

Tok Blong SPPF

A Quarterly of News and Views on the Pacific Islands

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VICTORIA, B.C., CANADA

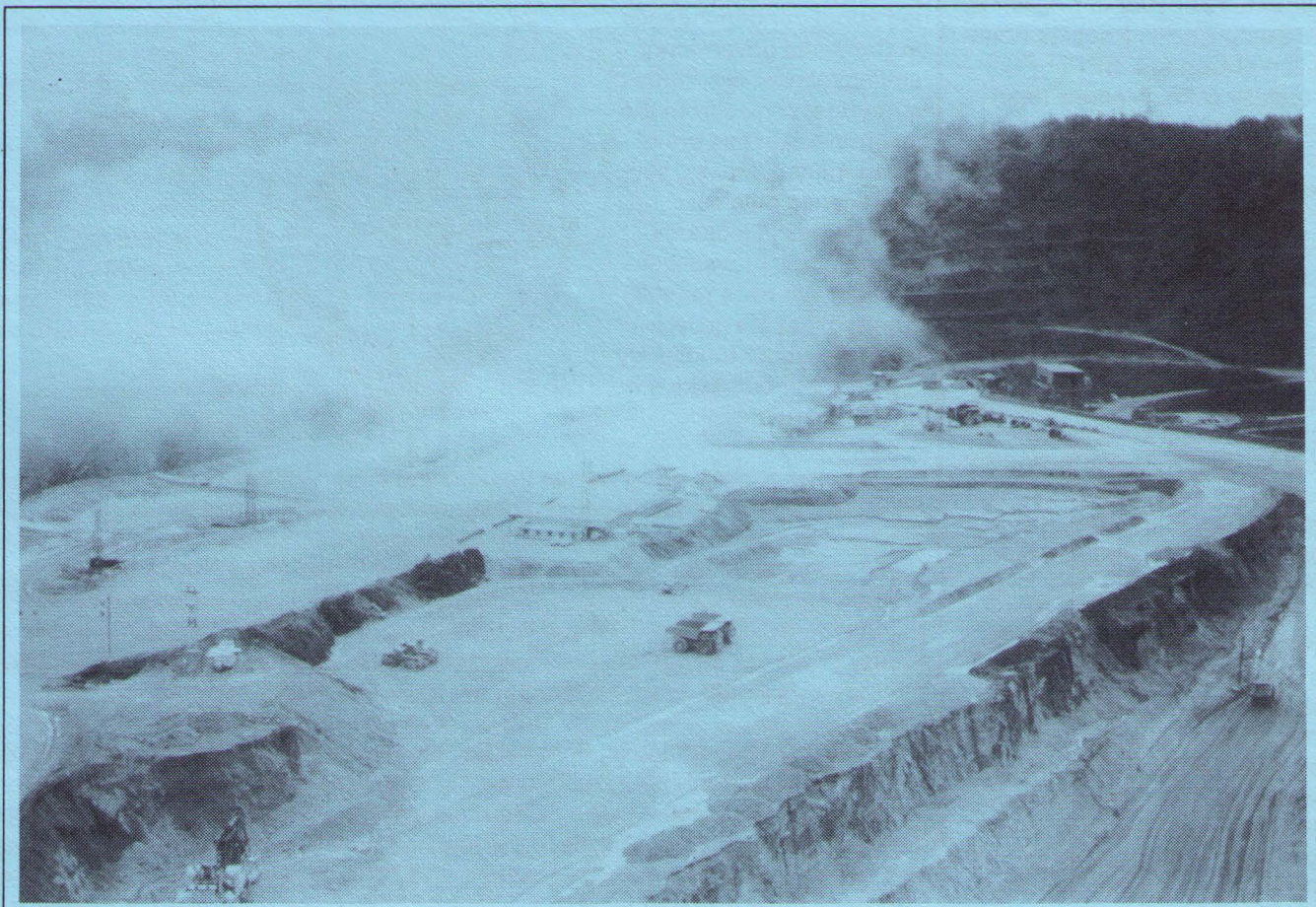


Photo: Paul Finkel

Ok Tedi mine site in Papua New Guinea

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About this journal...

TOK BLONG SPPF is pidgin, a language used in many parts of the Pacific. An equivalent expression in English might be "news from SPPF". *TOK BLONG SPPF* is published four times per year in English by the South Pacific Peoples Foundation of Canada. SPPF gratefully acknowledges financial support for the publication from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

SPPF's major aim is to promote awareness of development, social justice, environment, health and other issues of importance to the peoples of the South Pacific. Through this journal, SPPF hopes to provide Canadians and others with a window on the Pacific that will foster understanding and promote action in support of Islanders in their struggles for development.

We welcome readers' comments on the journal, as well as suggestions for articles, selections of clippings, or notices of development education materials of interest. We reserve the right to edit material. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of SPPF or of CIDA.

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SPPF Update

Funding Cuts...But the work goes on

We've talked about the importance of increased SPPF fundraising in recent *Tok Blongs*. We need increased resources to sustain and expand our programmes. We've also been worried about our dependence on Canadian government funding; almost two-thirds of our budget comes from the government. In this era of government cutbacks, such dependence puts our programmes in jeopardy. Our concerns proved well founded. We were recently informed that the government will cut our funding by 11%. Further cutbacks are possible in future.

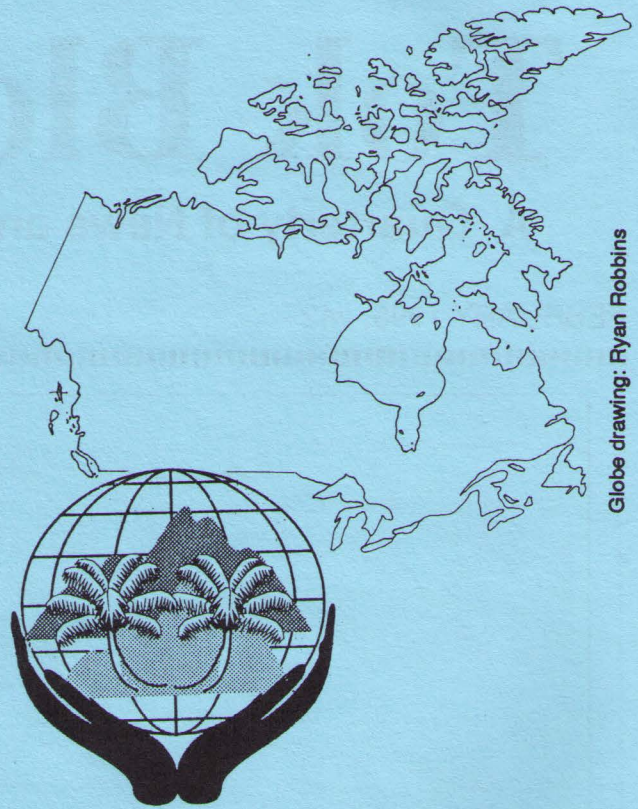
The rest of our funding comes from private donors, sales of resources and services, etc. This is the funding that must grow if our programmes are to survive. Our last *Tok Blong* included a membership application. Please consider joining if you haven't already. (Approx. 70 new members have joined since November.) Encourage others to join or become supporters of SPPF. If you can afford an additional donation to SPPF at this time, it is needed and would be welcome (Canadian donations are tax receiptable). Any suggestions on funding leads or offers to assist in fundraising would also be welcome.

On a more cheerful note, the past few months have been productive. A highlight was our January conference on "Constitution Building and Indigenous Rights: A South Pacific Perspective". The conference was co-sponsored with the University of Victoria's Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives, had an excellent cast of speakers and was well attended. January also featured an SPPF general meeting which saw the election of three new members to our Board of Directors: Celia Esmonde, Alison Gardner and Renee Pahara. Continuing Board members are Jim Boutilier (President), Sandy Argue, Elaine Monds, Chris Morgan, Mike Mullins and Gayle Nelson.

SPPF staff attended film festivals in Courtenay, British Columbia, and Edmonton, Alberta. Both festivals featured a number of South Pacific videos/films and featured talks by SPPF staff. I spent much of November and December travelling in the South Pacific (Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, PNG and Aotearoa). The opportunity to meet with many of our colleagues and partners in those countries was welcome. The results of some of those contacts will be apparent in this and future *Tok Blongs*.

Much of our time is currently occupied with organising of our annual Pacific Networking Conference (May 7-9). We have an excellent group of resource people and are looking forward to an exciting conference. The theme is ***SURVIVING IN THE ECONOMIC JUNGLE: Free trade, structural adjustment, changing global economies and their impact on people in the Pacific and Canada.*** A brochure with details is enclosed. We hope to see many of you there.

Stuart Wulff for SPPF



Globe drawing: Ryan Robbins

In This Issue...

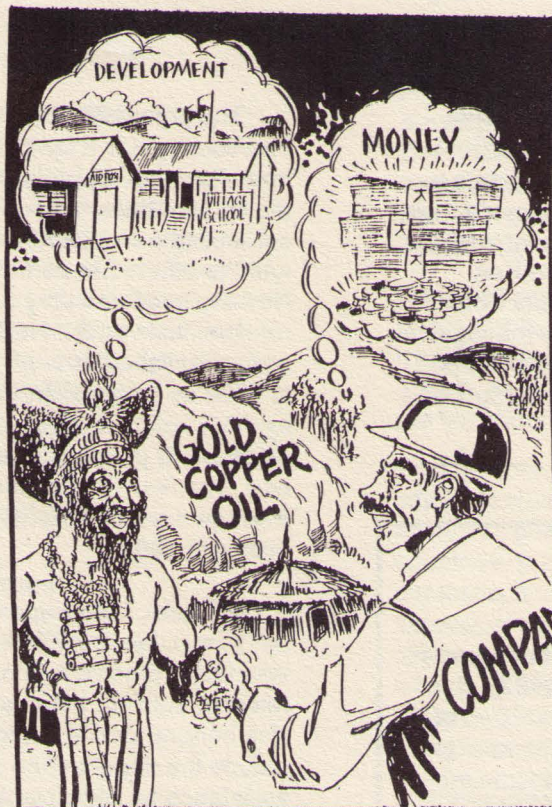
"Isn't development like World War II?"

