

Tok Blong SPPF

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photo by Elaine Briere

Marketsplace, Tonga

E. Briere

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SPPF Update

Since development in the Pacific Islands is the central concern of the SPPF network and development education is the "business" of SPPF, let me introduce myself as the new Executive Director of SPPF with a few words on development.

Development is the process by which people are empowered to change their lives for the better. In order to provide genuine and lasting benefits development must be equitable, participatory, and sustainable.

Equitable development must begin by focusing on basic needs. Creating the means to satisfy basic needs for food, shelter, health care, and education must take precedence over non-essential benefits for the few.

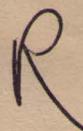
Development is by definition a participatory process. It should offer individuals increased control over their own lives and the future of their communities. In particular development must ensure that women and the poor can and do participate more fully in their own societies.

The continuing interest of the great powers in the South Pacific as a testing ground, dumping ground resource mine, and strategic playing field will continue to add to the pressures on the people of the Pacific.

Canada is a Pacific nation, yet we do not share the colonial history or strategic interests of other developed nations. This gives Canadians an important role to play in promoting development and social justice in the South Pacific.

The growing network of social justice and development organisations in Canada means there is an increasingly large pool of interest, expertise, and support to be mobilized on South Pacific issues.

I look forward to working with friends and supporters of SPPF, the board, my fellow staffer, CIDA, and Pacific Islanders in strengthening our work.



Randy Garrison

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. individuals; \$25/yr. groups). 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 reserves the right to edit material. Views expressed do not necessarily represent the South Pacific Peoples Foundation.

WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The following interview took place on June 18, 1989 in Victoria, B.C., Canada.

Phil Esmonde: Au, you have been very active with women's organizations in Papua New Guinea and are very knowledgeable about the situation of women in Papua New Guinea. In general, what is the situation of women in Papua New Guinea today?

Au Doko: In the early 60s, at the beginning of my involvement, change was slowly coming and various developments were taking place like the introduction of new food items. Women have adapted themselves well, mainly because the government has taken so much interest in them through the welfare offices. There the women were able to gain some knowledge about what they should do. At the same time the office was preparing the women to meet the needs of their husbands who were taking up jobs with the government. This was preparation to live in the cities and have some knowledge on what their husbands were involved in and the type of jobs they hold and so forth. So a lot of work was done on the domestic basis to upgrade their knowledge of cookery, sewing, cleaning, general hygiene, nutrition and apart from what they should know living in a city situation with people from other parts of the country.

PE: Obviously there are some transitional difficulties and challenges both for women and men as people move from the rural areas into the new urban centres. What are the particular new challenges and concerns that women are faced with in the urban areas?

AD: As transition is taking place women move with their husbands to the cities. As well, women have been educated to take up jobs within the work force. This has brought a lot of changes. They are living in the cities with very little knowledge on why certain development has taken place. For example, alcohol was introduced into the country long before

the country was independent, and there is a problem with how people take it and deal with it.

Women now have been educated and take up jobs with the government or with the private sector and that gives them an independence. As well they can think for themselves and speak for themselves. This conflicts with our traditions. Our traditional way has been that men are always the head of the family and are supposed to make decisions. Publicly women never spoke. Women now find that they can speak because many things are happening in the country which are increasing problems they are having with their children. There is a law and order problem. Men are also turning more violent or women have violence in their home because of the alcohol and less money is given them so they cannot maintain their families. So some of the issues that women have taken up in the course of the 10 years since independence are alcohol, and domestic violence and also the political standing for women in the country. We discuss where women should be to influence the decisions of men in the committees or councils which is the important part of decision making in the government. Therefore we have lobbied hard to ensure that women sit on these committees so they are able to influence the decisions and at the same time contribute whatever they can to upgrade the standard of women in Papua New Guinea.

PE: Let's look at each of the issues you mention: alcohol and the impact on society and specifically on women, violence against women in the society and women in decision making positions. Maybe we can start with alcohol. What has been the situation in terms of the increase of alcohol abuse and alcohol use and availability in Papua New Guinea and what specifically has been the impact on women from that?

AD: The use of alcohol in Papua New Guinea is a social problem because in Papua New

Guinea the men drink and sometimes the women have less money given to them. When the women ask questions about where the money goes, and why does he spend his time drinking, the women are bashed up just to shut them up. The result is a lot of financial abuse and emotional abuse when women speak up for their rights. Women find it very hard to tolerate this situation. Women have taken on the issue of domestic violence and now we are dealing with educating our women to know about their legal rights. It can be the last resource for them to use, but they should be aware that there are existing laws in the country against domestic violence which are made for them to use. This can help keep the family together and at the same time educate the men against violence and alcohol abuse or being provoked when women ask what has been done with the income that should be going to the family.

PE: How knowledgeable are women in Papua New Guinea of the law and do they speak up when there is violence against them?

AD: It's very limited, Phil. The laws were written before Papua New Guinea became independent, and we know very little. All we know is if you take a man to court he can go to jail. But there is more than that. As we go into the issue women are now aware that the law can help them in many ways other than taking their husbands to jail. A preventive order can be made so a man is warned not to hit his wife again. These are some of the things women now are starting to know and they can even ask for protection if there is more violence. This will help them and I think that having some knowledge can give women a sense of some responsibility, and they can act on what is good for their situations.

Traditionally, and it is a problem the world over, domestic violence is not a new thing. Traditionally a women raised in Papua New Guinea knows that her role is to be a mother and at the same time take care of what is good for the family. But there are problems that hinder her in doing what is right for her children or the whole family, so here again we have conflicts or problems and this is where we are trying to help the situation through education.

PE: What kind of things are hindering her, what kinds of conflicts are arising in society?

AD: Well, she is not confident. She is not confident enough to stand up for herself and confident enough that she can go to the court and do things for herself because she is not aware that there are existing laws as I said. She doesn't realize there are friends that she can go to talk to — she doesn't have the courage because women often think if they do that they are thought of as being bad. The community always thinks that whatever happens to them is their fault. So women tell themselves not to go and do something that could help themselves. They do not have the self esteem.

PE: Tradition is still very strong in Papua New Guinea from my understanding. There is a bride price that is paid for women. Is it then seen that the woman becomes a possession and almost a slave to be used by the husband to do work and to maintain only his needs rather than her own needs as well?

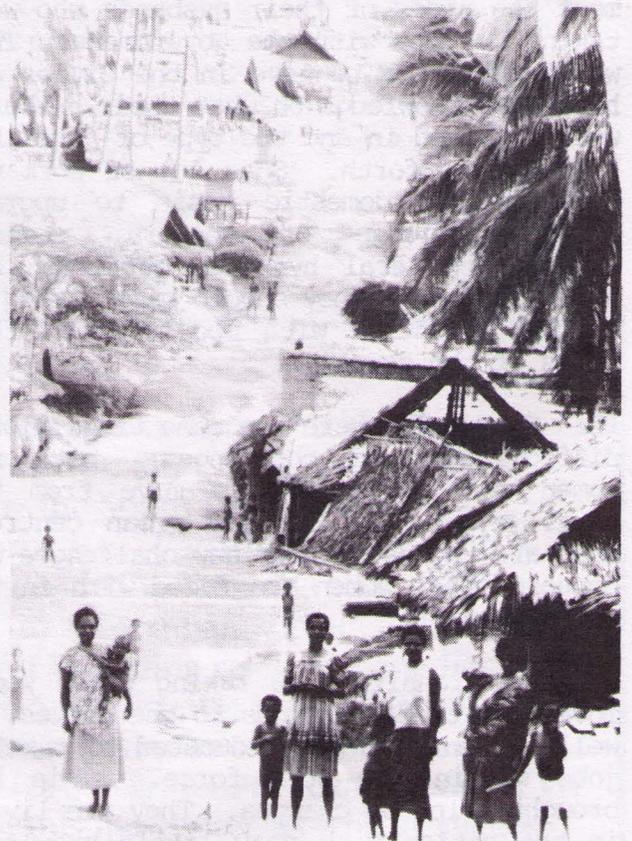


photo by Quentin Shaw

AD: Well it is a very, very strong custom that a man must pay a bride price to the woman's people. It sort of gives a legal status to that marriage, a recognition for both parties. At the same time, it was meant for bringing two families together and to have the woman's children recognized in both villages. But nowadays the bride price has become very commercialized and men have given so much to have a woman and she is supposed to be doing what he believes she should do. So there is a high demand to perform or to do whatever is necessary for the man's family. Therefore when she cannot meet these needs and what is expected of her there is always a problem for the woman. Sometimes it is very difficult for a woman to get out of that marriage, although she finds that she cannot stand the situation, because the bride price has been paid. The bride price hinders a woman, and her ability to make decisions for herself.

PE: Does the bride price also hinder her from speaking up about violence and does it also assist the man in thinking that the woman has been paid for and thus he is free to hit her?

AD: Well, too many men think that they have that right. That was mentioned when we did a campaign on wife beating. Traditionally man has a right, he paid for her therefore he should do whatever he will do to correct her. But that is not our point of view now. We are looking at how women and anybody has a right that they should not be beaten. Our survey had found that 73% of the women killed in Papua New Guinea are killed by the constant beating of their husbands, which is not a very nice thing for many families.

PE: 73% of women who are murdered are as a result of beating?

AD: Yes, constant beating by their husbands.

PE: In terms of the population in Papua New Guinea what percentage of women have you found are beaten by their husbands, either constantly or sometimes?

AD: Well, the 73% is just data that has been collected by the Health Department where they have found that constant beatings by men has caused death. But

wife beating really is a problem of the educated woman. She is being constantly beaten by her husband, especially in the city. This again shows that as women become educated they know themselves and they know what is their right in the family and they also earn their own living and this gives the men a lot of insecurity. We have gone to the stage where we can now see that women and men are equal in many instances. So this is really conflicting with our traditional roles. At the same time educated women are becoming more confident and they see that they can do things independently without having to fear. If anything happens, that they can look after themselves and maintain themselves.

PE: So educated women are getting more beaten than non-educated women because the non-educated women are not seen as threats. But obviously non-educated women are getting beaten as well. Other than knowledge of the law, and an increasing self confidence that comes with education for women, what else is being done in terms of the serious problem of battering of women in Papua New Guinea and the traditional view of women as a possession?

AD: We have done a lot of work through adult education to help the women to understand and take part in community as well as take an active role in decision making in their own communities and to find ways that women can make decisions at the political level. That has been an encouragement to a lot of women in that they now understand that the alcohol abuse cannot stop, the domestic violence cannot stop and they cannot protect themselves as much if they don't have a voice to speak up for themselves.

So we have a National Council of Women where we are trying to be under one umbrella and can speak out for and upgrade the standard of women in the country politically, socially and economically. We have come to the stage that we have to speak out more so that we can be seen as partners in development. Women in the villages could not speak out as much, but now they are speaking out because there are women's organizations mobilized through churches, non government organizations and so forth and women have come to realize they have a responsibility not just in their homes but also in the community.



PE: What is the situation of women's groups throughout the country? Are they well organized? Are they well funded? Is there government support? How widespread are they?

AD: The women's organizations are very active and involved in the community and work toward developing women mentally, spiritually, and so forth. In terms of organizing, the women's organizations still have problems administrating and managing their affairs as they have very little skill and knowledge in these areas. Most of the women who are working for women's organizations are at a volunteer level and do not have much knowledge or training on how to run these organizations. There are a few elite types of women's organizations that do have some knowledge in administration and management. These groups also are able to obtain some funds through international agencies or through the government.

