better suited to his people and their environment - exploitation of natural timber at a rate which could be

matched by rehabilitation of the logged areas for subsequent agriculture or forestry.

CONCLUSION

The development of environmental management options appropriate for modern development has proceeded to varying extents in South Pacific states and territories. There are good prospects that the excessive environmental disruption seen in other parts of the world can be avoided in the South Pacific, but this is not yet assured. The biggest move towards effective forms of resource management is the South Pacific Regional Environmental Program, which offers ideas, information, expertise and, not least, a stimulus which promises to boost even the weakest of environmental management systems.

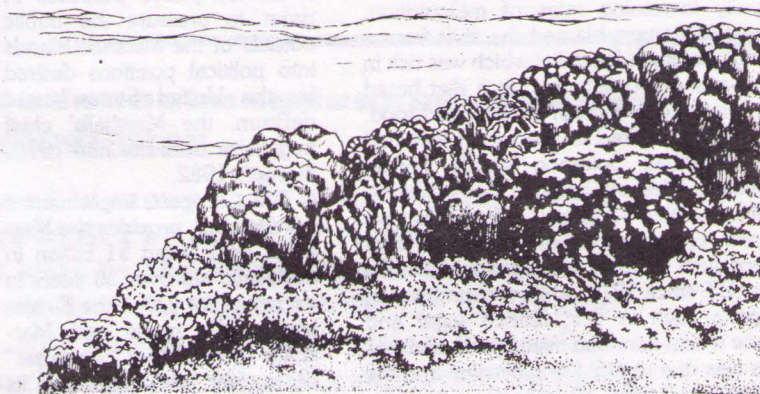
REFERENCES AND NOTES

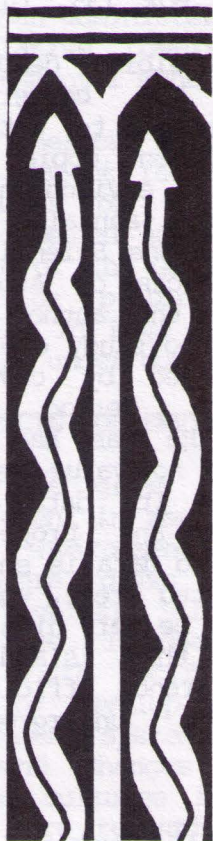
1. Examples are Fiji's Seventh Development Plan (1976-1980) and Western Samoa's Fourth Development Plan (1980-84).
2. Western Samoa actually was the first independent South Pacific island nation to voice its opposition to France's weapons tests, which were imposed on the region in 1966 after an Algerian test facility was forced to close. Levels of radioactive iodine detected in Apia, Western Samoa's capital, frequently rose dramatically during French tests.
3. A first step towards identifying Vanuatu's environmental management problems and indicating possible approaches to these is a report "Environment, Resources and Development in Vanuatu" by G.K.B. Baines, prepared on behalf of the United Nations Development Advisory Team for the Pacific, 1981.
4. Nongovernmental environmental organizations operating as pressure groups are rare in the South Pacific, not because of lack of public concern but because the concept of such groups, operating as they do outside the established structure, is alien to traditional social structures. The slogan quoted is from the Rain Forest

Resources Center, PO Box 135, Gizo, Solomon Islands.

5. It has not been possible, despite repeated efforts by concerned individuals and agencies, to obtain from the French government copies of the reports on environmental radioactivity submitted annually by them to the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. However, the author of this article was able to study one of these reports, obtained by covert means, covering a period of atmospheric tests. He has had to conclude that it has no value as a scientific document. Its data are based on inadequate and properly documented sampling. No data is shown for the nearest populated areas, where the hazard is known to be very high by virtue of the fact that islanders there are forced by French officials into thick concrete underground shelters.

[Source: AMBIO. Volume XIII. Number 5-6. 1984. Reprinted with permission of the author and AMBIO]





US forced Marshall Islands to sign nuclear settlement

The United States used economic pressure to force the Marshall Islands government to sign away the rights of its citizens to sue the United States for nuclear testing damages, a high level Marshalls official said in a sworn court affidavit.