The above quotation appears on the front cover of the Oct./Nov. 1992 edition of *Link*, the newsletter of the Solomon Islands Development Trust. In his editorial, SIDT Director Abraham Baeania compares economic development in the Solomons to World War II in terms of the scale of negative impact experienced by Solomon Islanders. He also notes that this second "invasion", like that of World War II, has been more about the interests of outsiders than of Solomon Islanders.

The questioning of some forms of economic development by an increasing number of Pacific Islanders is not unique to the Solomon Islands. The chorus of dissent is heard from many directions. The concern voiced by these development critics is that the economic development models being promoted and the increasing integration of Pacific Island nations into the global economy has often benefited foreign interests more than the local population. In many cases, these profit-centred approaches to development have actually left local communities worse off and more marginalised. Environmental degradation has also been a frequent result of this "development". As Atu Emberson-Bain says in her article, *Sustaining the Unsustainable: Assessing the Impact of Mining in the Pacific*, "the adverse impact which mining has already had on Pacific societies raises serious doubts about the capacity of current patterns of resource management to promote anything resembling sustainable development".

The predominant focus of the articles is on resource extraction industries and their impact. Most of the articles address themselves to the situation in Melanesia, the Pacific Islands region where the resource extraction model of development is most dominant. However, the issues and debates are familiar to anyone living in a country or region (Eg. Canada) affected by resource extraction industries and models of development. That these debates have come to the Pacific is simply one more sign of the Pacific's increasing integration into the economic "new world order".

As usual, this *Tok Blong* contains a number of articles and book reviews on other topics. A noteworthy item is the article by Lopeti Senituli on the Pro-Democracy Convention in Tonga. This November event rivetted the eyes of many on this Pacific kingdom. SPPF welcomes the opportunity to share the impressions of a participant with our readers.



Graphic from MEF Mining Literacy & Awareness Packet #3

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Volunteering the Papua New Guinea Way

Leo works with village youth groups to develop local income generating projects. Theresa, a school teacher for over 20 years, now helps to coordinate a kindergarten network. Kevin and Gutuma provide their business experience to two Papua New Guinea NGOs. Madeline manages a resource centre, while Ken manages a sheltered workshop for physically disabled adults. Joe teaches at a pre-school, Yanny manages a cultural centre, Malap provides administrative support to a small NGO and Willie runs a literacy programme.

■ Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

The interview with Marie Chan, "Youth Talk from Fiji" (*Tok Blong SPPF*, #41, November 1992), contained a rather startling statement: "There's a lot of land areas which are still virgin forests. We want to develop those forests so that they can become more export oriented and sell logs and woodchips to Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia."

I was very disappointed that this was not followed up by the interviewer. The notion that forests are "developed" by being felled and that this represents an economic advancement cannot be accepted. It is terrifying that the tragic and continuing loss of Pacific forests and the role of Japanese, Korean, Malaysian and Indonesian industries in their destruction and waste is apparently still unknown to a Pacific teacher/journalist. The history of exploitation in Papua New Guinea, where dreams of "development" and a better life have been met with the reality of social impoverishment, is especially relevant; I'm sure the Melanesian Environment Foundation would have a reply to the statement quoted above.

Perhaps this is an indication of how important your work is; experiences of other Pacific islanders need to be communicated so that the same sorry lessons do not need to be learnt the hard way every time.

Susi Arnott, for *Minewatch*
London, U.K.

(We receive many letters in response to Tok Blong and though that we would like to begin sharing the occasional one with our readers. SPPF did not conduct the interview with Marie Chan. Like Minewatch, we were disappointed that the interviewer did not probe Marie Chan's statement. However, we felt that it was still important to share this far from unique viewpoint with our readers.)

The presence of volunteers is nothing new to PNG. The country has a long history of hosting volunteers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Great Britain, the United States and other countries. But there is something new happening in PNG and Leo, Theresa and the others are part of the vanguard. All are Papua New Guineans and they have been posted to their current positions by the National Volunteer Service. NVS was established through PNG government legislation in 1990 as a non-profit, community development agency. NVS exists to make the same type of volunteer placements previously filled only by international agencies. The first 10 volunteers, all highly skilled and with average work experience of more than ten years, were placed in 1992.

In future, NVS hopes to place up to 30 volunteers per year. Like similar international agencies, NVS volunteers receive a living allowance, health care, relevant training, travel expenses and an end of service honorarium. In the long term, NVS hopes to reduce the dependence of PNG on overseas technical assistance by filling positions that would have previously required an international volunteer. NVS also has a mandate to promote the concept of volunteerism and citizen participation.

SPPF would like to salute the government of Papua New Guinea for its progressive thinking in establishing NVS. Hopefully, other Pacific Island governments will be encouraged to develop similar initiatives in self-sufficiency.



A Conversation about Development

by Konai Helu Thaman, PhD

Dr. Thaman is the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific

The other day I was talking with a feminist friend of mine who is a Lecturer. I showed her a poem which I wrote recently. It was my evaluation of a conference I attended on foreign aid and educational development in small states, although she did not know this background. I asked her to suggest an appropriate title for the poem, which went something like this:

*today your words are empty
sucking dry the brown dust
left by earth and sky
patches politely parched
with no water flowing
from the mountain top
scars burn on my soft skin
you've cut a piece of me away
leaving my bandaged heart
to endure the pain
of your tying me
to yourself*

"Wife's Lament", she said.

"But it's not a poem about a wife!", I said. "It's about Foreign Aid - and the World Bank conference I attended".

What's the difference? Inequality, exploitation, dependence, that's development, isn't it?

But look at it this way. For a few of us, overseas educated and "influenced", it's O.K. - but most of our people are worse off today that they were when they were kids. You and I have both seen the supposed beneficiaries of development end up victims of it. What is happening in our islands can not fit anyone's definition of sustainable development!

Wait a minute. Surely development is not all bad. What about all the good things that are happening in Education - the many aid projects aimed at developing our education systems? More kids are going to school now; there are more high schools in the outer islands; and we now have post-secondary institutions in most of our countries. You can't tell me we're worse off now than we were 20 years ago?

Isa, my friend - are you blind or what? Your problem is that you're thinking of yourself as an individual, because you've been brainwashed into a different mode of thinking. If you look at development and what it has done to the Pacific peoples as a group, it's a different picture all together. You'll see the signs of social and cultural breakdown; environmental problems; landlessness and land alienation; the destruction of our traditional agricultural systems; pollution, malnutrition and poor health, etc.; I can go on...

Don't! Surely some things are getting better? People are beginning to talk about "sustainable development". Look at our university - we now have a Development Studies Program where are students are being exposed to different development theories and the need to ensure the use of more appropriate development strategies.

Don't believe everything those economists and accountants tell us. Their idea of "sustainable development" has more to do with maintaining economic growth, and conserving natural resources, primarily for the benefit of metropolitan and developed societies.

What's more, it's about the protection of our biodiversity for recreational tourism, or finding economically medicinal plants that might help AIDS patients in their countries. When these experts talk about concern for our lost cultures, they are basically talking about those aspects of our culture that are seen to be beneficial or of interest to developed societies. And anyway, what have they done to find out about the actual perceptions and practices of people in our communities who are being "developed"?

To make matters worse, most of our development planners are overseas educated economists, who blindly accept the orthodox approaches to development that they learned at university. They may know a lot about the workings of the monetary economy, but they know virtually nothing about our subsistence economy and its economics, which have been the basis of sustainable development of our people for over 3000 years.

Most of them readily agree with visiting foreign aid consultants that money/capital accumulation is the key to development, and you accumulate money through making the factors of production (ie. labour and capital) more efficient. Now they tell us the best way to make money is through the use of free market forces, and something called "comparative advantage" is the pump that will prime the engine of economic growth. I agree many of our countries are pushing for their economies to be export-oriented. But things won't improve. We all know that our countries are too small for all these imported economic policies to work. The bigger countries, like Fiji and Papua New Guinea, may be able to adopt them but the rest of us will have to find our own strategies.

For example, the kinds of rural development projects that exist today all require large sums of money, which we don't have; they depend on overseas or urban-based expertise rather than local knowledge and skills; they often have negative impacts on both our natural and cultural environments; and they largely ignore indigenous systems of resource use. In other words, the

kind of development which we've accepted has reduced the value as well as the usefulness of our environment - our natural and cultural capital.

That's too harsh a judgement - though I do sometimes wonder why our governments continue to condone wasteful methods of developing our islands, given their fragility.

Experts say that the causes of our development problems include defective government policies (where they exist); inadequate technology; greed of the rich; incompetence of the poor; vested interests of politicians, etc. There's probably truth in this, but I don't think it's the whole story.

As for the solutions, they recommend privatisation; corporatisation; deregulation, environmental protection and land reform agencies; improved transportation and communication networks; market research; more education and more and more feasibility studies. But I doubt if implementing any or all of these will actually help "develop" our islands. You see, most of these "solutions" fail to address the larger cultural contexts in which these take place.

Maybe we should look at education, then, for some of these answers?

You must be joking. Can't you see what is happening in education is perpetuating the kinds of problems we've been talking about? We've inherited a system of education based on the same philosophy on which modern development is based. And because we all depend on foreign development assistance to realise our educational goals, we're trapped in a vicious cycle.