Government supports women's organizations and women's development, but there is not much funding that has been given to women so that they can carry out

what is best for themselves. So, although the government has made one of the priorities of development to educate women to take part in the development of the country, when it comes to the practicality of it, there is not much support through funding women's organizations. So we are struggling, and we know we cannot stop, but we have to work in order to do whatever is necessary for the women's development in the country.

PE: Do most of the provinces in Papua New Guinea have women's organizations?

AD: Yes. I would say yes. The churches in all parts of the country are very active and the largest women's organizations are now run by the churches. Also there are provincial councils of women which are still trying to bring women together to be more politically aware. At the same time the YWCA exists in the provinces and we do whatever is in our capacity to help. We are not a big organization but we have strength through our international relationship and it gives us a little bit more knowledge on how to organize what we are doing in the country.

PE: What about in terms of women's role and advancement in decision making in the country? What's that situation like now and what has been taking place? Are there more women that are actively involved? Are there any women Members of Parliament? Are there any women high up in the government ministries?

AD: Well, there are just 4 women who are departmental heads. And I would say about twenty are middle level executives. That is not much. Politically, we do not have anybody at the moment in the Parliament. That does not mean that we are not interested. We had 17 women who stood for the last election. Unfortunately, none made it and we are now in the process of trying to encourage women to take a more active role in politics so that they can be able to have some fair say in the Parliament. So that's one of the areas that we are now becoming more aware of. We have to be in the Parliament in order to represent ourselves, so that we can speak out for the women. We are working at it and I would say women are now more politically aware than they were 5 years ago.

PE: One of the areas where women have great impact and which has impact on the whole family and the society is in nutrition. Often I have run across information which has suggested that in some areas of Papua New Guinea the man gets fed first and sometimes the children are malnourished because of that. How are women involved in coming to some solutions?

AD: In preparation of food women know what they can prepare and what is best for their families. But as you say there is also a problem with our culture that says the men have to be fed first and our children come after.. That has also changed since women have become educated. In the cities families all eat together. The more the women are educated the more they are able to understand the value of having to have nutritional food cooked for their families, as well as cleanliness for their families. This is one of the basic areas we have to do a little bit more work on, although our social services and health services have improved a lot. Our mortality rate has dropped and there is an increase in fertility rate. If you look at the nutrition and health services, it has improved our situation but there is a lot more to do to combat malnutrition, because women still have to know the preparation of food and what food they can use. They also need to overcome the tradition where men are supposed to have the best and then children come after. These are some of the things that we have to do. I know the status has improved but there is more need to educate the women to know more about the nutrition and the value of it and how women should look after their own bodies.

PE: Cleanliness?

AD: Yes, cleanliness and the type of food women eat while bearing children and raising them. It helps a person to live a longer life so really for a person to live a longer life depends on the mother - how she looks after herself and what she knows about health and hygiene and nutrition and so forth.

PE: As well as the new challenges for women in terms of the changes in Papua New Guinea society and challenges to the traditional way of doing things, there are other challenges coming in Papua New

Guinea and much has to do with the richness of the resources of Papua New Guinea: the logging, fishing, copper, gold and oil. Traditional landowners in North Solomons Province have been protesting the results of the Bougainville Copper mine feeling they haven't got compensation for what has taken place on their land. Can you just say what some of the roots of that problem are from your knowledge, and what that is indicating about some of the problems and difficulties and challenges in Papua New Guinea.

AD: Well, in Papua New Guinea when policies were made in the early stages knowing the importance of our natural resources and what they could bring in as revenue for the country, landowners had a very small percentage (about 5%) for royalties for use of their land. That is really nothing. At the same time as the mining continues over the years, a lot of the environment has become very polluted and people find their land has been used and the multinational company is getting more and the government is getting more, even the provincial government is getting more. The real landowners themselves are getting very, very little although this was the land they farmed. They find it's very difficult to believe the little they get out of the land that they call theirs and how much goes to the multinational companies and to the government. They are not really benefiting and they can see the injustices done so they are trying to fight it and talk about it with the government, but there has not been much understanding. They have taken it into their own hands to demonstrate their feelings and frustrations and the need to discuss them. These discussions have not taken place and nobody really has heard them. They know this is their land. It is something that belongs to them. Therefore they should be given more than what they are given now.

Over the years there is so much that has happened. The rivers are polluted and the fish is no longer the same. They can't eat the fish, it's badly polluted and very unhealthy. At the same time, where the people used to plant their food crops the soil is no longer good. The people are displaced from where they used to do their planting and gathering of food and the game has gone.



PE: What about other areas of Papua New Guinea? Will there be other situations like this?

AD: Well I'm pretty sure that there are other places where mines have been opened up. At this stage Papua New Guinea is really going through a mining boom. International companies are coming in and working after being invited by the government. But there are more and more Papua New Guineans becoming aware, especially with the Bougainville situation at the moment. They can see that they will be treated in the same manner because the more the people are educated, the more they hear what is happening to other parts of the country. This makes them think about their own situations. For example, in the Pogera mine, the landowners have been fighting about who owns that land so they can get their share. And just fighting over the land so that they can also have the wealth of it has also caused a lot of internal problems for themselves.

PE: Within the village itself?

AD: No within the tribes, because it is tribal owned land. So when you look at this it is not helping the people, because people are also fighting to have the wealth, but again who owns it? Is it the people's or the government's? That is the question. So these are the debates that are taking place now. We accept the mines because we need the revenue in order to maintain and develop the necessary services for the country and that's important. At the same time peoples' frustrations and peoples' concerns have to be met, so that the government and people work together.

PE: How many mines are operating now in Papua New Guinea?

AD: So far about four mines are operating in the country. Two companies are still in the process of finding out the viability of the mines. There are a lot more resources in Papua New Guinea in many places. And it's not just gold mines or copper mines but logging is also a big thing, and the land is owned by people. So really this is where we are concerned. It is Papua New Guinea people who own the land and therefore we should have more to say about what we own and what is happening right now.

PE: What is the situation with logging in Papua New Guinea? Is it wide spread and are the logging practices positive ones?

AD: Well it is in a lot of places and government has invited several international companies to log. I think our policies need reviewing and in this way it will help the land owners particularly to have more share from their land.

PE: Other than the compensation question around logging or other resources, is there good knowledge amongst the people of logging practices? Are the multi-national companies just coming in and stripping the forest with the government not reviewing or watching what they are doing?

AD: The people themselves do not know very much about the environment and what happens if the trees are all cut down. All the people know is they can give their land to the government and the international companies who log it and landowners can get some returns. They do

not know very much about the after effects. Whenever they find out they ask questions. Otherwise the international companies come and log but there is no education of the people. I think also it is the responsibility of the government to educate the people, as well as to have some power to protect the environment for the future. And nowadays we have a lot of climate change because our rainforests are being cut down. We are having more floods in the provinces as well as droughts. The people do not understand much of these things, but this is the result of the forest being cut down. And it's getting cut more and more.

PE: It's getting more and more serious in terms of the cutting down of the rain-forest? Is the government doing any of this education or is the government itself ignorant of some of the consequences?

AD: Well, to my understanding, the government has set up its department of the environment and conservation and they have started to educate the people that certain animals and certain environments should be protected, but how far they have gone with this education as well as protecting the land and the wild life species is something which I do not know, so I cannot comment very much on it. As far as I understand the people themselves are not very aware of what they should do to prevent unnecessary problems coming from this continued logging.

PE: So the government really isn't very active in raising these questions in the villages and in the places where the country's being logged? How do these companies get into these areas? Do the people, because there's lack of knowledge, do they just say we can make a few kina and we can give our logs away and we'll have a little bit more development?

AD: Well, I think the government is aware of the location of certain natural resources in the country. And multinationals have moved in and carried out their own explorations. Requests are always being made and investors invest on what they feel is profitable for them. So again, villagers themselves - although they may know that they have the resources don't go in to sell them. It is always through the government. So I would say that in the process of planning, people

are not very much involved. It's mostly a top down approach.

PE: Are any of the skills being passed on to Papua New Guineans when these companies are operating in the country?

AD: Well, that is one of the things that we have been fighting and 'localization' has been one of the government's programs. But if people cannot cope with the development and people are not in the position of making decisions in these industries, then it shows that we don't have many trained people. We have a lot of unskilled human resources employed. A national decision on Papua New Guineans getting trained? I don't think there is any - there is not much. So this doesn't give us any way where we can protect our resources and people.

PE: What about logging? Is there any processing in Papua New Guinea, or are these companies taking out the raw logs and doing the processing and manufacturing somewhere else?

AD: There is only very, very small industrial development because of the high cost of operation, and investors find that to invest in manufacturing is a very costly exercise. So primarily logs are taken out and processed outside. But the government is encouraging industries to be started in Papua New Guinea and some is already taking place.



PE: The other big resource that is being found in Papua New Guinea is oil. Is there an oil boom in Papua New Guinea as well? Is there much industry or is it just that they are finding oil and maybe later they will set up some oil wells?

AD: Well, Phil, I have not really heard that much. There are prospects for oil but we have not come to that stage yet. We are still in the process of the mining boom but not to oil yet.

PE: Another issue that is facing Papua New Guinea that's a difficult issue for the government and people of Papua New Guinea is the Papuans who are in Irian Jaya - taken over by Indonesia and given to Indonesia through questionable methods by the United Nations. There are Papuans in what they call West Papua who are related culturally and ethnically to people in Papua New Guinea. There has been fighting in West Papua over the years, and there are now many, many refugees in Papua New Guinea. The government of Papua New Guinea seems to fear upsetting the Indonesians and so accepts the Irian Jaya situation but the refugees - what's happening in terms of the peoples' knowledge and interest? You have been to the refugee camps along the border. What's the situation in Papua New Guinea right now with this issue?

AD: There hasn't been much of an understanding by the people of Papua New Guinea except by those who have been educated or who are involved in development. They know that Papua New Guinea is sharing a border with another country. In 1985 the influx of refugees took place and at the same time there was not much assistance by the government when there was an outbreak of disease in the camps. This brought a lot of international attention focussed on this issue itself, the Irian Jaya refugees, and that was the first time that the country really came to understand more about what was taking place on the other side of the border. People moved from Irian Jaya to Papua New Guinea because Indonesian soldiers were destroying their villages. The media has done a lot of work to help the Papua New Guineans to understand the situation at the other side of the country since then. I would say the people in the western part of Papua New Guinea where they are sharing the border with Irian

Jaya or Indonesia have a better understanding because they have been receiving the refugees. People further away don't have much knowledge. But I would say media has done a lot of work on educating people on the situation.

Politically people are aware that there is a problem and that Papua New Guinea is sharing a border with a highly populated and stronger economy. We know that the people in Irian Jaya are very much the same as Papua New Guineans, and therefore we sympathize with them, but the Papua New Guinea government has signed a convention recognizing the refugees and has taken a step by providing a permanent location if they don't want to go back. They can stay on land and they can build their homes and even start agriculture projects so they can make some income for themselves. To my knowledge schools have been built for the children. As well, the health department has moved in and the agriculture department has moved in and various international agencies are also working together with the government to do whatever they can to help the people in the camp.

PE: How many refugees are in Papua New Guinea?