The statement by former chief Compact of Free Association negotiator and now Minister of Health Tony deBrum was the first by a Cabinet level official concerning the controversial provision in the Compact which seeks to bar the currently pending \$5 billion in lawsuits.

U.S. attorneys state that the Compact treaty with the Marshall Islands, which limits nuclear testing compensation to \$150 million, represents full and final compensation for nuclear testing which occurred between 1946-1958. If the provision is upheld by the judge presiding over the current legal dispute it would prevent the Marshallese claims for nuclear damages from coming to trial.

Mr deBrum stated that the nuclear claims part of the Compact was not the product of mutual agreement. During the negotiations the U.S. "could and did provide or withhold funds for public purposes in order to pressure the public officials of the Marshall Islands into political positions desired by the United States," said deBrum, the Marshalls' chief negotiator from the mid-1970s through 1982.

The Compact, implemented last October, provides the Marshalls with about \$1 billion in economic aid over 30 years in exchange for use of the Kwajalein missile range and Marshalls' government "espousal" of nuclear test claims by its citizens.

"I pointed out to the United States delegation (during the negotiations) that espousal by the government of the Marshall

Islands was under our custom, law and constitution, illegal and unconstitutional," said deBrum. "... We insisted that any settlement of the nuclear claims be approved by the individual claimants."

Mr deBrum said that U.S. officials told the Marshalls it "should trade off the rights of the claimants for other concessions from the U.S. in other parts of the Compact."

The Marshall Islands was a United Nations Trust Territory governed by the U.S. during the Compact negotiations. Nearly all of the Marshalls financial aid came from the U.S.

Mr deBrum said that the U.S. held out the "carrot" of Trusteeship termination in 1981. Relying on these promises and with the backing of U.S. officials, the Marshalls took multi-million loans for infrastructure — a power station, new dock and airplanes — "necessary to an independent government".

"Once the government of the Marshall Islands was burdened with this debt the carrot was

removed, the trusteeship was not terminated and the government of the United States refused to assist with relief of the burden assumed in reliance upon American promises," he said.

During the early 1980s the U.S. began using the Marshalls debt to press the north Pacific island group to agree to the nuclear claims settlement that would bar citizens from suing the U.S.

To gain the Marshalls support, deBrum asserted, the U.S. included a variety of financial incentives in the Compact, including free importation rights, tax concessions and authority to control territorial waters.

"After the plebiscite (which approved the Compact), the U.S. unilaterally changed the provisions of the Compact through its internal legislative process by withdrawing from the Compact these provisions which had induced some of us to support the Compact plebiscite, thereby making a mockery of the Marshallese people's act of self-determination," he said. — Giff Johnson.

MALNUTRITION RATES UP

A UN report has found that Pacific Island people have some of the world's most rapidly increasing rates of malnutrition. The FAO report blamed the shift from a traditional fresh food diet which was rich in fibre and micro-nutrients, to a diet based on imported and often over-refined food. Countries covered in the report included PNG, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Western Samoa, Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, Niue and Palau. It found that per capita consumption of traditional root crops such as yams and taro had fallen by over 8% since 1970, while consumption of imports such as rice, refined sugar and white wheat flour had risen by 6% and said this was due to rapid urbanisation and the relative cheapness of imports.

[PACIFIC ISLANDS MONTHLY, MAY 1987]



Bikini Atoll Mayor Tomaki Juda, at left (with arms folded), leads a prayer during a brief visit to Bikini.

Belau Update

As expected, another plebiscite on the Compact of Free Association between Belau and the United States was scheduled for June 23, 1987.

However, there were serious questions raised about the absentee ballot procedure, and in a court case brought against the government by the Ibedul (High Chief), the Court ruled that the June 23 vote be reset and that the plebiscite be held within a month of that date.

The ruling was yet another embarrassment to the government of Belau, especially since the U.N. Observer Team was in Belau for the June 23 vote. During the court case, it was found that while there are only some 10,000 voters, there were 18,000 ballots printed, leading to speculation that vote-switching of absentee ballots would be undertaken in Hawaii.