What do you mean?

I am saying there are problems in the area of education. Look at Australia and New Zealand - they provide most of the capital, goods and services we require for development. Both embrace orthodox economic approaches to development as their prescription for our development. In the area of educational development in particular, both reflect the global picture, where the bulk of bilateral aid money is spent in the donor country (about 90% in Australia and 70% in New Zealand). The major components of that aid are the training of island nationals in the donor country, and the provision of modern advisors and consultants. These features not only ensure that resources are kept in donor country but also provide the donor tertiary institutions with additional enrollments, thus creating more jobs there. The goodwill generated by students likely to become future Pacific Island leaders is of course an added benefit.

But I'm sure aid donors will disagree. They will claim that most development projects were entered into from the best of motives and after discussion with recipient countries. I'm sure people in Australia and New Zealand will tell us that they did their best, given the received wisdom at the time. And anyway, decision-

makers in development issues can't get things right all the time. Often it's only with hindsight that we see the fleas in development projects.

But shouldn't they listen to the people who are being developed?

Who do you listen to when you are trying to get things right? Remember when those engineers came to blast reef channels on one of the islands? The elders had decided where the channels should be and the engineers did as they were requested. Later, another engineer came and told the islanders the channels were in the wrong place to minimise rip and crosscurrents, and nutrient flows into the lagoon! And what about the New Zealand technician who went to a hospital to fix the X-ray unit? He found a room full of aid-donated equipment from different countries, including France, Japan and the USA. Some of the equipment had broken down and parts were not available in the country! Some machines were the wrong voltage. Others had instructions that couldn't be understood by hospital staff because they were in a foreign language.

I still think that most aid consultants are so arrogant - they think they know everything! it would help if they took our advice: after all, there are enough of us educated islanders now who can deal with our own development.

But even among ourselves, there are varying perceptions of aid donors and their role in our islands' development. You, for example, see donors as using their aid to achieve their own aims rather than for the benefit of the majority of our peoples. But my cousin at the Planning Office back home would disagree: he claims aid resources have been used effectively, because locals were responsible for project identification and donors were only "responding" to the prioritised needs.

Perhaps you're right: but we agree on one thing, don't we:

And what's that?

That in the Pacific Islands, the benefits of development aid in general and educational aid in particular have been disappointing.

Perhaps. Certainly in education there's not enough consultation about the nature and appropriateness of development aid: too many consultants have little or no experience of our island cultures, especially the economic realities of people from extended families on low incomes. The amount of aid money going to such consultants leaves little for direct assistance to the education sector of the island country concerned. It's often hard for an Australian, American or UN consultant, who stays in a \$150 a day hotel, receives \$60,000 a year tax-free salary and claims \$250 a day in consultancy fees, to understand how rural people (and most of our people are rural) think and feel.

And what about the \$700,000 livestock development that was meant to serve five of our island countries? Did you know that 75% of the money went to consultants' travel, lodging and fees, and, after the project was completed, there wasn't one additional animal in any of those countries? I'm telling you, most of us are disillusioned with development because we've seen how donor-driven Pacific island development has become.

Perhaps our faith in donor countries like Australia and New Zealand has been misplaced. We really can't expect aid to raise our living standards, solve our manpower and training problems, close the gap between rich and poor, generate employment, expand trading markets, etc. after all, these benefits haven't been forthcoming in the donor countries themselves. Perhaps the problem has been that most development planners, experts and consultants have little understanding of what is when they recommend what ought to be. And here I'm not just referring to overseas personnel - I'm including Pacific Islanders as well.

We in the islands need to evolve theories/models of development that synthesise traditional and modern knowledge, skills and values, because that's the context in which development takes place. We can't have the one without the other. This synthesis can come about only through suitable education. It ought to be the focus of our Development Studies programme. I guess what I'm saying is that we must look for ways of developing ourselves and our resources that take into account our cultures.

That's impossible. How can you change a giant monster when he is about to eat you up? The development community itself, particularly the international development community (like EEC and UNDP) are more worried about their own survival and development than about trying to create more equitable development for us. Even now, some people are planning development projects for our islands which will give them the chance to make huge profits.

Take "ecotourism" - a buzzword of current tourism development literature. The World Resources Institute in 1990 reported more than 300 companies selling wildlife and nature tours, most of them in developing countries. I'm told a major USAID project in the Pacific

is appropriately entitled PEP (Profitable Environmental Project). This is just the kind of "development" of our natural and cultural resources that we should reject. And to make matters worse, most of us have grown to like and even need the products of our own exploitation!

We can make a start with ourselves. We need a change of heart as well as a change of mind. As educators, we have to bring about a change in the development perspective that has dominated our islands so far - a perspective that is foreign and potentially destructive because it treats lands and peoples as separate objects to be used for accumulating money, and reinforces the attitudes that make some of us treat others of us like pawns on the development chessboard of the Pacific environment. This has eroded the tangata whenua relationship that has provided relatively stable development for generations of Pacific peoples.

I think you're dreaming again, my friend. Who on earth is going to do that? No one wants to commit social and economic suicide!

Perhaps you're too pessimistic. There are people concerned about the kinds of issues we've been talking about. I may meet some at this conference I'm going to in New Zealand. Meanwhile, there's no harm in dreaming about a better and more equitable way of ensuring that development works for us; for more appropriate models, that take into account the people for whom "development" is supposed to work.

WATKAEN DEVELOPMENT?



From: LINK

Where did you say you were going?

Massey University

Lucky you.

Yes

Vinaka vaka-levu, bahut dhanyabaad, fa'afetai lava, faka aue lahi, metaki ma'ata, kobati.

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Protecting Worker Rights in Fiji

...An Interview with Ema Druavesi of the Fiji Trade Union Congress

SPPF's Stuart Wulff met with Ema Druavesi in Suva in November. Ema is Women's Officer and a national organiser with the FTUC as well as being Secretary of the FTUC Women's Wing. She is active in Asia-Pacific regional labour networks and will be speaking at SPPF's annual Pacific Networking Conference (May 7-9).

SPPF: Many people have expressed concern about Fiji's new constitution and the government has committed itself to a constitutional review. What is your view?

Ema: Although people have heard that the constitution is discriminatory, they do not know the enormity of how the constitution can be used to discriminate against other ethnic groups, particularly Indians. Some employers, especially in the garment industry, have used that provision to further their own interest. I know that in a lot of factories now, there are more Fijian women in the garment industry than there ever were before. The employers say that Fijians are willing to do the work, but there is more to it than that. They disregard minimum working conditions because they know that a lot of Fijian workers are not aware of their rights. The discriminatory nature of it is that they follow the government policy of recruiting. More than 50% of the workforce in government departments must be Fijian. That seems to be filtering down to private employers. They take away the work of women belonging to other ethnic groups. A lot of Fijian women who enter the garment industry do not realise that they should only work up until so and so time. Once they go over that, it's regarded as overtime. Because the Fijian women are willing to do more, the employers take advantage of their ignorance and do not pay extra.

SPPF: Why are the women willing? Is it because there aren't other jobs and they're desperate?

Ema: Yes. A lot of women have gone into the garment industry because of financial problems. Some of them know that it's lowly paid and working conditions are poor, but they have no other source of income. The cost of living here is so high that it's not comparable with the low wages. The wage of one earner is not enough to feed the family. The woman is forced to go to work and the only available work that women can go to without skills is in the garment industry.

SPPF: Are many of the women in a recognised union?

Ema: Not many, about 1,000 out of a garment industry workforce of about 10,000. The trend seems to be, especially with Asian employers, that once they have a union in place, the employers shut the factory or sack the workers, then reopen under a new name and recruit new workers. Then we have the Australian and New Zealand companies. While we support improvements here, we certainly object to the way our counterparts in those countries have suffered through the relocation of companies from their home towns to here.

SPPF: What are wages like in the garment industry? Do some companies pay better wages?

Ema: For unskilled workers, it is 65 cents/hour (Fijian - approx. U.S. 40 cents/hour). After six months, it's 85 cents. Even then, the women have acquired some skills, but it takes the manufacturer four or five years to even think of upping their wage to \$1.00. We've been



Photo: Stuart Wulff

Ema Druavesi - Women's Officer and a National Organiser with the FTUC

telling the manufacturers from New Zealand and Australia, "We're not going to ask you to give us an Australia or New Zealand rate. All we're asking is that you give us a liveable wage adequate for the standard of living here." But they don't want to. We thought that these people would teach Asian employers that they should not exploit the workers. But to us now, they're all the same. There are minimum working conditions under the law here; they're not being complied with. We've been pushing the government to monitor the situation of employers violating the law. For example, the employers know that women are not allowed to work past 8:00 at night, but I got a call this morning about a garment factory that continued working the women from 8:00 yesterday morning until 8:00 this morning. They know the law, but the ministry does not have enough people to monitor these violations.

SPPF: How many garment factories are there?

Ema: There might be three or four joint ventures with indigenous Fijians and eight or nine that are fully owned by local Indians. There are almost 200 foreign owned factories under the tax free system. I suspect that they've not been told the truth by the government, that they must have been promised after the 1987 coup not to worry about the unions. "You can come in; the cheap labour is there." When they've come and found that there are unions which have been very active in unionising the workforce, some of them have folded up and gone away. That is why, I think, the government introduced this labour reform last year, so that it could give them some credibility regarding what they had promised. The labour reforms would reduce the union movement to nothing at all.

SPPF: We understood that the government had agreed to withdraw some of the labour reforms.