AD: In 1986 there were over 20,000 refugees but some had voluntarily gone back so that leaves less than 20,000 still in the camp. About 13 camps along the border have been moved to the new location. It will make it easier for the government to give them supplies, transportation and communication. In the past it has been very, very difficult for the refugees to receive any help. Transportation was very poor, the communication was very poor. They just had the Catholic Mission's Twin Otter - a small plane - to carry a little food in. The transport alone was costing a lot of money, where it could be better utilized in one place. So I think that is the reason why they moved everybody to the new camp. Although they are uprooting them again from where they have already made good homes for their families, by moving them to be in one place it will help them. The government will save some of that money to establish better development for the refugees. At least they have been recognized.

PE: It also takes down some of the tension on the border area if they are

moved away from the border where the Indonesians may not like them, some of them being active. What is the situation on the border in the last little while from your knowledge? Has the tension gone down and are there still people coming across as refugees, or is it quiet?

AD: It is a little bit more quiet now. There are not many crossing at this time. The biggest influx was in 1985. I'm sure there is always continuous small numbers. But to move refugees a further distance from the border gives them more security and at the same time a bigger land mass that they can utilize. There are three types of refugees; one is just the villagers fleeing their villages in fear of their lives. A very small number are skilled as teachers, nurses or office workers. Those with skills are the only ones who can be given the opportunity to live in the cities. It would be very hard for the villagers to live in the cities where there is no employment. So I think what the government has done what will help them in the long run.

PE: Who are the third kind of refugees? You said they were three kinds, the villagers, the skilled people. Who are the third?

AD: The third would be the political people; the people who have some involvement in political decisions.

PE: The OPM, the independence fighters?

AD: Yes, those are the ones. And sometimes if a third country is found for them, they are sent to those countries.

PE: Is there anything that you want to conclude with?

AD: Well, you know Phil, to me whatever the trend of development that Papua New Guinea is having, I think we have come to understand that we have gone too fast. And now we are reviewing and our government and people are discussing and debating what we have done and where we have got to and where we are now in this transition. Should we go forward or should we assess our situation so that we can do better for our people? For me, it is a healthy situation because people are aware. They want so much but at the same time they can see the problems. So non profit organizations, the churches and the government are now talking to each other about what they can do best for the people. The most important thing is that we are becoming aware.

PNG promotes "more accurate reporting" of regional affairs

Papua New Guinea's Deputy Prime Minister Akoka Doi received wide support amongst Forum leaders last week for a proposal that a seminar be held for reporters on the South Pacific, media executives and government officials from Island countries - probably before the end of the year.

Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Nauru and Fiji expressed particular concern at reporting by the Australian and New Zealand media. The aim of the seminar would be to allow an exchange of views and ideas leading to "more accurate reporting".

Doi said current reporting was a "very serious problem. It is damaging and hinders investment opportunities in the (South Pacific) countries".

Asked for an example of biased reporting by the Australian media he cited Bougainville "such as reports on security forces bashing up citizens and burning houses - where two or three houses may have been burnt the Australian media will say a village. . . ."

The proposal was supported by Australia and New Zealand on the understanding that "there was no suggestion of any infringement of that basic principle of freedom of the Press", Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke told reporters.

In 1998, at the end of this ten year period, New Caledonians will be asked to choose between independence and staying within the French Republic.

The FLNKS (which represents about 80% of the native peoples) was recognized as the legitimate representative of the Kanaks and the previous statut, the Pons statut, was put on hold. This is an important point since it was the Pons statut, with its systematic recolonization of Kanak lands by non-Kanaks, which provoked the most violence in the Territory. Another important victory for the Independence Front was the release of all Kanak political prisoners, that is, those Kanaks being held in French prisons for crimes related to the independence struggle. And of course the French government has promised to promote Kanak culture and preserve Kanak heritage in New Caledonia.

The Territory was divided into three regions - northern, southern and islands - and the Kanaks now have control of the predominantly rural northern and islands regions, where they represent the majority of the population. One of the most interesting aspects of the accords is the decentralization of bureaucratic structures and government services so as to better serve the more remote northern and islands regions and the gradual removal of more than 4000 public servants. Priority will be given to the training of Kanak civil servants, police officers, judges, doctors, teachers, nurses, etc. There is even talk of relocating the territorial capital to the northern province.

In order to re-equilibrate the Kanak regions with the predominantly white, urban southern region, the northern and island provinces will benefit from 75% of the Territory's public investment budget. Development projects will be undertaken and a youth training program will be instituted in order to incorporate young Kanaks into community development projects. Plans are underway to create an economic center in the North at Nepoui - an ambitious project which includes the construction of a deep water port, an international airport, and an oil refinery.

The recent assassination of Jean-Marie Tjibaou, one of the chief architects of the accords, and his second in command Yeiwene Yeiwene jeopardized the fragile peace in the Territory. Were they victims of a struggle between moderate FLNKS elements and those unwilling to trust the French and the Matignon accords? The provincial elections in July confirmed the FLNKS commitment to the accords but how strong this commitment will be remains to be seen. The new municipal and provincial representatives are putting all their energies into seeing that the Kanak regions "take off". However, they are already confronting bureaucratic foul ups and slow downs - a dangerous situation given the administration's history of broken promises. Much will depend on the ability of the French government to institute change quickly. Any amount of foot-dragging could be seen as an unwillingness or inability to keep one's word. The situation in New Caledonia remains volatile but for now peace is easier to live with than war.

[Donna Winslow visited New Caledonia in June 1989.]

NATURAL RESOURCES THREATENED ON MANY SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS

They're pictured as idyllic bits on paradise, but many Pacific islands are facing destruction of their natural resources, according to an environmental specialist at the East-West Center in Honolulu.

"Accompanying the drama of resource development in Pacific island nations has been rapid population growth and cultural change, all of which place the environment and many plant and animal species in jeopardy," says Lawrence Hamilton of the Center's Environment and Policy Institute.

"Introduction of alien plants and animals to these vulnerable islands has resulted in wholesale reductions and even disappearance of native species," Hamilton says and cites the example of the brown tree snake, which was accidentally introduced into Guam and which within 30 years has literally wiped out the native bird population.

Other examples of natural resource degradation abound, Hamilton says. "The giant clam is threatened in the northern Marshall Islands by over-exploitation by illegal fisherman of a foreign country, and in American Samoa the development of a pleasure boat harbour threatens a beautiful bay with pollution, reef destruction and disruption of village life."

Hamilton is directing a three-year project on conservation of biological diversity in tropical ecosystems. The project will concentrate on American Samoa, Palau, Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam and the Federated States of Micronesia.

One of the first activities will be a response to a request by the Marshall Islands government to identify pieces of land that should be formed into a system of protected areas. This will be carried out in collaboration with the South Pacific Regional Environment Program.

Caledonians and particularly the Kanaks from establishing links with their anglophone neighbours.

It is the heavy emphasis on import-export which led to many of the current inequalities in the Territory. Imports were favoured over domestic products. New Caledonia could be, yet, is not at all self-sufficient in food production. The Territory's imports total 63 billion South Pacific francs per year while the exports produce a mere 2.7 billion.⁴ The predominance of the import-export trade led to the abnormal development of the territorial capital Noumea which, together with its suburbs, contains 50% of New Caledonia's population. Nowhere else is the inequality so evident as in "Noumea the White"⁵ which up until now has controlled the economic activities and administrative services in the Territory. There are 170 doctors in Noumea as opposed

4 100SPF = \$1.00CAN

5 Noumea is the third largest city in the insular Pacific after Port Moresby and Suva and it is the only one where the population is predominantly European.

to 35 in the bush. Noumea produces two thirds of New Caledonia's exports and tourism, which is New Caledonia's second most important industry after mining, is also concentrated in the capital with its hotels, shops, casino and Club Med. Most of the revenues generated by tourism remain in the capital.

The socio-economic inequalities in New Caledonia led to increasing tension and ethnic violence. In an effort to avoid civil war, France's new Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, brought together members of the FLNKS (the native people's independence front) and the RPCR (the settler-dominated conservative party) in August 1988 to decide the future of the Territory. The result of these negotiations is known as the "Matignon Accords" and it is the third statut to be imposed upon the Territory by France within the past four years.

The accords herald a ten year "peace period" during which the French government will attempt to redress the socio-economic inequalities in the Territory, particularly by promoting development and training programs in Kanak communities.



photo by David Robie

DEVELOPMENT IN NEW CALEDONIA

By Donna Winslow, University of Montreal

The violence between ethnic communities in New Caledonia is not a result of insurmountable ideological or religious differences nor is it a product of endemic poverty brought about by a high population growth rate. It is not the inability of the formal monetary economy to provide jobs nor is it the incapacity of the government to provide social and administrative services which is at fault. Rather, it is social and economic inequality, particularly inequality in the distribution of resources brought about by French colonialism, that has been at the root of ethnic conflict in the Territory.

Compared to other South Pacific countries, New Caledonia is affluent. Her per capita internal domestic product places her just behind Australia, just ahead of New Zealand, and way ahead of Fiji and American Samoa. She has agricultural and mineral resources in addition to the infrastructure to develop them: hydro electric power, electrification, roads, international airport, deep water ports, schools and hospitals, etc. are all in place.

However, development in New Caledonia has been unequal. There is shocking economic inequality between the predominantly Kanak rural areas and the European-dominated urbanized southern region of greater Noumea. The result has been a form of apartheid where legally none should exist. Segregation and discrimination exist in terms of rural - urban rather than Black ¹ White and the results have been similar.

In the rural areas, the Kanak economy produces yams and taros for local consumption. On some reserves this domestic production is supplemented with coffee production for local consumption

¹ For example, one out of every two New Caledonians of European origin will go to high school while only one out of every 6.5 Kanaks will make it.

and export. What Kohler² has defined as the colonial economy rests on three pillars: ranching, mining, and import-export. Ranching is no longer an important activity in New Caledonia. It produces only 2% of the Territory's G.D.P. However, it plays an important ideological role in New Caledonia since ranching justifies the European occupation of vast tracks of land claimed by the Kanaks.³

New Caledonia is a rich source of nickel. It contains 20% of the world's nickel reserves and nickel ore represents 80% of the Territory's exports. The nickel industry is one of the Territory's largest employers hiring approximately 3,000 skilled and semi-skilled labourers. New Caledonia's largest nickel company, *le Societe le Nickel*, is owned by the French government. Although the nickel industry in New Caledonia went into a recession in the mid 1970s with the fall in world nickel prices, there is evidence that there will be a new boom in nickel production caused by the current rise in price.

The import-export trade is entirely controlled by a few European families. The major consumers of these goods, mainly from France, are the 10,500 French civil servants stationed in New Caledonia who represent 30% of the Territory's wage earners. It is important to note that economically, New Caledonia is tied to France and through France to the European Common Market 19,000 kilometers away. Until recently there has been little or no attempt to integrate the Territory into the economy of the South Pacific region. This regional isolation is reinforced by the language barrier which keeps New

² Jean-Marie Kohler, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 1989.

³ Ranching has been a source of conflict between Europeans and Kanaks since the 19th century when the Kanaks revolted against settler encroachment on Kanak land and the devastation of Kanak garden crops caused by wandering cattle herds.



PESTICIDES IN THE PACIFIC

The post World War II development of new synthetic chemicals capable of killing pests and weeds brought promise for a new age of agriculture and a world without hunger. This claim has turned out to be false. Despite a tenfold increase in pesticide use, crop loss due to insect damage has doubled in the last four decades. Instead of bounty there is poisoned air, soil and water.