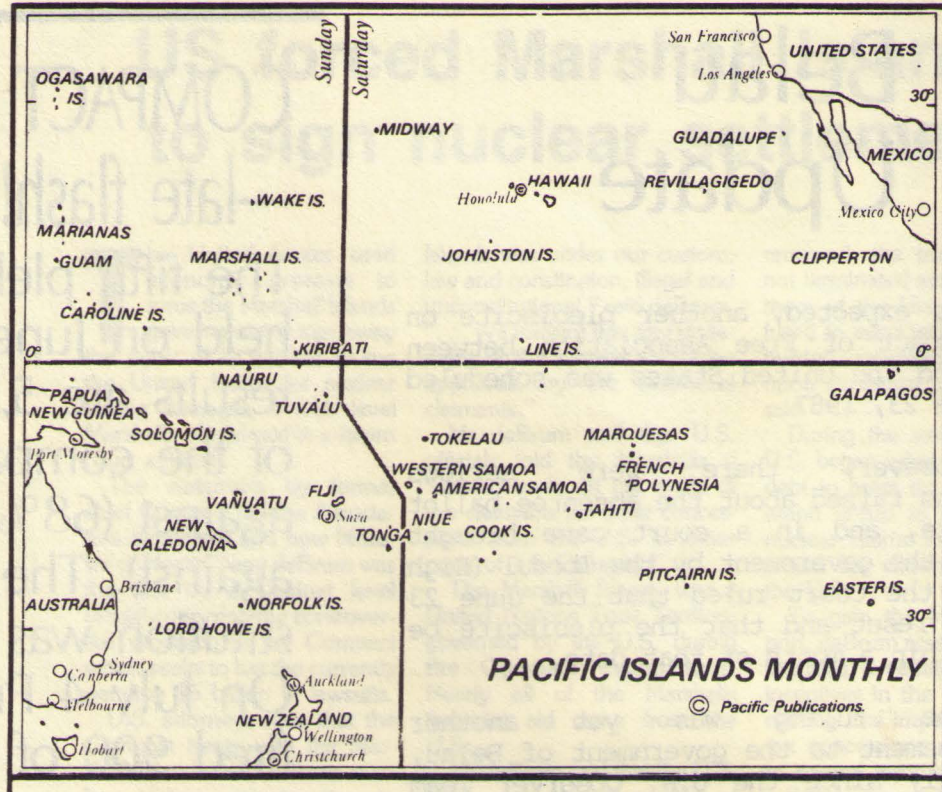
This plebiscite is the fifth on the Compact - which sees the U.S. give Belau a 15 year funding package in exchange for military use of Belau - and the eighth vote on Belau's nuclear free constitution in four and eight years respectively.

COMPACT REJECTED— —late flash!!

The fifth plebiscite was held on June 30. Final results are 5,500 in favour of the compact and 2,600 against (68% for; 32% against). The Belau constitution was upheld again. On July 4 President Saliu fired 900 of the 1,333 government employees. It is not clear what will happen next in Belau, but it is almost certain there will be no more referendums until after the Presidential elections in November, 1988.

About this newsletter . . .

TOK BLONG SPPF is pidgin english as used in many parts of the Pacific. It might literally be translated as "this talk belongs to SPPF" or, SPPF Newsletter. TOK BLONG SPPF is published four times per year by the South Pacific Peoples Foundation of Canada, 409-620 View St., Victoria, B.C., Canada V8W 1J6, and is available to donors of SPPF (minimum \$10 yr.). SPPF exists to raise critical issues in the South Pacific to a Canadian audience through a variety of public education methods, and to assist in getting relevant Canadian financial, technical and other assistance into the South Pacific to assist islanders in their self-development. Partial financial support for this newsletter from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is gratefully acknowledged. We welcome readers comments on items carried in this newsletter, as well as suggestions for articles and copies of Pacific news clippings, etc, which would be of use to our work. TOK BLONG SPPF is edited by Phil Esmonde.



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