Ema: There have been talks with the government about withdrawing some of the labour reforms. But at the same time, in the budget speech of the Minister for Finance, he said that the economic growth of the country needs the labour reforms. It's funny that two government ministries do not co-operate. While the Minister for Labour is withdrawing, the other one is saying it is necessary. Economic growth does not just depend on the labour force, but they want to blame the labour force for all the problems.

SPPF: How is the union movement trying to help women workers?

Ema: Women have been disadvantaged for a long time. We have been mounting courses to make women aware of their rights. For example, they have the right to say no if they are being asked to lift an object that is too heavy. Women are frequently required to lift heavy bales of cloth up three or four stories. Back problems are common. Women should also be aware of

repetitive motion problems from use of equipment. A lot of women in the garment industry are now coming up with asthmatic problems because of exposure to material dust over many years. They do not know, but it is the beginning of suffering from a disease that will never leave them for the rest of their lives. Garment workers are not allowed to step from their machines until they go out for teatime or even lunch. Women who go to the toilet several times a day are penalised. We have been mounting these awareness programmes to tell them that they can say no to certain things like that. We are also telling them that they must report if they feel any pain in their joints, back or other parts of their bodies, that these are signs of work related injuries. We want to continue mounting these type of programmes because we see the necessity of it.

SPPF: Do you offer these courses only for women who have joined a trade union or for all the women?

Ema: We do orientation courses for the membership and we also do it especially for women, who may feel uncomfortable amongst men. For women who are not in unions, it is hard. They are hardly exposed to any of this. We encourage employers to let them into courses during lunch, but the employers don't see that we are playing a positive role to enhance productivity in the workplace. They think that we're trying to turn the women against them. I've tried to convince them that "unless you have a healthy and happy workforce, you will not be able to meet your productivity target", but....

SPPF: Is the union movement actively trying to organise women and are you succeeding?

Ema: Yes, we are and the numbers of women in unions is increasing. We come across some barriers. But because of the media exposing those hard core employers that refuse to allow the women their rights, a lot of women are becoming more aware and these women are becoming a force in organising women in other factories.

SPPF: There's been a couple of strikes in the textile factories. Has that helped organising?

Ema: I've noticed that it has helped in getting other women aware of the problems and reasons why that particular factory went on strike. At the same time, it has given us an insight into the overseas connections of companies. We've come to understand that it's only a subsidiary here. The parent multinational is somewhere else. It's hard to trace these companies because they often go under another name, like one strike we had at a company where the registered office was in New Zealand. When we traced the company's registration in Fiji, we found that it was non-existent. We then went by the label and found that the company, which was also producing in New Zealand, was a subsidiary

company of a man in Hong Kong, but he is based in America.

SPPF: Is there a problem with sexual harassment in the garment factories?

Ema: There has been sexual harassment, but women are afraid to report the harassment because it would break up their marriage. They also succumb to sexual harassment to retain their jobs.

Some factories have men and women as supervisors, but most of the supervisors are men from other countries.

SPPF: While the previous government, with its labour reforms, seemed to be quite strongly anti-labour, the new government has seemed to adopt a somewhat different stance. Is this an accurate impression?

Ema: So far, I think the government has been responsive to a lot of worker's issues. At the same time, I think they are a bit soft. I don't know if they are not sure or what. The legislation is a real stumbling block. We've got the Employment Act that has been there for a donkey's years. We need to amend that or even change the whole Act. What was quite relevant 30 years ago is not at this moment, for example with regards to modern equipment and worker safety. The labour reforms are a real test for the government now, with the Minister for Finance saying that they need to well and truly put the labour reforms in place while the Minister for Labour is saying that market forces should decide wages and that workers should be able to negotiate freely. If the labour reforms are removed, it enables the trade union movement to negotiate for better working conditions. As any improvement in working conditions applies to all workers, not just those in unions, we are representing the interests of unorganised workers as well.

SPPF: Structural adjustment programmes with their "free trade" policies, privatisation and cuts of government services, etc., are an increasing concern for workers in Canada and other parts of the world. Is this an issue on the agenda of the FTUC?

Ema: That is a fairly new topic for us, but structural adjustment is coming. A lot of government departments are now being privatised or corporatised. How will these changes affect the workers? It comes in a very big way and none of us knows anything about it until it happens. We need to understand what structural adjustment is all about, look at government policies on structural adjustment and examine how this will impact on workers. I'm leaving next week for an ICFTU meeting in Japan to look at the impact of structural adjustment on women workers. It is a big concern.

SPPF: Is there a close relationship now between the FTUC and the Labour Party?

Ema: I have a relationship because I'm a member of the Labour Party. But people have the freedom to choose whichever political party they will belong to. I notice that the move from workers is towards the Labour Party because of their policies, especially now that the government is refusing to give the civil service more than 4% whereas the first bill that they approved in Parliament was raising their salaries more than 100%. When the civil service association asked for a 20% increase, the prime minister accused them of trying to bankrupt the government, but they've given themselves a hefty rise.

SPPF: Have you had support from other countries and what kind of support would be useful from your point of view?

Ema: Yes, though very little. They couldn't do more in terms of solidarity because we could not trace the source of the company overseas. Some of our counterparts have sent money to help with our work. We would like to have workers come to actually see what workers in the Pacific are being subjected to compared to conditions in their countries. We would also like to see women from here meeting with counterparts from other countries to learn about working conditions there. I think that programmes like this should be mounted on a large scale, not just for the organised sector. We would also like to work with NGOs that have an interest in women, so we can accomplish more together. NGOs should mount programmes for working women. That will also allow women not in the trade union movement to attend their programmes and access information from the NGOs and from other women.



plaiting coconut leaf

Sustaining the Unsustainable?

Assessing the Impact of Mining in the Pacific

by Atu Emberson-Bain

Atu Emberson Bain is a researcher and video documentary maker with an interest in mining issues.

Discoveries of rich mineral wealth in the Pacific region have generally been welcomed as a panacea for countries increasingly pounded by the problems of rising trade deficits and national debts, high population growths, escalating unemployment and poor economic growth. In the clutches of international development and financial institutions with their conditions for debt relief and preferred economic models, a premium has been placed on large-scale exploitation of mineral resources.

Mining development has characteristically created an important source of export revenue for Pacific countries, helping to diversify narrow, primary commodity-based economies inherited from the colonial period. It is regarded as an invaluable source of employment and infrastructural development. In some countries like Papua New Guinea, Nauru and New Caledonia, the industry has claimed such preeminence within the productive cash economy that it has effectively become the earner. By 1987, the Panguna mine on Bougainville and the Ok Tedi mine of Western Province were together responsible for as much as 60% of PNG's export earnings, dwarfing the 15% contribution of PNG's second export, coffee. For Nauru, the prosperity generated for the country since local control over the phosphate industry was established in 1968 has become the source of massive overseas investments and trust funds. In French-controlled New Caledonia, a nickel industry which boasts 40% of world deposits and contributes more than 90% of the territory's export earnings is critical to the military capability of metropolitan France as well as a crucial resource to its nuclear-based energy.

Yet in spite of its apparent benefits, mining is increasingly steeped in controversy and conflict, in particular bitter opposition from local communities who have been affected most adversely by it. The tensions created by the industry have varied in intensity and in some instances - Nauru, Bougainville, New Caledonia - their origins go back in history, linking localised protests against mining to broader political (anti-colonial, post-colonial and secessionist) struggles. In Nauru, opposition has ranged from local discontent over government mining policy and distribution of phosphate revenues to government sponsored litigation at the International Court of Justice in support of rehabilitation claims. In Fiji, the industry has been

plagued by industrial disputes, a landowners' court case, and allegations against an Australian company of political activities linked to the 1987 military overthrow of the Labour-led Bavadra government. In PNG, people's protests against mining-induced destruction of the environment and over their marginalisation from mining benefits have in one case - Bougainville - pushed the conflict into the bloody domain of civil war and a brutal military invasion. As the recent military/paramilitary offensives against Bougainville landowners and Fiji mine strikers demonstrate, state protection of foreign mining operations in the Pacific does not appear to stop short of violent suppression of their detractors.

While it is not possible here to explore details of populist resistance to mining in the Pacific, it provides an important reminder of the priority that should be given to evaluating the impact of mining on indigenous peoples of the region. All too often, grassroots implications and perceptions are a postscript to development analyses if they are included at all. The elitist and patriarchal bias of development thinking has significant policy implications. The marginalisation of women from the process of formulating development policy is one outcome. The dominance of a growth-led, export-oriented model of development is another.

The sustainable development debate, including criticisms of its limitations, highlights the need to focus on the local impact of development strategies. It emphasises the need to redefine development (and so shape policy) according to its ability to guarantee minimum standards in quality of life for the majority of people and to promote a more equitable distribution of resources. Sustainable development must translate into sustainable livelihoods, putting people's welfare first. It is not enough, indeed it is contradictory, to merely inject existing development strategies (based on economic growth) with a strong sense of environmental "sensitivity". The root of the problem lies with the growth model itself. As Trainer succinctly puts it, the basic problem for the third world is "not lack of development...it is inappropriate development" because "a development strategy making growth the top priority creates poverty."

As a rule, mining in the Pacific has proved to be one of the most destructive and unsustainable forms of foreign initiated development. The living human scars of this rapacious industry are starkly visible in the suffering endured by the people of Bougainville. But while Bougainville might be singular in so far as its human "time-bomb" has already exploded, it is by no means

alone as a victim of mining. In most areas of the region, the history of mining weaves a woeful tale of expropriation and exploitation, social and cultural dislocation, and environmental damage.