The countries of the South Pacific region, though not areas of great agricultural productivity, also suffer from these shattered hopes. Illness, environmental contamination, and financial and technological dependence on industrialized nations are the results of the empty promise of pesticides.

Efforts to address these problems have, as yet, had little impact. The number of pesticides available in the Pacific nations has quadrupled in the last 15 years.³ Many countries in the region have no legislation regarding pesticides. Those that do, often do not have the means of monitoring and enforcing existing regulations.

Environmental And Health Effects

Pesticides are specifically designed to kill a broad spectrum of plants and other pests. Such chemicals kill indiscriminately, often having devastating effects on humans and the environment. Pesticides can take 20 years or longer to break down in the environment, and sometimes deteriorate into even more toxic compounds. Moreover, they are often mobile in the environment and can accumulate in the food chain in ever higher concentrations.

Environmental Contamination

Contamination of ground water and soil by pesticides has become a major concern in most developed nations. The magnitude of pesticide pollution in Pacific island nations, however, is nearly impossible to gauge because the resources and expertise needed to study pesticide-related environmental contamination in a comprehensive way do not exist locally. Efforts are being made by universities and governments in the region to improve their capabilities to monitor and analyze pesticide contamination, but as yet this capacity is insufficient.

Research has shown that direct application of these poisons has a disruptive effect on the ecological balance of an area. Spraying pesticides on a field not only kills the target pests or weeds, but a host of other plants, insects and animals that maintain the ecological integrity of that area. Ecological damage is clearly indicated by fish, wildlife and livestock deaths caused by pesticides. Examples of such acute contamination that have been documented in the Pacific include fish and coral kills from pesticide run-off and spills, cattle kills from incorrect use of diazinon and from drinking water from an old arsenic herbicide container and bird kills from lagoon contamination.⁵ Individual studies of pesticide residues in oysters and clams in the area of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, have shown low concentrations of organochlorines.⁴ In some areas, pesticides such as aldrin and lindane are used for fishing. In addition to killing many fish which are not used, this practice contributes to the destruction of the surrounding corals and the range of other organisms which they host.²



Lack of proper information and training about the dangers of pesticides and their use is commonplace in the Pacific. In this photograph a Western Samoan man is spraying bananas for black leaf streak fungus without wearing any protective clothing.

RR Thaman



Human Health Effects

Human health hazards due to long-term exposure to pesticides include cancer, birth defects, neurological disorders, liver and kidney diseases, reproductive problems and mutations. Although some tissue residue studies have been conducted in Papua New Guinea, the Pacific region is like most other regions in the world in that no comprehensive research has been conducted on the effects of chronic pesticide exposure.

The World Health Organization conservatively estimates that 700,000 to 1 million people around the world are severely injured by pesticides annually, and that 14,000 to 20,000 die as a result of pesticide exposure. In the Pacific, as in other parts of the world, acute health effects caused by exposure to pesticides are significantly under-reported because of the lack of convenient health care facilities. Illness due to exposure is difficult to diagnose, and often not recognized by victims. Thus, the true magnitude of acute pesticide poisoning in the Pacific is not known.

Rural agricultural communities are particularly at risk of chronic and acute pesticide poisoning. Around the world, farm workers and their families live next to the fields, work directly with the chemicals, drink and bathe in contaminated water, and eat poisoned produce. In the Pacific, lack of knowledge about pesticides and their application, lack of proper equipment, protective clothing and the easy availability of highly toxic chemicals make Pacific islanders vulnerable to acute and chronic pesticide exposure.

Chemical Addiction And The Pesticide Treadmill

The use of pesticides in the South Pacific islands has expanded greatly with the spread of aid to the region. Efforts to "develop" agriculture in the South Pacific often utilize imported agricultural systems and technologies, and are geared toward short term productivity and export, rather than sustainability and food self-sufficiency. This transformation is altering traditional farming practices in the Pacific region and throughout the world. In the Pacific, some areas producing a variety of subsistence crops have been replaced by larger single crop farms or plantations that are more easily overrun by pests. These farms and plantations are often established on small islands that have fragile ecosystems particularly susceptible to imbalance and damage from indiscriminate use of pesticides, and other practices associated with imported agriculture systems.

The introduction of new high-yield crop strains has required large amounts of fertilizer and pesticides to achieve the greater yields for which they were developed. Some of these hybrid crop species have lost their natural defenses against insects and must be repeatedly doused with pesticides. Traditionally, a variety of insects acting as predator and prey could usually keep one another's population in a particular area in check. But the indis-

criminate destruction of insects with pesticides upsets this balance, destroying beneficial insects along with the target pest. Otherwise harmless insects can become serious pests when their natural enemy are eliminated.

Another consequence of pesticide use is pest resistance. Insects may hatch several generations in one growing season. Repeated spraying of insects that have developed resistance to pesticides increases their proportionate numbers in the field. The survivors mate, pass on their resistant gene, and produce offspring even more immune to pesticides. By the end of 1986, close to 500 insect species were reported to be resistant to one or to all five major pesticide groups. These "super bugs" have caused unprecedented crop loss internationally, and have left farmers ever more dependent on newer, more dangerous chemicals in heavier doses each year.

A classic example of pest resistance comes from Fiji where the organophosphate acephate (Orthene) was used to control the diamond-back moth on cabbages and radishes in the mid-1970's. By 1978, the moth had developed such resistance that recommended applications of Orthene provided little or no control. The farmers' answer was to double or quadruple the dose rate, or drastically increase the frequency of spraying and apply the poison right up until harvest. Costs to farmers skyrocketed, while crop yield decreased. A new chemical, the synthetic pyrethroid permethrin, was introduced. Farmers found this pesticide effective initially, but recently insects have begun developing resistance to it as well.⁷

The consequences of this "pesticide treadmill" for farmers and consumers are: greater crop loss from insect pests, greater use of resources, spiraling control costs, and increased environmental pollution and human health hazards.

Pesticide Exports; Profits From Poisons

Since the 1960s, industrialized countries have banned or strictly regulated more and more of the most dangerous pesticides. At the same time, these countries allow pesticide manufacturers to legally export these very chemicals to developing nations, countries often without regulatory structures sufficient to control this trade. In fact, in 1979, the U.S. government reported that roughly 25 percent of the pesticides sold overseas by U.S. companies were banned, severely restricted, or unregistered domestically.

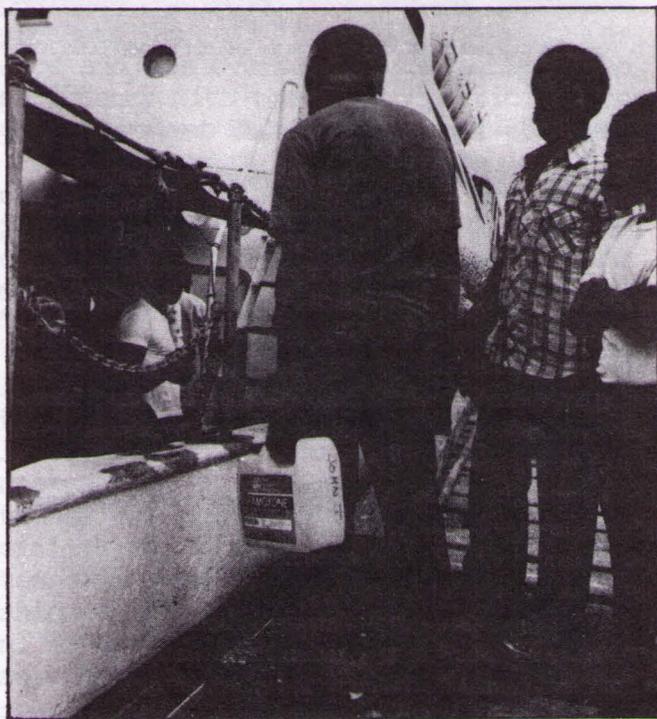
The Pacific region has a long history as a weapons test site and is being considered as a potential waste repository for the industrial powers of the developed world. Pesticides serve as another case in point. Pesticides that have been banned, severely restricted, or are not registered in the country in which they were produced are widely available in the Pacific region. For example, a 1988 South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) report indicated that more than 40 pesticides that have been banned or severely restricted in the U.S., such as heptachlor, aldrin, and EDB⁵, are available in South Pacific



countries. These pesticides can usually be purchased by anyone who wants to buy them. In addition, many containers are inadequately or inappropriately labeled—cultural and language differences often make labeling irrelevant even if labels are adequate. Applicators also have little or no training about the toxic effects of pesticides and how they should be used.

More than half of the pesticides imported to the Pacific region come from manufacturers and formulators in Australia and New Zealand. Among the largest of these exporters are ICI, Rhone Poulenc, Dupont, Bayer, BASF, and Hoechst. These companies and others either import and distribute their products directly to South Pacific island nations, or they work through large and small wholesalers and retailers and even some government departments, which import and distribute these multinational companies' products.⁵

In addition to marketing pesticides that are banned or severely restricted in industrialized nations, multinational chemical companies as well as smaller producers, sometimes manufacture and market chemicals for export that have never been registered in the country of origin or any other country. These pesticides are not subject to even the most limited testing requirements, and therefore their health and environmental toxicity is not known. The 1988 SPREP report indicated that more than 150 pesticides not registered in Australia or New Zealand can be exported to Pacific nations, from these countries⁵. Of these 150, some are registered in other countries such as the U.S. and



PNG Department of Agriculture and Livestock

Man using paraquat (Gramoxone) container to store drinking water in Papua New Guinea. Paraquat is one of the world's most highly acute toxic herbicides, responsible for thousands of deaths every year from poisoning incidents.

France. Those that are not registered, and have not been tested anywhere pose particular great danger to Pacific islanders and their environment.

Legislation

Only half of the countries and territories in the Pacific have legislation concerning the importation and registration of pesticides. Few have regulations to control use of pesticides. Most do not have a designated national authority to coordinate and administer pesticide-related matters, the necessary technical expertise to evaluate chemicals for registration, or the means to enforce regulations that do exist.⁵

Currently, there are efforts underway in several Pacific nations to pass legislation which would regulate pesticides and improve analytical and enforcement capability regarding pesticides and pesticide regulations. On a regional level, SPREP has several ongoing and proposed projects to assess regional needs and develop the capacity of member nations to more effectively cope with pesticide problems.

Alternative To Pesticides—Sustainable Agriculture

There are ecologically sound and economically sensible alternatives to pesticides. Understanding the farm as a cooperative complex of soil, microorganisms, crops, insects, animals and humans, and utilizing this natural ecology to the best advantage rather than attempting to short-circuit it, is the key to these alternatives.

Successful biological pest-control programs have been implemented in the Pacific (e.g. Fiji, Hawaii, Papua New Guinea and elsewhere) by introducing natural enemies, predators, parasites or diseases to control crop pests.^{1,6} In addition, the vulnerability of single-crop farms or plantations—vast areas devoted to just one plant species that are easily overrun by pests—can be avoided by alternating different plants or diversifying the species within the same type of crop.

Farmers in every part of the world have shown that it is possible to significantly reduce pesticide use, while at the same time maintain or increase crop yields and profits. Introducing and conserving beneficial insects, rotating crops from year to year to prevent the recurrence of the same pests, selecting plants for their resistance to insects, timing the planting of crops to avoid attacks by pests, or simply planting certain crops in their appropriate climate, are all non-chemical methods that can reduce the loss of food to pests.

Many of these techniques are integral parts of the subsistence agriculture that still predominates the Pacific region. These traditional farming systems are often ecologically sound. Much can be learned from them. When supplemented with other agricultural techniques and information, traditional systems can become excellent models for increased agricultural production and sustainable agricultural development.



Greenpeace's Pesticide And Pacific Campaigns

- Individual farmers, small research centers, and other non-government organizations in the Pacific region are researching and developing ecologically sound pest control methods. Greenpeace's Pacific Campaign will be supporting their efforts by providing them with necessary information, links to other groups, and access to media.
- Greenpeace is calling on the industrialized countries to prohibit the export of pesticides that have been banned, severely restricted, or never registered in the exporting country.
- Until such a ban is accepted, Greenpeace, along with the governments of many developing nations, is calling for the international acceptance of the principle of "prior informed consent (PIC)." This requires that restricted products not be exported unless the importing country has been informed of the reasons for any regulatory action in the country of origin and has given consent to the shipment of the controlled product.
- Greenpeace's Pacific Campaign is encouraging Pacific governments to support efforts to prohibit industrialized countries from exporting pesticides that have been banned, severely restricted or never registered, and to actively participate in the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to achieve the interim measure of PIC.
- Greenpeace is closely monitoring the actions of the World Bank and other multilateral development banks to ensure that environmental concerns expressed by the banks translate into changes in policies and lending priorities. Greenpeace will continue to publicize the banks' dangerous and shortsighted policies until the financing of chemical-dependent agriculture stops.
- Greenpeace's Pacific Campaign is supporting community groups and local governments from Pacific states in their efforts to educate farmers and consumers about pesticides, problems associated with them and alternatives to them by providing people with information, and linking them with other groups and funding agencies.

Summary of Pesticide Legislation Situation in South Pacific

Type of Control	Country
Own pesticide legislation	Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga
About to introduce own pesticide legislation (with NZ assistance)	Papua New Guinea
Thinking about introducing own pesticide legislation in near future (with NZ assistance)	Cook Islands, Vanuatu
Own pesticide legislation, but also under French laws	French Polynesia, New Caledonia
Own pesticide legislation, but also number US FIFRA	American Samoa, CNMI, Guam, TTPI (Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau)
No pesticide legislation, but partial control under 'Poisons Act'	PNG, Western Samoa
No pesticide legislation, but follow New Zealand regulations	Cook Islands, Niue
No pesticide legislation	Kiribati, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Pitcairn Island, Vanuatu
Unknown situation	Nauru, Wallis, Futuna

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POLYNESIA FEARS SECOND EUROPEAN INVASION

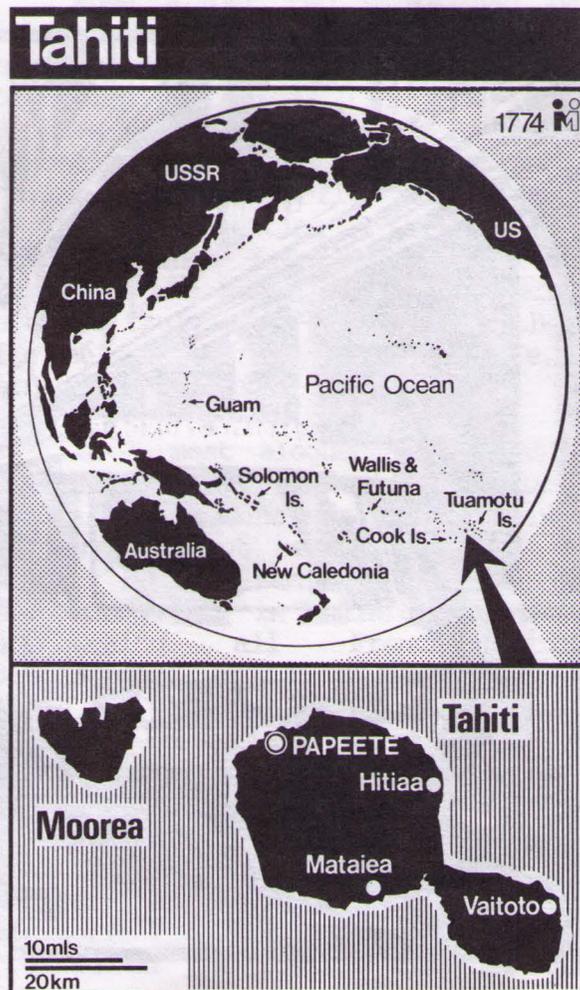
By Bengt Danielsson

Quite unexpectedly, the colonial lid which for years had concealed French Polynesia's manifold problems suddenly blew off in early June. For this is the real significance of the explosive decision made by all the local political parties - including the Gaullist Tahoeeraa party headed by Chirac's bosom friend Gaston Flosse - to resort to the rather unusual action of boycotting the elections to the European Parliament, held on June 18, as a protest against the high-handed manner in which the French government continues to impose its will.

In spite of the strenuous official propaganda in favour of a massive turnout, not less than 90% of the 110,000 registered voters heeded the Polynesian appeal and abstained on election day. This represents an all time low record for France and her overseas territories. The constituency with the lowest participation figures, a mere 2%, was the most populous in French Polynesia, Faa'a, which is still another proof of the tremendous popularity enjoyed by the pro-independence and anti-nuclear mayor of this commune, Oscar Temaru.

The ten per cent who did go to the polls were practically all French settlers, government officials and military personnel, which explains why the conservative UDF, RPR and CDS parties obtained twice as many votes as the ruling socialist party, and why as many as 1,249 votes were cast in favour of the old-fashioned fascist leader Jean-marie Le Pen. One cannot help wondering also, whether the preference shown by the ex-patriate voters for the Giscard d'Estaing-Jacques Chirac ticket was not to some extent dictated by the inclusion of three national heroes, who have played a prominent part in recent French covert actions in the Pacific.

The foremost of these, in slot seven, was General Jeannou Lacaze, who masterminded the bombing of the Rainbow Warrior in 1985. But there was also in t, whose exploits were so greatly slot 14, Yvon Briant, a former DGSE colleague of Dominique Prieur and Alain Mafart appreciated in France that he was elected a senator a few years ago. Finally there was in slot 10 a real Pacific native: the anti-independence Kanak Dick Ukeiwe. Having been awarded these top positions on the 81 candidate list, they were all easily elected European deputies for the next five year period.



It may also be worth mentioning that the only French party which condemned the nuclear weapon program and advocated a negotiated disarmament was the Greens. The French official news agency AFP therefore announced the day after the election as a great tricolor victory that not a single "green" ballot had been cast in the Tuamotu islands, where more than 150 atomic bombs have been exploded. The true explanation was, however, that due to "transmission delays" no bulletins had been distributed in these islands by the French authorities.

Ever since the nuclear tests began at Moruroa in 1966 political party and church leaders, representing the majority of the Polynesian people, have regularly protested, not only against these tests, but also against the maintenance and strengthening of colonial rule. But their protests were each time ignored or brushed aside by the French government. Many Polynesians leaders therefore little by little fell silent from sheer despair, while the silence of others was bought with money and favours.

What revived their fighting spirit on this occasion was the French government's badly timed transmission to the Territorial Assembly on 16 May of a series of documents relating to the final steps soon to be taken to realize a fully integrated European Common Market by 1993. Very revealing of the totally dependent status of French Polynesia was the fact that the matters about which the 41 Polynesian Assemblymen were asked their opinion had already been discussed in Brussels and agreed to by France. The horrified Assemblymen suddenly discovered that the 300 million citizens in the twelve countries forming this ill-defined European federation would soon be freely allowed to settle and work in the French overseas territories.

Having already seen their island, especially Tahiti, being invaded during the past twenty-five years by 30,000 metropolitan Frenchmen, the Assemblymen were, of course, outraged by this very real threat to become totally submerged by another and much bigger invasion wave. An equally distasteful prospect, which shocked the Assemblymen as much as the



photo by David Robie

freedom big European business firms will soon have to invest and open branch offices in their islands. This would complete the French political domination with a multi-national economic colonization.



photo by David Robie

Oscar Temaru

During the three sessions that followed in the Territorial Assembly it was the Faa'a mayor and leader of the Polynesian Liberation Front, Oscar Temaru, who protested most forcefully against this fait accompli decided in Paris and Brussels. His solution was the same that he had so often proposed in the past, i.e. immediate independence to be achieved through a popular referendum. The speeches made by the other Assemblymen reflected the exasperation they felt for they all supported Oscar Temaru's formal motion. Well, Gaston Flosse mitigated his approval by adding that it was dictated by his firm belief that a majority would vote against independence.

However, this unanimous vote in favour of a referendum did not mean that there existed a general consensus about how it should be realized. While some

Assemblymen wanted to limit the participation to the Polynesian people, others were perfectly willing to let the French government organize a nation-wide referendum, in which all 38 million French voters would be allowed to participate. Their argument was quite convincing: recent public opinion polls in France have shown that most Frenchmen are tired of the constant troubles occurring in New Caledonia and Polynesia and perfectly willing to give these Pacific colonies complete and immediate independence.

Incidentally, during these debates most of the Assemblymen spoke in Polynesian which, as usual, greatly angered the French journalists in the press gallery. They all protested against this un-patriotic choice of a barbarian language which they did not understand by simply omitting these key interventions from their newspaper, TV and radio reports. The logical solution would be to have these debates covered by journalists with a solid knowledge both of French and of the mother tongue of the majority of the population.

When almost two weeks had passed without any official French acknowledgement of or reaction to these Polynesian protests and demands, the two deputies representing French Polynesia in the national Assembly, Alexandre Leontieff and Emile Vernaudon, flew off to Paris in the hope of getting a better hearing there. Since Leontieff is also the premier of the local coalition government, he could truly claim to speak in the name of the whole Polynesian people, and Vernaudon graciously let him do so.

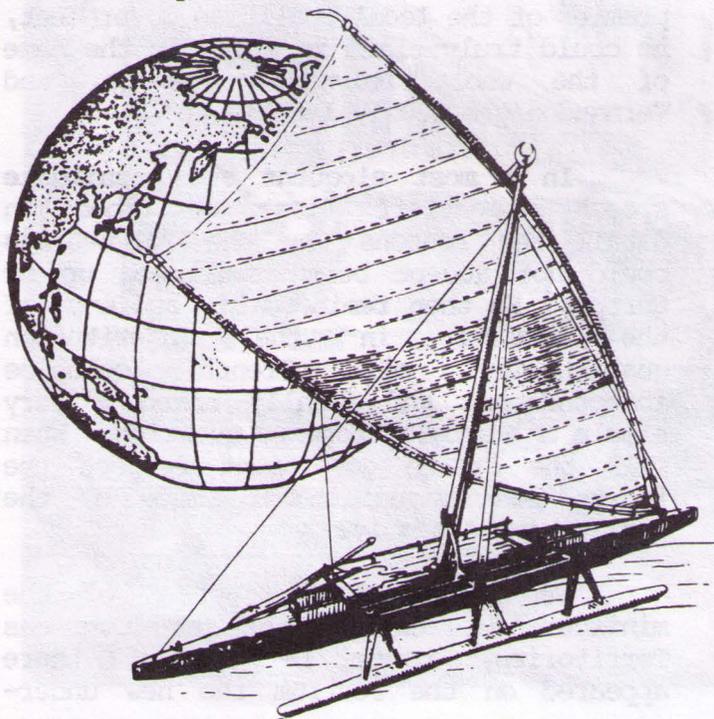
In a most eloquent and passionate speech, Leontieff first described in detail the reasons why the Polynesians could not accept being swallowed up by Europe. He then reminded his audience of the clauses in the Constitution guaranteeing all French colonies independence, and finally asked a very simple and straightforward question. When will the French government respect the recent demands unanimously made by the Territorial Assembly?