It is one of the ironies of mining "development" that it has tended to consolidate rather than reduce economic dependence for Pacific countries and that in the process it has caused a decline rather than improvement in quality of life for its supposed beneficiaries. The implications of dependence are especially serious because the industry (in some instances, the entire economy) is founded on a non-renewable resource. At the macro-level, this dependence is represented in the foreign orientation and control of the industry. Mining has drawn the Pacific more decisively within the orbit of the global capitalist economy as a cheap source of raw materials and under the control of its powerful brokers, the IMF and World Bank. Foreign ownership and control have facilitated the expatriation of mining revenue; the heavy dependence on foreign technology, expensive machinery and material imports has been a major drain on mine earnings, aggravated by practices like transfer pricing. Another leakage has been the outflow of dividends to foreign shareholders and the remittances of expatriate employees.

The drawing on domestic capital reserves for mine infrastructure and development and the further surrender of economic returns through government tax concessions have also been features of the mining history of Fiji, PNG and New Caledonia. In PNG, the siege on the secessionist island of Bougainville has drawn resources away from more productive and needy areas of the economy. It has aggravated the country's debt burden and increased its dependence on Australian (military and economic) aid. The trend looks likely to continue as further resources are diverted to mounting military defences of mining operations around the country.

At the micro-level, mining-induced dependence and underdevelopment has had its impact in massive land losses and destruction and associated social dislocation. The large land requirements of mining have subjected some indigenous communities, notably those of Banaba and Bougainville, to the trauma of permanent exile or resettlement. Mining exploitation of the natural environment has undermined the self-reliance of traditional Pacific economies and led to a growing dependence on less nutritious imported store foods. In both Bougainville and Ok Tedi, contamination of local river systems and destruction of forest and other productive land by the daily dumping of thousands of tons of toxic tailings have killed huge quantities of fish and other marine life, crucial to traditional diets, and destroyed water and timber supplies. New Caledonia is another ecological disaster.

But it is probably Nauru, as the most prosperous Pacific island economy and yet one of the most severe victims of environmental damage, that encapsulates the full irony of the dependent development encouraged by mining. What remains today after 80 years of plunder and the effective "surrender" of virtually the entire island to phosphate mining is a barren landscape of tall limestone pinnacles resembling "freshly dug graves with white headstones". The loss of food and copra grounds, building and craft materials have imposed an unhealthy import-based diet and a relatively sedentary lifestyle. It is these trappings of an "affluent" lifestyle that have sentenced Nauruan men and women to one of the highest rates of diabetes in the world and other associated health problems. Mining has effectively reduced their lifespan.

There is a special significance to the land losses and degradation resulting from mining that has intensified the pain and sense of deprivation experienced by local communities and fuelled the flames of discontent and conflict. Traditional Pacific values about land have no parallel in Western capitalist notions of it as an alienable and disposable material commodity. Land is crucial to physical survival as well as to the reproduction of traditional social relations. It has a distinctive spiritual value that enshrines an unseverable sacred link between the dead and the living. Communal rather than private tenure predominates in customary land systems and there is no tradition of proprietary rights being vested exclusively in single males. The claim of the state to ownership of minerals has no traditional legitimacy. Nor has the distinction between surface and subterranean components of land, a device historically used to legitimise this claim. For the Bougainville villager, "Land is our life...it is our only world. When you take our land, you cut away the very heart of our existence...For us to be completely landless is a nightmare which no dollar in the pocket or dollar in the bank will allay" (from 1989 statement of John Connell to the Supreme Court of Victoria, Australia).

Evidence suggests that mining has proved to be an iniquitous form of development, generating social inequalities which have become sources of social tensions and conflict of disturbing proportions. Benefits of mining have been largely the monopoly of local and foreign shareholders, national governments and elites; the distribution system (royalties, compensation, wages and other benefits) has tended to impoverish rather than enrich local communities, including those who lay claim to the mineral rich land and those responsible for digging it. With the exception of Nauru, the "trickle down" of high earnings from mining has been just that, a trickle. Neither Fiji nor New Caledonia concede a royalty to landowners. While landowners in PNG and Nauru have been the beneficiaries of royalties and/or compensation payments, the returns have represented a tiny proportion of the value of extracted minerals and corporate profits. In addition, their

unequal distribution (a product of many factors including disregard of traditional land rights in the distribution formula) has paved the way for marked economic inequalities, undermining what were fairly effective traditional redistributive mechanisms.

Another perceived benefit of mining, employment, offers little support for the trickle down theory. In New Caledonia and Nauru, employment benefits for indigenous people have been negligible as a result of heavy reliance on immigrant labour. In PNG, local benefits have in cases like Bougainville and Ok Tedi been limited by a preference for non-local Papua New Guineans. In Fiji, although indigenous Fijians dominate the mine workforce, total employment in the mining sector averages only 1-2%. Moreover, in Fiji and PNG, the mining industry has (despite national commitments to localisation) continued to display features of a colonial division of labour, typically maintaining a highly paid senior expatriate (white) elite within management, a discriminatory wage system and a ceiling on the upward mobility of indigenous workers. In colonial New Caledonia, the situation is probably worse, with Kanak nickel workers continuing to be concentrated in unskilled jobs and enjoying few opportunities to move into higher paid skilled work.

Mining's failure to deliver sustainable livelihoods can be seen from wages, other returns to labour and the living conditions evident in the mine-servicing or relocated settlements. (This has unfortunately been a relatively neglected area of study.) From labour research undertaken on Fiji's mining sector, it is apparent that mine wages have persistently lagged behind all sectors of the economy except agriculture. For large numbers of mineworkers who live off company (supermarket) credit and wage advances, day to day survival does not come easily. Housing for most Fijian families provides outdoor and communal washing, bathing, cooking and toilet facilities that are blatantly substandard. On Bougainville too, impoverished squatter settlements have sprung up and relocation has brought problems of overcrowding, dilapidated housing and poor facilities. Health problems including a high incidence of respiratory ailments, gastroenteritis, skin problems and child malnutrition appear to be linked to sulphur pollution, poor living conditions and poverty in the mining community of Vatukoula (Fiji). New Caledonia's problem appears even more serious, with high rates of lung cancer and childhood leukaemia and the world's record for asthma-related mortalities.

The Impact of Mining on Women

While there has been some interest in how mining has affected women, research has mainly been confined to PNG and there are no separate studies. There is a need for more comprehensive, critical studies on the changes in women's social, economic and health



Local settlement at the edge of Tabubil town near Ok Tedi mine site

Photo: Paul Finkel

status resulting from mining. Equally important is the need to examine the ways in which women have responded to the changes, including the role they have played in community based struggles against mining development.

Integrating gender analysis into studies on mining can enhance our understanding of its social impact. Evidence suggests that, while women have reaped fewer of the benefits of mining, they have borne the brunt of the most dislocating aspects of it. The negative impacts that mining has on living standards are especially problematic for women given their traditional responsibilities as caretakers of the family. The siphoning off of male labour into the industry has increased women's workload by leaving them exclusively responsible for subsistence food production. Family recruitment in lieu of migrant labour systems generates its own dislocation. For women, the resulting break up of the extended family system has reduced the physical and emotional support available to them.

Environmental damage, in particular the depletion and contamination of water and firewood sources and loss/damage of land and fishing grounds, has undermined the capacity of women to provide food and maintain the welfare of their families. Workloads (eg. distances travelled to collect firewood, tend gardens or fish) have also increased. The inadequacy of household cash earnings and poor living conditions in mining towns constitute additional pressures. Congested, impoverished and culturally alienating mining settlements outside the traditional mechanisms of social control have brought the novel (or greater) problems of domestic violence, alcoholism, extra-marital sexual relations and teenage pregnancies.

Barriers to women's employment in mining exclude them from one of the few benefits that Pacific communities can potentially derive from mining. Male dominance of mining generated business ventures

emphasises women's economic marginalisation relative to men. In small mining towns like Vatukoula where opportunities for non-mine work seldom exist, the overwhelming preference in favour of males has implications for women's educational/literacy status (and in turn economic independence) by reducing the perceived need to educate girls, particularly when money is short. Women comprise a very small proportion of the mine workforce in PNG and Fiji, possibly none at all in Nauru and New Caledonia. Of 20,000 women classified as wage employees in PNG, there are only 400-500 in the mining/quarrying sector, 5% of the total 10,000 employees in mining. In 1985, women claimed just 4% of total wages and salaries paid in the mining sector (PNG Census data).

The gender bias of the mine labour market reflects the dominance of patriarchal values and the industry's own rationale, both of which prescribe an essentially domestic and reproductive (or prostitution) role for women. In Fiji, prohibitions exist on underground mine work for women and restrictions on night work are laid down in law. Women are therefore largely confined to lower status, lower paid surface jobs deemed suitable for them. In the past, work opportunities for ethnic Fijian women did not extend beyond very low paid domestic work in the houses of European management or a short-lived prostitution trade. Today, women are still employed as cheap domestic servants, but they are also found in the research, geology, administration and stores sections on the surface, as well as in the mill as rocksorters. Traditional stereotypes about women's unsuitability for mine and night work appear to be quite flexible on the production floor. Women at Vatukoula perform strenuous manual work in the mill (shovelling soil and rocks) and they work night shifts. Women rocksorters, paid at the minimum unskilled rate of F\$1.55 an hour, work in a dusty, extremely hot and poorly lit working environment. They are required to spend many hours of the day standing bent over a conveyor belt.

Violence and Other Controls

The fragmentary information that exists suggests that negative changes in women's status are probably considerable and that female-directed violence may be an endemic feature of mining communities. Heavy alcohol consumption, sexual and domestic violence, and prostitution (with attendant health risks) typify some of the problematic features of mining development for women, but it is difficult to generalise about the scale and intensity of impact. At the Ok Tedi mine, the establishment of exclusive and competitive male drinking gatherings at night has led to a high incidence of violent drunken behaviour amongst men, including rape and other serious assaults on women. Heavy beer consumption on the island of Misima has also resulted in an escalating incidence of domestic and other violence. It is likely that women bear the major burden of mining linked social conflict and violence,

whether this occurs at the level of the household or the wider community.