Strangely enough, instead of the minister in charge of the Overseas Territories, Louis Le Pensec, there appeared on the rostrum the new under-

secretary for the environment, Brice Lalonde. Since his appointment last year to the post of junior minister responsible for environmental problems in the new socialist government of Michel Rocard, Brice Lalonde has spent most of his time spreading the old official propaganda lie that the nuclear tests at Moruroa and Fangataufa are totally harmless.

In conformity with his new mission, Brice Lalonde tried to sooth Leontieff's fears with a long row of promises that the French government will in the future do what it so far has been and will always be unable to do, i.e. to protect the Polynesians by persuading the European commissioners in Brussels to change the offensive clauses in the Rome Treaty. For the rest, Brice Lalonde's speech was remarkable only for its evasiveness, as he finished it without having answered the key question: whether the French government was ready to organize a referendum on the independence issue.

Since Rocard's government has taken over lock, stock and barrel the civilian and military nuclear policy of the preceding right wing governments, on these matters it means that it has the support of all the political parties represented in the National Assembly. Consequently, none of the other 575 deputies came to the rescue of poor Leontieff and Vernaudon, who therefore jumped on the first Papeete bound plane to carry on the struggle on their home ground.



SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM MEETS

The 20th South Pacific Forum meeting in Tarawa in July has been widely acknowledged as a very happy one for members. Fishing and environmental issues were the key agenda items and members were united behind the resolution to ban the devastating practice of driftnet fishing from the South Pacific.

The Tarawa Declaration resolves that a management regime for albacore tuna stocks in the region be established that would ban the practice and that a Convention to create a driftnet-free zone for the region be urgently drawn up by diplomatic, legal and fisheries experts.

The Declaration commended South Korea for its withdrawal of its one driftnet fishing boat from the region and called on Japan and Taiwan to also cease the practice.

The two countries have up to 190 driftnet vessels operating in the South Pacific and fisheries experts predict the loss of the albacore tuna stocks within two years unless the practice is stopped.

While Japan has offered to monitor its driftnet operations, the albacore fishery would be devastated by the time this was done.

In the meantime, Forum members will take "all possible measures" to prevent driftnet fishing in their waters and to actively discourage such operations. The Tarawa Declaration also called on the international community to back the Convention.

On the issue of a multi-lateral fisheries treaty with Japan, the Forum said it was pleased that Japan was ready to discuss the issue but disappointed that "no progress had otherwise been made". Forum Fisheries Agency Director Philipp Muller was mandated to continue his efforts to achieve a treaty with Japan.

The 'greenhouse effect', or global warming, which is predicted to cause rising sea levels and so particularly threaten low-lying Island countries, was of strong concern to the Forum meeting.

An offer by Australia to fund a \$A6.25 million climate monitoring project was welcomed; the project will begin in 1990 and cover at least the next two decades, with information on the air temperatures, sea levels, atmospheric pressures and other data to be shared with Forum members.

Australia and New Zealand committed themselves to relocation of the populations of the threatened countries (Kiribati, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands and part of the Cook Islands) in the event of their atolls being inundated-but the focus is rather on monitoring and warding off the greenhouse effect at this stage.

External Relations spokesman of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front, Rock Wamytan, who is also a member of New Caledonia's Southern Provincial Assembly was in Tarawa to urge Forum members to closely monitor the progress of the French Government's Matignon peace accord.

Former FLNKS external relations spokesman Yann Celene Uregei, whose small FULK party is opposed to the peace plan, was also in Kiribati but to urge that the Forum not support the Matignon plan. He was not received by Forum leaders.

The Forum urged the United Nations Decolonisation Committee and General Assembly to continue the consensus approach begun last year in its dealings with the New Caledonia issue.

France was again called on by the Forum to cease immediately nuclear testing and was reminded that "a reduction in the number of tests was not what was sought".

WHEN CUSTOMS CONFLICT WITH RIGHTS

Cultural integrity, land rights and freedom to choose their own development models are becoming growing issues for Pacific societies. DAVID ROBIE meets a Fijian consultant on human rights.

In his recent book, *Lo Bilong Yumi Yet*, Papua New Guinea Justice Minister Bernard Narakobi tells an anecdote about a group of villagers who want to take their young people to court. The youth had taken off to the city and refused to send any money back to the village to help the old folk.

According to custom it is right that the old people insist that the youth send them payments. After all, if the young people were still in the village the fruits of their labour - from the gardens, forests or the sea - would automatically be shared.

Faced with the problems of living in an urban environment, however, the youth found it difficult to accept that their pay packets should be handed over to their parents, grandparents, siblings and even cousins.

In Western Samoa, a distraught young man searching for his runaway wife turned to a local church social worker for help. When the worker offered to put a discreet message on a radio programme, however, the young man refused.

He believed the message would bring shame to his village and he would risk being ostracised for having been incapable of "keeping" his wife.

In Fiji, a high chief used a walking stick to beat up a commoner - as was his customary right - for a minor offence against himself. The commoner, claiming his right under the law, took the chief to court.

These are some examples of the growing conflict between traditional communal rights and the rights of individuals in the South Pacific cited by Suliana Siwatibau at a recent Aotearoa-New

Zealand and Asia-Pacific Human Rights conference in Wellington. In a keynote speech on Pacific human rights at the New Zealand Government-sponsored conference, she outlined serious problems facing the region.

Mrs Siwatibau, a Fiji-born United Nations consultant now living in Port Vila, strongly advocates the establishment of a Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Charter for the Pacific, an ideal already proposed by a Lawasia research group. She also appealed for better rights for women, youth, handicapped people, the elderly and other disadvantaged groups. "Only then will Pacific societies be truly free," she says.

According to Mrs Siwatibau, more is needed than to balance the protection of the cultural integrity of an indigenous group against the rights of other groups. "Pacific Islanders," she says, "have yet to think through how the preservation of their culture and traditions is to be balanced against the rights of individual members of their societies."

During recent years Pacific islanders have become increasingly concerned over the growing erosion of their cultural integrity.

"This has been manifest, for example, in discussions on the formal incorporation of indigenous, custom-based laws into the laws of the land in various Pacific states, and in the surge of interest in native languages," Mrs Siwatibau says.

"It was one of the main justifications of the military coup that overthrew the democratically elected government of Fiji in 1987."

She believes that the cultural integrity of a people is an important right - particularly for indigenous peoples who are a minority in their own countries, such as the ethnic Fijians.

"However, there has been a tendency to romanticise our customary practices and traditional values, forgetting the often practical disadvantages of those practices and values in the very rapidly evolving situation of Pacific societies in the modern world."

In the case of Fiji, the constitution adopted at independence in 1970 recognised special rights for indigenous Fijians over their land and waters and made other positively discriminatory provisions.

According to Mrs Siwatibau, the present problems of Fiji result partly from the "ignorance of many ordinary Fijians of the degrees of entrenchment of those rights", and partly from the demand by some for an extension of indigenous Fijian special rights.

"Peaceful co-existence of different groups of people within a society cannot be achieved without a delicate balancing of the rights and obligations accorded the different groups," she says.

"Legislators should be mindful not to jeopardise the rights to cultural integrity of other groups within a country. In the long run, equality of different cultural groups within a nation can only be achieved through formal declaration and active encouragement by the state of multiculturalism."

Mrs Siwatibau believes many Pacific Islanders find it difficult to adjust to the concept of individual rights to freedom of opinions, freedom of expression and freedom for political participation. This has hindered the struggle by women and youth to assert their rights to equal participation in the development of their countries.

"In the modern context, as our countries became independent, our rights were defined in the constitutions that established our sovereign states," she says.

"With a few notable exceptions, these constitutions entitle all citizens equally with the enjoyment of rights."

In Kiribati, Nauru, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu, for example, discrimination

based on "race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex" is prohibited. In the Cook Islands, the constitution states there shall be no discrimination in the enjoyment of fundamental human rights "by race, national origin, colour, religion, opinion, belief, or sex".

In Vanuatu, the word "colour" is not included while "language" is mentioned as an unlawful basis for discrimination. All of these assert the equality of all individuals - "an acknowledgement not always accepted in our traditional ways of doing things".

Traditionally, only certain members of Pacific societies could hold and express opinions in any community debates. These rights were frequently denied to women and the young.

Traditional Pacific politics were always played by men," Mrs Siwatibau says. "Women have been very slow in entering the field - not only as politicians, but even as independently thinking voters. Some Pacific women leaders have claimed that many of their women still vote according to their husband's instructions."

Mrs Siwatibau stresses that along with the right to self-determination is the right of a people to development.

"Many of the countries of the Pacific are now either fully independent, or independent enough to determine their own development. However, for most of them it appears that the achievement of political independence does not necessarily assure full self-determination."

She warns that an over-dependence on foreign aid could result in the erosion of the people's right to determine for themselves the direction their development should take and the nature of society they could evolve.

Aid focuses upon capital programmes, with the economic and social benefits generally not being carefully evaluated beforehand.

"The burdensome recurrent costs of some aid projects have in a number of island countries contributed to the

widening budget deficits which are now reaching worrying proportions."

Mrs Siwatibau hails the Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement as being one of the most successful people's organizations in the region. It is a regional umbrella movement embracing youth, women's groups, academics, indigenous rights campaigners, peace activists, environmentalists, trade unionists and Christian churches.

"Propelled by a common desire to achieve justice for their peoples and to create a region of peace in the Pacific," she says, "this movement asserts that without self-determination for all Pacific peoples, their region will continue to be used for testing of nuclear missiles and nuclear weapons, will continue to be militarised in the interests of security of others, and will continue to be economically and culturally dominated by others."

PALAUAN MONEY

Necklaces, *iek*, are usually assembled from clan moneys & worn by high ranking women, on special occasions. Single pieces, strung on a black cord, may be worn at other times. The value of this necklace represents thousands of American dollars.

The Palauan money, *udoud*, is currently used. The use of *udoud* occurs in all important events - birth, marriage, death and house-building.

Labels around the necklace include: Kluk, Delobech, Chelbuchebe, Bachel el berrak, Bleob el mengungau, Kldait, Bleob el berrak, Bleob el mengungau, Kldait, Bachel el mengungau, Chelbuchebe, Bachel el berrak, Bleob el mengungau, Kldait, Chelbuchebe, Bachel el berrak.

5. Kluk

10. Chelbuchebe

1. Bachel el mengungau

6. Kldait

2. Bleob el mengungau

7. Delobech

3. Bleob el berrak

8. Bachel el cheldoech

9. Bleob el cheldoech

4. Bachel el berrak

The crescentic pieces nos. 1 & 4 are of the highest value. Nos. 2, 3 & 10 are of lesser value, followed by *kluk*, no. 5, which serves as the standard of value to which other pieces can be related. History, size & perfection of quality determine the value of any single type; used for interest on loans, & in cases of divorce & adultery settlements. No. 7 is of little value & nos. 8 & 9 are obsolete.

CONSUMERISM AND MALNUTRITION IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

R.R. Thaman, USP Fiji

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Consumerism is rife in the Pacific Islands, its avaricious fingers increasingly touching even the most isolated areas. Although the introduction of trade goods, the continuing overemphasis on export cash cropping and livestock production, western white-collar education, cash employment, monetization, and the rapid expansion of sea, road, and air transport networks have played major roles in promoting consumerism, the role of the media revolution, with the rise of the ubiquitous transistor radio, the privatisation of daily newspapers, and, in some areas, the uncontrolled introduction of television and video, is seen as the most recent, and, perhaps, most pervasive and powerful promoter of consumerism and nutrition-related ill-health in the Pacific Islands.

As Marshall McLuhan argued, "the medium is the message", and the message that Pacific island peoples seem to be getting is that they should buy and consume imported or highly processed foods rather than their traditional fresh local foods. This is despite the fact that it has been shown that increasing consumption of such non-traditional foods has been, perhaps, the major factor in some of the highest or most rapidly increasing incidences of malnutrition, nutritional disorders and nutrition-related non-communicable diseases. This article attempts to look [at the role of the media, with particular focus on the role of the "medium" of the daily newspaper in Fiji, in promoting consumerism,] the consumption of inferior foodstuffs, and increasing malnutrition in the Pacific Islands.

THE FOOD SITUATION TODAY

At the time of European contact, most Pacific islands, even the smallest, most isolated atolls were apparently self-sufficient in food and the people

generally healthy and free of diseases of affluence. Food analyses have shown that traditional island diets were nutritionally sound and especially high in fibre and many of the vitamins and minerals, so often lacking in modern urban diets.

Today, however, there is increasing food scarcity, both physical and economic (in terms of high prices), especially for highly nutritious local staple food crops, fruit and vegetables, and animal and fish protein. Ingenious strategies for wild food acquisition and food processing, storage and preservation have been forgotten by many of today's youth.

Many countries have become dangerously "food dependent" with food imports constituting far more, in terms of value, than returns from all export earnings. As early as 1968, food imports in the Cooks, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru, Niue, Western Samoa and Tonga comprised between 25% and 35% of import expenditure. Although the percentages of total imports have not changed significantly, the total value of food imports and their value compared to the value of exports has increased drastically. In Kiribati, for example, the 1981 value of food imports alone of \$A4,900,000 was almost 150% the value of all locally produced exports. This value jumps to nearly 200%, if beverages, tobacco, and animal and vegetable fats and oils are included. The situation is similar for countries such as Tuvalu, Niue and the Cook Islands, where food import bills are greater than the total value of locally-produced exports. The situation is even worse in American Micronesia, but not so serious in Melanesia, although food dependency in urban areas is increasing rapidly.

In the late 1970s, rice imports in kilograms per head per year ranged from 40 and 39 for Kiribati and Fiji, 28 for Papua New Guinea to 8 to 1 for Western Samoa and Tonga, whereas flour imports ranged from 42, 32, 31 and 28 kilograms for the Cook Islands, Tonga, Western Samoa and Kiribati to 6 and 9 for Fiji and PNG. In Papua New Guinea, rice imports increased 40% between

1975/76 and 1979, of which approximately one-half was consumed in rural areas.

One study in Papua New Guinea comparing rural eastern highlanders with those living in urban Lae showed that, whereas sweet potato and other starchy foods provided 85% of the dietary energy and 65% of the protein in the rural area, rice had become the main staple, ahead of sweet potato and taro, with animal protein being eaten almost daily in Lae. Although energy, vitamin and mineral intakes seem to be sufficient in rural areas where root crops and bananas predominate, the energy intakes in some low-income urban areas in the capital of Port Moresby, where 72% of the energy was provided by flour, rice, sugar, bread and biscuits, energy intakes were the lowest ever recorded for the country. Sugar provided 11% of the energy, whereas root crops provided only 9%.

In Fiji, food balance studies in the late 1970s showed that the total population received only 29% of total energy from root crops and fruits. Of particular concern in Fiji is the increasing overemphasis on the consumption of cassava; in some areas, its contribution to dietary energy rose from 36% in 1953 to 59% in 1963.

In Tonga and Samoa, similar trends are evident. Urban Nuku'alofa diets contained more bread, sweet potato, cassava, mutton, pork, tinned fish, beef, butter, and tea than rural diets, where more taro, plantain, ripe bananas, fresh fish, shell fish, green vegetables, and fruits were consumed. In Western and American Samoa, taro, green bananas, breadfruit and coconut contributed 50% to 64% of the dietary energy in rural areas, yet provided only 31% on the most urbanized island of Tutu'ila, and only 20.5% among highly urbanized Samoans in Hawaii.

In the Cook Islands, studies comparing rural Mitiaro with urbanized Rarotonga showed that less than half the amount of root crops and one-eighth the amount of coconut, but over 30 times the amount of cereals (flour, bread and rice) and nine times the sugar were consumed in Rarotonga. In French Polynesia, where the trend is well advanced, by 1973, 90% of food intake was imported.

The changes are, however, most dramatic on some of the atolls, such as the Tuamotu atolls of French Polynesia, where traditional foods, such as taro and Polynesian arrowroot, have been all but forgotten and breadfruit and bananas are also becoming rare.

In Tuvalu, where the traditional diet consisted of fish, coconut, breadfruit, taro, banana and *Cyrtosperma*, by 1976, the island of Funafuti was 80% dependent on imports for its food need. In Kiribati, the per capita consumption of rice and sugar increased three-fold (15 to 52 kg per year) and five-fold (18 to 40 kg) respectively between 1950 and 1979. Even on rural Maiana, 60% of the population regularly consumed sugar, 90% flour, and 95% rice. Studies on Namu atoll in the Marshall Islands in the late 1960s showed that 93% of all copra income was spent on food, and that sugar, tea, and rice had replaced breadfruit, coconut and *Cyrtosperma* taro, as the most commonly consumed foods.

Such expenditures, on often unnecessary products, such as sugar, soft drinks, and infant feeding formulae, is a particularly worrying trend in a situation where most of the smaller Pacific countries have great imbalances of trade, very poor resource bases, and are dependent for cash income on a very narrow range of crops, such as copra, bananas, cocoa, coffee, or sugar, all of which are subject to sharp price fluctuations and vulnerable to natural disasters, such as hurricanes and droughts and pest infestations. Moreover, there has been a continuing and serious deterioration in terms of trade, with the price of imported goods increasing relative to returns for export crops owing to inflation and rising transport costs.

It has thus been suggested that increasing dependence on imported foodstuffs is possibly the most critical form of dependence because reliance on imported food increases vulnerability to both reduction in food supplies and decreases in a country's purchasing power. Countries such as Tonga, for example, with **per capita** yearly food imports of only \$73 in the late 1970s would be far less vulnerable than French Polynesia with **per capital** yearly food imports of \$554.

NUTRITIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGING CONSUMPTIONS PATTERNS

From a state that has been referred to as "subsistence affluence" where food was abundant, and people, even in the Papua New Guinea highlands and on the small atolls, were reportedly well-nourished, the Pacific islands are undergoing a nutritional transformation and now have some of the highest or most rapidly increasing rates of malnutrition and nutrition-related non-communicable diseases in the world. Dental disease is also on the increase in most groups, and has reached epidemic levels in some urbanized areas such as Tahiti, with alcoholism also being a major concern in some areas.

Nutritional Disorders

It is now accepted that energy deficiency, rather than protein deficiency may be the limiting factor in nutritional improvement in some areas of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, and Micronesia, thus underlining the importance of staple food development.

In the case of protein deficiency, a complicating factor may be the shift from traditional rootcrop diets (which were almost always supplemented with coconut, nuts, fruits, greens and limited animal protein) to almost exclusive consumption of highly refined imported foods in urban areas, and cassava in some areas, such as in Fiji. Although important in supplying energy demands, cassava has very low protein content and is associated with high incidences of kwashiorkor in areas of Africa where it is the main staple food.

Severe energy malnutrition and severe protein malnutrition is increasingly common among infants and young children in urban areas in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, the Northern Marianas, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Marshall islands, where breastfeeding is declining, or where unsound weaning habits or unsanitary conditions cause infection, which deprive children of, or lessen their ability to use what protein is available. The national nutrition survey in Fiji indicated that 1.6% of under five-year olds were severely malnourished (below 60% weight-for-age) and over 20% were at risk

(below 80% weight-for-age). There are also relatively high incidences of low birth-weight babies in the Pacific. This is mainly an indication of the health and dietary status of the mother, and is usually an indication of energy or protein malnutrition and/or iron-deficiency anaemia.

Studies in Micronesia, American and Western Samoa, the Cook Islands, Hawaii and New Zealand, show that urbanized Polynesians have some of the highest recorded rates of obesity (20% more than the desirable weight) in the world. Owing to extreme obesity, American Samoan males between 18 and 30 years of age reportedly have among the lowest aerobic capacities (levels of fitness) ever measured, and in Tonga in the early 1970s, 45% of the women and 33% of the men were found to be obese, with the rate being significantly higher in urban areas. Increasing incidences of obesity are also seen among affluent groups in urbanized Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, where rice, flour, sugar, animal fat, and alcohol consumption is high.

Childhood and infant obesity is also increasingly common among urban Polynesians, some Micronesians, and in Fiji, and seems to be associated with increasing intakes of sugar and other highly refined carbohydrates. Both adult and infant obesity are considered forms of malnutrition (overnutrition) resulting from energy consumption in excess of bodily needs, and are both indicators of potential health problems, such as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, varicose veins, and general ill-health.

Nutritional Related Non Communicable Diseases

Some of the highest or most rapidly increasing rates of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, gout and intestinal and bowel cancer in the world are found in the Pacific islands. Very high rates of diabetes and gout are found among Micronesian and Polynesian populations in the urban context, with Nauru having the highest rates of diabetes and gout in the world. American Samoa's diabetes mortality rate between 1962-74 was among the highest in the world, and its cardiovascular disease rate was also

very high. Similar trends are found in the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Indian population of Fiji has an alarmingly high incidence of diabetes, as well as high rates of cardiovascular disease and hypertension.

Dental disease is also almost epidemic in many areas. In Tahiti, where it seems to be worse, 80% of children up to 14 years of age were found to be affected by dental caries, and, at age 13, the mean number of decayed, missing, or filled permanent teeth was 12 in late 1970s. Dental disease and missing teeth (primarily attributed to gum disease related to poor dental hygiene) are also increasingly common amongst the New Zealand Maori and in Tonga, Western and American Samoa, New Caledonia, and Fiji, in both urban and rural areas, and seems to be associated with a high-sugar and low-fibre diet and poor dental hygiene.

In short, most urbanized areas of Polynesia and Micronesia and New Caledonia and Fiji in Melanesia seem to have undergone a "mortality transition" over the past 20 years or so, with infectious diseases having been replaced by nutrition related non communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, stroke and cancer, as the major causes of mortality.

DIETARY FACTORS RESPONSIBLE

Although Pacific peoples seem to be genetically predisposed to such diseases, the main causative factor seems to be the shift from a traditional fresh-food diet, which was **high** in fibre and micro-nutrients (vitamins and minerals) and **low** in sugar, salt, animal fats, and refined carbohydrates, to a diet based on cheap imported, often highly-refined, foods, which are **low** in fibre and micronutrients and **high** in sugar, salt, animal fats, and refined carbohydrates.