In terms of general status, the Ok Tedi case suggests that Wopkaimin women have lost important aspects of their former economic and social independence. Traditionally, women engaged in independent food collection and consumption and lived in separate housing. As a result of mining, they have become dependent on their husbands for food and housing. Further, as cash has increasingly displaced the traditional valuables used to pay bride price, women have become prey to a competitive, entrepreneurial marriage market, a form of male controlled "business development" that has permitted men to exploit and increase their control over women's sexuality. Increased dependence and lower status within the family almost certainly have implications for Wopkaimin women's health and the welfare of their children, particularly since wages to buy food are eroded by male alcohol consumption and because of the rising violence associated with this.

On Bougainville, women have not made war but they have paid dearly for it. They have not only endured the pain of losing husbands and children. As they have become part of a war that has delivered heavy casualties, cut off medical and educational services, and destroyed homes and food gardens, the demands on women's labour will almost certainly have risen. Amongst the human rights atrocities inflicted on the Bougainville people, women have had to deal with the additional menace of rape.

Women's Land Rights

Women's land rights and the status these conferred on them within traditional society appear to have been eroded as an outcome of mining development, especially in the matrilineal societies of Bougainville, Lihir and Nauru where women had more to lose. Matrilineal descent systems which transferred land rights through women did not necessarily confer significant levels of autonomy, power and authority on them. In Nauru, for example, women's matrilineal status was circumscribed by their limited access to positions of traditional political leadership and by controls over their sexuality. It is nevertheless notable that on Bougainville, the matrilineal principles of land inheritance accorded women a position of some importance within traditional society and gender relations tended to be marked more by "complementarity" than the "hierarchy" typical of PNG's highland societies. On Nauru moreover, the matrilineal land system provided the vehicle through which women indirectly controlled much of the subsistence economy.

Mining development on Bougainville has brought about an increasing contradiction between the traditionally dominant matrilineal system of the Nasioi speaking people and the patrilineal values associated with the cash economy and private property. The high money

stakes of compensation and royalty incomes from mining have strengthened intruding patrilineal claims. While the extent to which women's status has been affected is unknown, the failure of the compensation system to account for the custom of matrilineal inheritance suggests that it has almost certainly deteriorated. A decline in women's position relative to men has also resulted because the compensation system has boosted male cash crop farming while employment and business opportunities have favoured men.

On Nauru, it has been argued that women's control within the phosphate economy has continued unaffected, that women along with men become the recipients of an independent source of cash income from mining, and that the distribution of mining royalties to landholders has continued to be based on matrilineal principles. Yet it needs to be noted that, in spite of their traditional status, women do not appear to have exercised much if any influence over compensation negotiations or to have had a say in management of the phosphate resources. Furthermore, destruction of the subsistence economy appears likely to have undermined an important basis of women's status within the traditional division of labour. It has reduced their economic and social independence by preventing their cultivation of pandanus, a crop regarded as more valuable than coconuts (which men usually tended) and which required them to live away from their husbands for a few months each year. The loss of the central plateau known as the Topside has disrupted women's role as food providers and craft makers, eroded the prestige they enjoyed as transmitters of cultural knowledge (through production of craft valuables), and forged a more dependent, domesticated lifestyle which has led to a decline in their health.

Writing Women In

The scant attention paid to the impact of mining on women reflects the perception of mining as a male industry. Such a view is probably responsible for the marginal role women have been permitted to play in community decision making about mining development. Yet this male-centric view is misleading and fails to account for the role women have played in the industry as well as the numerous ways in which their economic and social status has been dramatically affected by it. In the mining communities of the Pacific, as elsewhere in the world, the unpaid labour of women has been a crucial factor in maintaining low cost labour systems. Women's labour outside direct employment includes unpaid household management, food production and social security support to dependents in village economies stripped of their young able-bodied males. Their paid sexual labour services (prostitution) in bachelor mining outposts and their unpaid social and biological reproductive labour in family mining settlements is another factor. Every mine has been dependent on and subsidised by women's labour. It is important that any study seeking to understand the

social impact of mining in all its complexity, including the dynamics of exploitation and power within the labour process, should account for its gender component.

The case for writing women into the social history of Pacific mining also rests on the important role they have played in community based responses to mining. The cases of Bougainville and New Caledonia probably stand out as the most obvious beacons in the history of women's involvement in community struggles. On Bougainville, the protests of Rorovana women, who in 1969 resisted the attempt by 100 armed riot police to seize their land on behalf of the CRA mining company, are but one instance of the courage and inspiring example they have shown. In Fiji, the long miners' strike at Vatukoula has drawn attention to the increasingly public and militant role women are assuming in industrial struggles against foreign mining companies.

Conclusion

This paper identifies some ways in which mineral exploitation has touched the lives of Pacific Islanders, particularly women. In the absence of more research, definitive conclusions cannot be drawn. What can be inferred from available evidence, however, is that the impact of mining on Pacific island economies, environments, social systems and cultures has been considerable, in some respects devastating. While some economic benefits might have accrued at the national level, the limited, unequal and gender discriminatory nature of their distribution at the local level (to workers and landowners) is a conspicuous anomaly. Even more disturbing is the large scale destruction of irreplaceable resources like land and river systems which affect local communities most directly, undermining their traditional self-sufficiency and threatening their health and livelihoods. The adverse impact which mining has already had on Pacific societies raises serious doubts about the capacity of current patterns of resource "management" to promote anything resembling sustainable development.

The marginalisation of Pacific communities, especially women, from planning and decision making about mining, not to mention ownership, are a testimony to their powerlessness. Equally telling is the heavy hand with which local critics of mining development have been treated. An important challenge that therefore faces Pacific peoples is to find ways to empower communities, and women, so that they are better equipped to prevent the most harmful features of mining, to have a greater influence over mining policy, and ultimately to help shape a more equitable and sustainable form of development. The bleak prospect of further conflict, violence and bloodshed may be the only alternative.

(Note: This is a slightly abridged version of an unpublished paper. Due to space limitations, the extensive references and appendices in the original paper have been omitted.)

Industrial Development and Cultural Survival ...The Case of Irian Jaya

by Catherine Kennedy

(Catherine Kennedy is a pseudonym. The author is a Canadian researcher with an interest in Indonesia.)

(Terminology note: Supporters of self-determination for the indigenous peoples of western New Guinea use the name, West Papua, for this territory and refer to its people as West Papuans. These names were chosen by West Papuans prior to their annexation by Indonesia. In Indonesia, it is now known as the province of Irian Jaya and its people are known as Irianese.)

The resource rich eastern Indonesian province of Irian Jaya remains culturally and ecologically diverse despite growing pressures from the industrialised world. However, industrial development and environmental destruction are threatening the survival of the province's indigenous peoples. Canadians are part of the threat to these people and their land; Canadians can also be part of a changing world that reverses this trend. This article examines the interconnectedness of the cultural and environmental needs of the Irianese people, and the global context which threatens to extinguish these cultures at a time when we in the industrialised world need to be looking to indigenous peoples as models for a sustainable existence. The role of Canadian corporations in Irian Jaya is also outlined.

Irian Jaya: The Land and the People

Irian Jaya is the western half of New Guinea, the second largest island in the world. The eastern half of the island is the independent country of Papua New Guinea. The peoples indigenous to New Guinea have been culturally and ethnically classed as Papuan and are related to the other Melanesian peoples of the southwest Pacific. In contrast, most Indonesians are Malay peoples, descended from people who originated in China and Indo-China.

Indonesia is often described as a country of rich cultural diversity. One indicator of this is the large number of languages, at least 350, spoken across the archipelago. However, over 300 of these are found in one province, Irian Jaya. Irian Jaya's wealth of cultural diversity was not overlooked when the Indonesian government put together its tourism marketing strategy. The "Go East Archipelago" campaign featured boldly captioned travel brochures and posters featuring Irianese in their varied native attires - colourful body paints, feather headdresses, nose rings, necklaces, and bows and arrows.

New Guinea is the most culturally diverse place on earth. Over 1,000 distinct peoples live here, speaking over 1,000 languages, one fifth of the world's total. This cultural diversity is linked to the ecological diversity of the island. Snow-capped mountains, alpine grasslands, dense jungles, mangrove swamps and expansive rivers - these are the homelands of the Papuan peoples of New Guinea. With some of the most rugged and impenetrable terrain on earth, tribes have lived and evolved for 30,000 years in relative isolation; hence, the characteristic cultural and linguistic diversity.

During their millennia of habitation, each culture listened carefully to the rhythm of its unique natural environment and evolved a mode of subsistence that maintains the balance between land and life. One thing that all of New Guinea's one thousand peoples have in common is a fundamental understanding that land is life. This understanding had long been lost to the peoples of the industrialised world by the time they made contact with New Guinea.

The land is resource rich. At the same time that Indonesia is marketing the cultural diversity of its frontier province, it is investing even more energy in the development of Irian Jaya's natural resources. The government is mining, logging and fishing the lands and waters of the Irianese peoples at an alarming rate. As Irian Jaya's natural wealth is exploited, its environment (and with it, its cultural diversity) is being destroyed.