Refined Carbohydrates and Sugar

In Tahiti, where dental disease may be the worst on earth, the annual consumption of sugar is estimated to be 68 kg per person. Very high sugar intakes (often in tea, coffee, cocoa, milo, candy, ice cream and soft drinks) are also reported for other areas of Polynesia and for Fiji. As early as 1968, imports of sugar in Tonga, Western Samoa, Kiribati,

and Tuvalu accounted for between 12.4% and 15.3% of the total import expenditure on food. This, however, does not include sugar imported in other forms such as candy, biscuits (cookies), soft drinks, all of which are common "lunches" for Pacific school children.

Excessive Salt Intake

Salt consumption is very high among urban Pacific populations and is linked strongly with hypertension. In the Cook Islands, rural Pukapukans on a low salt diet had little or no hypertension, whereas Pukapukans in Rarotonga on a high salt intake had much greater hypertension.

Declining Fresh Food Intake

Excessive canned and processed food consumption is a major problem in Pacific urban areas. Canned foods have the effect of introducing nutritionally-poor, vitamin- and mineral-depleted, high-salt, high-sugar, low-fibre, and high-food-additive foods into the diet, whereas declining intakes of fresh fruits and vegetables, which are high in nutrients, have some protein, and are additive-free, further exacerbate this problem. The almost epidemic occurrence of iron-deficiency anaemia has a high correlation with declining consumption of iron-rich red meat, leafy vegetables and fruit. Hookworm is a major contributing factor in many areas of the Pacific, as is malaria in western Melanesia, but inadequate dietary iron intake seems to be the major causal factor in most urban areas. Other factors possibly related to increasing anaemia in the Pacific include the use of aluminium and steel rather than iron pots and utensils, the regular intake of aspirin, and chronic gastrointestinal disorders.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Although a range of factors have contributed to this dangerous situation of food scarcity, increasing food dependence on often nutritionally inferior, imported foods, and the associated rise in malnutrition and nutrition-related degenerative diseases, the media has been one of the most powerful and perhaps most one-sided factors in the promotion of what

has been referred to as the "diet of death" or "the eating catastrophe".

From advertisements in Fiji newspapers, the message that Pacific island peoples seem to be getting is that "they should buy and consume imported or highly processed foods" rather than their traditional time-tested fresh local foods. Despite the fact that most authorities have shown that increasing consumption of such non-traditional foods have been, perhaps, the major factor in some of the highest or most rapidly increasing incidences of malnutrition, nutritional disorders and nutrition-related non-communicable disease.

Although a range of factors, including the introduction of trade goods, the continuing overemphasis on export cash cropping and livestock production, western white-collar education, cash employment, monetization, and the rapid expansion of sea, road, and air transport networks have contributed to the dangerous situation of food scarcity, increasing food dependency, the associated rise in malnutrition and

nutrition-related degenerative diseases, and the promotion of consumerism, the role of the media revolution, with the rise of the ubiquitous transistor radio, the privatisation of daily newspapers, and, in some areas, the uncontrolled introduction of television and video, is seen as the most recent, and, perhaps, most pervasive and powerful promoter of consumerism and nutrition-related ill-health in the Pacific Islands.

Before it is too late, the Pacific island managerial elite must analyse very carefully the messages their people are receiving from the media, and develop appropriate laws, censorship or promote counter advertising and programmes of formal and non-formal education which promote health-giving local foods. Only thus, may it be possible to reverse the trends of consumerism that have led to the increasingly widespread availability and promotion of the "diet of death": an "eating catastrophe" which constitutes a biological time bomb that is only now beginning to tick loudly!

Solidarity Conservation Front

The rainforests of the New Guinea island, made up of the states of Papua New Guinea and Indonesian Irian Jaya, are a unique ecological resource. Already 40% of the world's tropical forests have been cleared, logged or burnt, and the forces behind this destruction are now hard at work in this as yet relatively unscathed area.

The causes of rainforest destruction in this area include multi-national exploitation of forest and mineral resources, monoculture cash crop plantation, unsustainable clearance for resettlement programmes and ill conceived development bank projects.

Other issues, such as human rights, especially of the indigenous peoples, freedom of speech and military involvement in the region are also of great relevance.

Clearly then, the problems and solutions are multifactorial, and this creates considerable difficulties for a concerted and focused campaign. Public and media awareness of the New Guinea disaster is low, and campaigning has to date been largely run against specific causes, such as Transmigration, or specific projects, such as the Scott Paper concession.

The organizations behind these campaigns have reflected their disparate spheres of interest. There is an urgent need to establish an organized international campaign concerned exclusively with the destruction of New Guinea's rainforests on both sides of the border.

We aim to establish a comprehensive network of concerned organizations and individuals. Networking will stress the collection of as much new data as possible. We intend to establish a united and focused campaign front. Whether such a campaign should be run under the auspices of the Rainforest Information Centre or some other established campaigning body, or whether it should seek an independent and distinct identity is a matter yet to be discussed within the network. We foresee the guiding aims would be:-

1. To ensure the protection of the New Guinea rainforests and their genetic species. The tribal people should not be considered separate from the rainforests with which they have such a close relationship. They have learnt how to live with the rainforests with which they have such a close relationship. They have learnt how to live with the rainforests on a sustainable basis. Their plight and their rights to their ancestral lands could well be the focus of an international campaign.
2. To ensure the maximum possible media and public awareness of the campaign. The best way to achieve change is through public awareness.
3. To apply pressure against the underlying causes of the rainforest destruction through visible forms of protest and direct action. There is a proliferating number of environmental and human rights groups concerned in this area. We wish to establish an organization that will regard bureaucratic structures—seminars, conferences, committees—as a means to organized active campaigning.

We can be contacted through the Rainforest Information Centre at P.O. Box 368, Lismore 2480, Australia.

BEST in PNG

The **Business Enterprise Support Team (BEST)** is an organization working in Papua New Guinea to support rural people in their endeavors to operate effectively within the cash and market economy. BEST's assumption is that economic development in PNG is inevitable and BEST's main focus is integrated community development and rural small business. BEST works to assist interested people in learning to be most effective in these combined areas.

PNG is an extremely diverse country. In terms of its "development" the continuum of peoples' reality ranges from the cosmopolitan, university educated citizen's perspective to (for lack of better conceptual terminology) the stone age, pre-literate citizen's perspective. Change has come very rapidly to PNG in some areas and in others it has not yet arrived. The positive and negative impacts of the cash economy reach from the household to the global market for primary cash crops. One of BEST's biggest challenges is in trying to address the mix of needs that occurs within this dynamic situation.

BEST is now an independent Papua New Guinean organization. BEST was started as a CUSO project to support rural businesses that employed CUSO volunteers. Since its inception in February 1988 BEST has grown considerably and operates in a range of programming areas all of which include an emphasis on creating and encouraging a balance and integration of business and community development.

BEST Program areas include:

Education - this is a component of all BEST Programs but the Education Program specifically is designed to produce appropriate material where none are available and create environments for non-formal learning;

Focus on Women Program - which is directed specifically to assessing the needs of women within both the formal and non-formal economy and to raising awareness and consciousness about women's

contribution to the overall economy of PNG. (In a country where 85% of the population is rural, and where women produce subsistence crops and lifestyle requirements for that group, their contribution to production and reproduction is considerable).

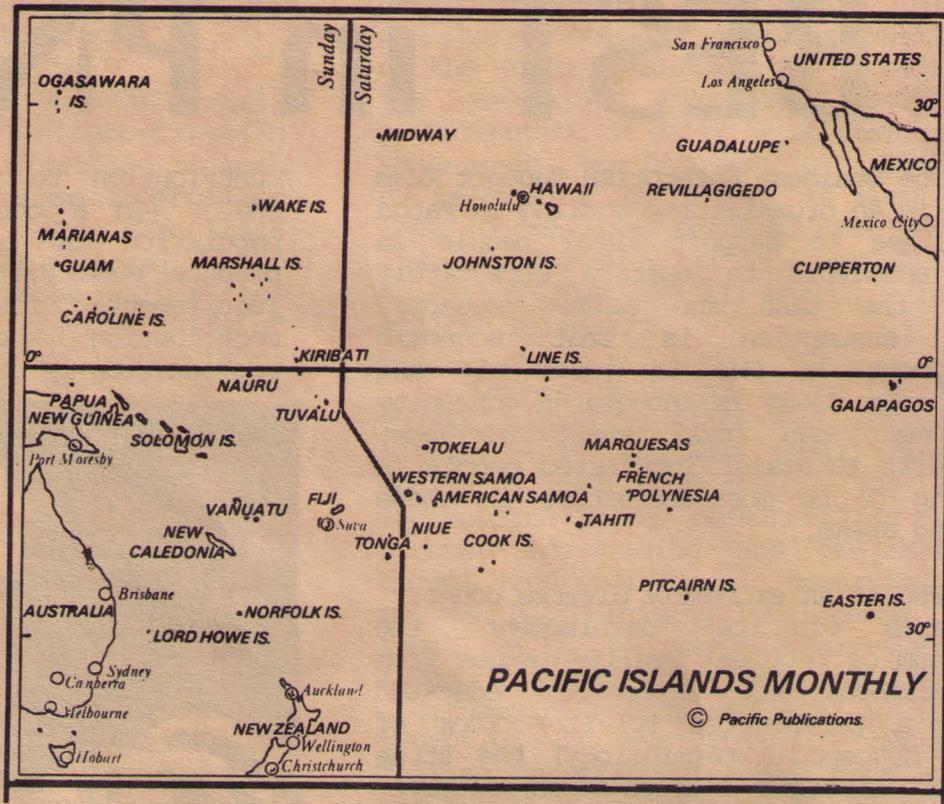


Networking - linking existing services to people in rural areas who do not yet have the skills to access resources suitable to their needs;

Direct Consultancy - serving the immediate needs of individuals and groups of people operating businesses in rural areas (such as planning, record keeping and marketing);

Each of the program areas of BEST is managed by a consultant, and the co-ordinator and his or her counterpart, a PNG woman, oversee the organization and participate in various program activities.

The challenges that BEST faces are considerable. It is very difficult to run such a complex organization with a mainly



volunteer staff that continues to turn over at rotating two year intervals. Currently BEST is trying to find a balance between PNG and expatriate staff as well as a balance between male and female staff. As of the end of 1989 there will be six staff (three male and three female, but only one of whom is a PNG citizen).

Funding is a problem for BEST as it seems to be for all NGOs. It is particularly so in the BEST/PNG context where volunteers can be subsidized by their sending agencies but PNG citizens must be paid competitive salaries, where the organization operates according to its clients' abilities to pay but where most agency funding is not applicable to employee salaries. BEST tries to promote an awareness of scale among its clients and is struggling itself to operate appropriately in terms of transferring skills and the control of operations and resources.

BEST is becoming established within the PNG system, we operate by word of mouth and are very busy. The development of small rural business is a stated government priority that the government system is not yet set up to handle, and while BEST does not receive direct government funding we liaise regularly with the National Department of Trade and Industry, keeping it informed of our activities.

As of April 1990 both the Co-ordinator and the Focus on Women Consultant will be leaving BEST at the end of their CUSO contracts. CUSO is currently in the process of recruiting replacements for these positions. If you or anyone you know are interested in these positions, contact: Pacific Desk, CUSO, 135 Rideau Street, Ottawa, ON K1N 9K7.

Know someone who would be interested in *Tok Blong SPPF*? Send us his/her name, address and interest in the Pacific Islands (if known) and we will send a complimentary copy. Let us know if we can use your name as a reference. Send to SPPF, 409-620 View St., Victoria, B.C., CANADA V8W 1J6.