From Colony to....Colony

In 1848, western New Guinea was annexed to the Dutch East Indies empire, extending the colonial boundaries to almost those of present day Indonesia. At the end of World War II, Indonesia declared independence. The Dutch attempted to hold on to their empire. Although international pressure forced the Dutch out of most of their former colony by 1949, they continued to hold West New Guinea. In the 1960s, Australia was preparing eastern New Guinea for independence as the country of Papua New Guinea. The Dutch were also preparing West New Guinea for independence, but an expansionist Indonesia was already campaigning for its annexation.

During 1962, the United States brokered an agreement between Holland and Indonesia which resulted in the United Nations administering West New Guinea for seven months before handing it over to Indonesia. The agreement stated that within six years there be a vote, an "Act of Free Choice", to provide West Papuans with

the right to self-determination. Instead of an open vote, the Indonesians in 1969 had 1,025 hand-picked, coerced Papuan delegates cast votes in favour of Indonesian annexation. During the lead up to what has been termed the "Act of No Choice", there was widespread resistance to Indonesian takeover, but it was crushed by the Indonesian military. Tens of thousands of Papuan lives were lost. Despite the death toll and the obvious fraudulence of the referendum, the United Nations placed its seal of approval on the Act and West New Guinea became the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya.

Resistance to Indonesian control continues today with the OPM ("Organisasi Papua Merdeka" or "Free Papua Movement"). Guerilla freedom fighters, often armed only with bows and arrows, fight soldiers equipped with M-16s. Even peaceful opponents of Indonesian rule are tortured and murdered, or sentenced to long terms in prisons thousands of miles from their homes.

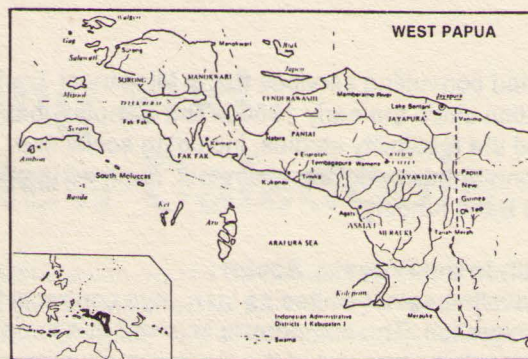
International Complicity

During the three decades that Indonesia has controlled Irian Jaya, the international community has remained unmoved by the cause of the Papuan people in their struggle for self-determination. This is explained by international interest in the resources of the province: the mineral and timber reserves, the fisheries and land, and the prospects of oil palm and other plantations. Irian Jaya is now an economic colony, the subject of exploitation at the hands of big business, whose Indonesian colonial masters are assisted by transnational companies from around the globe.

The Japanese, Taiwanese and French now scour the waters of Irian Jaya. The American oil giant, CONOCO, and South African, Petromer Trend, prospect for and exploit petroleum reserves. Freeport, another American firm, has operated an open pit copper mine in the Irian Jaya highlands since the early 1970s, excavating 30 million tons of ore to date. With 80% of the land covered in primary forest, Irian Jaya represents the largest intact tropical rainforest in the Asia-Pacific region. Now that most other Asian rainforests have been largely destroyed, transnationals from Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Australia are turning to the timber reserves of Irian Jaya.

Land and Population: A Formula for Exploitation

Indonesia is a vast archipelago of 13,700 islands which stretch 8,000 kilometres from the northern tip of Sumatra to the southeast corner of Irian Jaya. The population of Indonesia is 187 million. Over 110 million of these people live on one island, Java. This unbalanced population distribution inspired the Indonesian government to develop the "transmigration programme", whereby people from Java are moved to less densely populated other islands.



Irian Jaya comprises more than 25% of Indonesian territory, but less than 1% of the national population. This land base, which the Indonesian government views as settling grounds for its surplus populations, has been the target of government sponsored exploitation since the late 1960s. Transmigration has moved hundreds of thousands of settlers into this last great rainforest. Each family is given a plot of cleared forest to cultivate. They soon learn what native peoples have known for generations; this infertile jungle soil cannot sustain intensive agriculture. The seemingly vast and empty forests of lowland New Guinea only seem underpopulated; in fact, this land is not capable of sustaining large numbers of people. Every year, thousand of settler families abandon their failed gardens and attempt to eke out an existence in one of Irian Jaya's towns.

The stated goal of transmigration is to relieve population pressures in Java. However, the numbers moved to date have done little to mitigate this problem and there is no doubt that the programme has a more covert motive. In the words of Minister of Transmigration, General Martono: "By means of Transmigration we will integrate all ethnic groups into one nation, the Indonesian nation. The different ethnic groups will in the long run disappear because of integration and there will be one kind of man."

Transmigration also plays two key roles in the massive industrial logging operations recently begun on Papuan lands. Transmigrants supply much of the labour and the programme is used to remove indigenous peoples from their land, thus opening the way for logging operations. Papuans are forced to resettle in camps where, in order to survive, many must work for the very companies which are destroying their ancestral forests. Once in the camps, their complete assimilation is assured; government policy requires that Javanese settlers outnumber Papuans by a ratio of four to one.

The development of the Papuan land base poses perhaps the greatest threat to indigenous livelihoods - and it is in this sphere that Canadian corporate involvement in Irian Jaya first focused its attention. The transmigration programme has received international support through World Bank funding. Canadian support for transmigration has come primarily from its largest consulting firm, Lavalin (now SNC-Lavalin). Lavalin has

provided consulting services to the Ministry of Transmigration since the early 1980s. The company has conducted the feasibility studies, including social and environmental impact assessments, required to obtain World Bank funding.

Lavalin in the Forestry Sector

Lavalin has not limited its Irian Jaya contracts to transmigration. The company is involved in a forestry project with the support of the Canadian government. Through its international development agency, CIDA, the Canadian government has provided Lavalin with funding to conduct the feasibility study, including the environmental impact assessment, for an integrated logging, plantation and pulp mill project located on the western tip of Irian Jaya. The Indonesian logging giant, P.T. Kayu Lapis, plans to convert 65,000 hectares of natural forest to fast growing pulpwood plantation. However, the potential conversion area contains very poor soil and is probably incapable of supporting a pulpwood plantation on a sustainable basis. Although just starting the second part of its three phase feasibility study, Lavalin has not to date indicated any scepticism about the viability of the project. Furthermore, although Lavalin has not yet conducted the environmental impact assessment, the logging company has already started plantation establishment. If the plantation fails, the government will be under strong pressure to allow clear felling of natural forest to make up the wood supply deficit, adding to the area of land confiscated from the indigenous people and devastated ecologically.

While the Canadian consultants write reports to satisfy World Bank or CIDA criteria, making reference to the need for public consultation, the ancestral forest of the indigenous Moi people is already being cut down in preparation for pulpwood plantations that will probably fail. At the same time, Moi people are being arrested for protesting the logging operations. Even if Lavalin attempts public consultation, it will be too late for the Moi people. Lavalin claims the project will benefit the local community by increasing job opportunities. However, while jobs will be created, most positions will be filled by transmigrants. The proposed site for the pulp mill is adjacent to the existing Kayu Lapis plywood mill factory. At the plywood mill, only 10% of the workers are Papuan; the rest are transmigrants.

Canadian Involvement in Mining

Canadian corporate involvement in Irian Jaya is not confined to provision of consulting services. A Canadian gold mining firm was recently granted a one million hectare concession in the highlands. Since 1990, INGOLD (a direct subsidiary of INCO) has been conducting survey exploration in this vast area. Mining in this fragile environment will undoubtedly be fraught with high ecological and social costs. The land-based way of life of the highlands people will be devastated as they lose farmlands, hunting and gathering grounds,

and sacred places. Dumping waste rock into the local river system will threaten livelihoods from the highlands to the river delta. While it is rumoured that mining is scheduled to start this year, INGOLD has made no move to conduct an environmental or social impact assessment.

Multi-Sector Development: Canadian Involvement and UN Sponsorship

In the late 1980s, Lavalin produced a comprehensive Irian Jaya multi-sector development plan for the Indonesian government. Lavalin targeted hundreds of sites throughout the province for major industrial development and outlined a development strategy which includes more support for mineral exploration, cattle-ranching, "restructuring and reactivation" of the logging industry, new roads into remote areas and new transmigration settlements. Lavalin's research was sponsored by the organization which has declared 1993 to be the International Year of Indigenous Peoples. Indonesia's master plan for the industrialisation and assimilation of Irian Jaya was funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Industrialisation versus Diversity

We in the industrialised world are largely responsible for the environmental and cultural degradation taking place in Irian Jaya. However, in this case it is not too late and it is within our power to halt this destruction. Irian Jaya remains one of the most pristine places on earth. There is still time to defend its peoples and the landscapes which nurture them.

The plunder of Irian Jaya is representative of the rapid industrialisation and environmental destruction taking place around the globe. The limited resources of the planet can not support the present pace of so-called "development" which, if it continues unabated, bodes certain extinction for the world as we know it. If we want to reverse this trend, we in the industrialised world need to radically alter our consumption patterns, our value systems and even the way we organize our societies.

Ironically, as industrial development has destroyed, and continues to threaten, the diverse cultures of the indigenous peoples of the world, it is to these land-based peoples that we need to look in an attempt to make the changes necessary to save the planet. The indigenous peoples of the world are living models of sustainable existence; their cultural diversity is symbolic of their ability to respond to their natural environment in the development of modes of subsistence and lifestyles that maintain the balance between land and life. As industrialisation and environmental destruction rush our world toward a mono-cultural society, perhaps the first step towards affecting change - towards halting the pace of development - is to slow down and ponder the beauty of diversity.

Blood Money: The Mining and Smelting of Nickel in New Caledonia

by Susi Newborn

Susi Newborn is an Auckland-based environmentalist who has been conducting research on the nickel industry in New Caledonia.

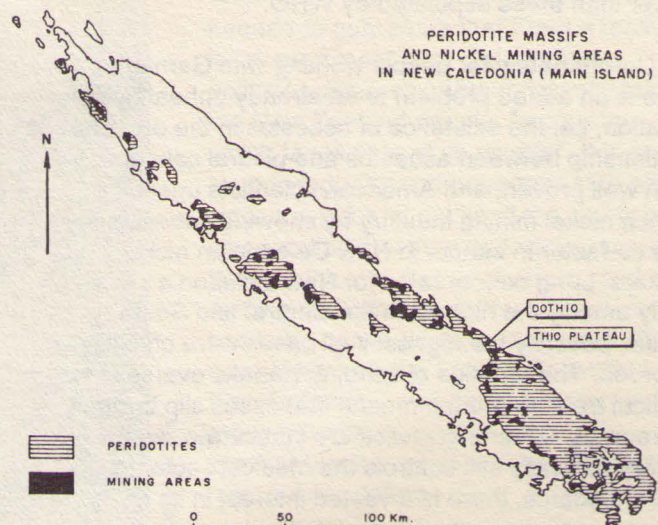
The mining and smelting of Garnierite, a silicate-oxide (laterite) nickel ore found in New Caledonia, imposes serious environmental and health risks which have yet to be addressed by the French national government, the New Caledonian territorial government, Melanesian provincial leaders and the grassroots independence movement. From an environmentalist's point of view, remaining silent about years of blatant destruction of one of the world's biodiversity heritages and the resultant ill health of the local indigenous people is to become an accomplice in premeditated sabotage of the New Caledonian habitat.

New Caledonia has for a long time been cut off from centres of conservationist activism due to internal political strife. The only local environmental NGO (L'Association pour la Sauvegarde de la Nature Nouvelle-Caledonienne) is a conservative outfit with vested interest in the status quo. The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), to whose Convention France is a signatory, was housed in Noumea for over a decade and yet always remained silent on this issue. The SPREP-coordinated South Pacific Developing Countries statement to the Earth Summit, "The Pacific Way", failed to mention the two most destructive (yet financially lucrative) industries in the South Pacific today, copper mining in Papua New Guinea and nickel mining and smelting in New Caledonia. It is far easier in the Pacific, it seems, to raise issues like climate change, driftnet fishing or incineration of chemical weapons, issues that are seen to be "safe".

Why? In the case of New Caledonia, it might have to do with the fact that the French Republic basically owns and administers the mining industry. This it does through (among others) the French Atomic Energy Agency (CEA) and Cogema, the world's largest uranium supplier and reprocessor. Garnierite is a strategic mineral used in the French and Japanese nuclear industries. 80% of France's electricity is generated through nuclear power and the Japanese are in the midst of building a new generation of reactors, one model necessitating the much protested recent transport of plutonium from France to Japan. A ten year nickel export deal was signed in 1991 between Japan and France's Société Metallurgique le Nickel (SLN); this year,

the Melanesian-owned Société Minière du Pacifique Sud (SMSP) will become the country's leading nickel exporter to Japan. The silicate-oxide ore, for which New Caledonia has been ravaged for almost a century and a quarter, is ideal for non-corrosive alloys used by the nuclear industry. Shortly after the 1991 nickel deal, the nuclear industry "discovered" an alloy using nickel and another strategic mineral, the extremely rare molybdenum, for use in its new generation of nuclear power plants.

40% of the world's nickel deposits, the planet's only Garnierite stockpile, are to be found in New Caledonia with the reserves predicted to last for another 200 years. Given this, and the use of nickel for French national defence purposes and production of energy, independence for Kanak people seems a very unlikely option. The Matignon Accords have really been little else than a clever French ploy to guarantee a steady and uninterrupted flow of a strategic mineral the Republic desperately needs. The Kanak leaders have fallen for the ploy and the "easy" development model this industry represents without really considering its environmental consequences or the damaged health of their people. The so-called Pacific way of non-confrontation means that effectively there is no public debate about the issue among the Melanesian people of New Caledonia, many of whom remain basically uninformed as to what choices are being made on their behalf.



From SPREP

With the only mining pollution watchdog in the territory, the Mining Pollution Control Commission, in the hands of the State and the country's own Environmental Commission represented by members of the New Caledonian "business round table", it is not surprising that this "dirty secret" of the Pacific has managed to be kept so secret. The untold history of the mining and smelting of Garnierite in New Caledonia is one of environmental and social atrocities, corruption and deceit. One can only express dismay that the magnificent ideals of the Kanak independence movement's constitution have so readily been traded in to be a part of it all.

Bodies such as the International Agency for Research on Cancer, World Health Organisation (WHO), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), International Labour Organisation (ILO), U.K. Health and Safety Executive and many others have classified nickel as a carcinogen and reported on its mutagenic and teratogenic effects. The EPA lists nickel as an "extremely hazardous substance" and there are strict European Economic Community directives which cover its handling and smelting (including emissions into air, soil and water) and the health of workers in the industry. There is currently much debate as to whether or not New Caledonia should comply with the EEC directives or French national law with regard to mining and smelting, as the French State has legislated its total control over the industry. According to the Territory however, the environment is the competence of the provinces, yet there are no provincial laws as such governing mining pollution. Were there such laws, how much authority would they have? New Caledonian legislation for smelting procedures has set emission standards far higher than those stipulated by WHO.

Unfortunately for people working with Garnierite, there is an added problem to an already unhealthy occupation, i.e. the existence of asbestos in the ore. The relationship between asbestos and pleural cancer has been well proven, and American scientists upset the French nickel mining industry by showing asbestos to be a co-factor in cancer in New Caledonian nickel workers. Lung cancer rates for New Caledonia are already among the highest in the Central and South Pacific, possibly the highest if all cases were officially recorded. The practice of sending Kanaks overseas for medical treatment often means that cases slip through the records' net and statistics are inaccurate. As the military basically still controls the medical sector in New Caledonia, there is a vested interest in its apparent inaccuracy in keeping statistics.



Nickel mine site in New Caledonia

Photo: SPREP

From what statistics are available, it is known that lung cancer rates are alarmingly high, that there is a propensity for respiratory ailments and that New Caledonia holds the world's record for asthma-related mortalities. Nickel dust pollution has been found to be a factor in asthma sensitivity, yet in New Caledonia, one of the nickel capitals of the world, they are studying a supposed pollen allergy as the unlikely cause. Rates of childhood leukemia, in particular myeloblastic leukemia, a rare disease which has been shown to be related to pollution, are high among Melanesian children. Nickel dermatitis is widely reported and life expectancy for Kanaks, in particular women, is low. Yet the only Kanak-controlled medical association seems more preoccupied with sexually transmitted diseases than with the real issues behind their health problems.

Certainly it is hard to be proactive if one is unaware of the extent of the problem, something which can be explained by the paucity of information on the subject in New Caledonia and the lack of French willingness to encourage an information flow or open debate. If the independence movement, the unions, the Kanak people and New Caledonians in general do not start to ask questions and challenge one hundred and twenty-five years of deliberate pollution, demanding compensation and a tightening up of standards, New Caledonia will end up a useless lump of eroded rock like Nauru or a centre of discontent like Bougainville.

Why have the French in Noumea never been challenged for building low income housing estates within metres and downwind of a hazardous installation like the Doniambo nickel smelter? Has anybody ever wondered if such "creative" town planning would have been allowed in mainland France? Why have people

been allowed to grow their food on top of toxic tailings dumps?

High levels of heavy metals were found in the rural and urban water supplies in 1988. Recent samples of nickel pollution smuggled out of Kanaky for analysis in New Zealand have revealed shockingly high levels of heavy metals in regular house dust up to several miles away from the smelter. In fact, up to 3 times more nickel was found in this dust than is extracted from the mined ore! These results are awaiting a full health risk assessment before being made public. The French State recently met with environmentalists to pleaded for caution in publicising the analysis results for fear of instigating political unrest. Meanwhile, smelter legislation clearly sanctions a deposit of toxic waste over the reef and over the heads of people in the surrounding low income ghettos, yet controls emissions when the wind is blowing in the opposite direction. Public apologies from the industry appear from time to time in the local press when insufficient warning of a wind change causes smelter dust to be dumped over bronzing tourists in the elite white neighbourhoods.

Is the Doniambo smelter being used to destroy hazardous wastes, apparently a common practice in similar high-temperature installations in France? Witnesses report the French Army evacuating all personnel from the smelter before entering the smelter's electrical furnaces, but no-one seems to know exactly what they do there. Finally, New Zealand recently signed a contract with the Territory to supply nightcap coal from Otago in the South Island for use in the smelter. This can only mean that the SLN intends to reactivate the outdated coal-fired furnaces, thereby largely increasing the sulphur dioxide and particulate emissions from the smelter, a "dirty" practice which would not be permitted elsewhere and which will underscore the Doniambo smelter as one of the greatest point sources of pollution in the world.



Low cost housing development on the outskirts of Noumea

As for the French nuclear industry, it is in crisis. CEA's favourite toy, the Superphoenix plutonium-powered "supergenerator" has faced massive opposition worldwide as well as safety problems leading to a two year closure. Job cutbacks, the restructuring of various departments within the industry and CEA itself, the cessation of the Cold War and cancellation of military programmes have all helped to bring France down from its "nuclear cloud nine".

The legacy of New Caledonian nickel mining and smelting can be seen when one flies over the Grand Terre and sees the miles and miles of deserted terraces of open-cast mines, ancient habitats bled dry by the developed world's incessant greed, and the red/brown blanket of dust suffocating the reef and poisoning the streams and rivers. In its classification of both nickel and chromium as carcinogens, the U.S. Department of Health states that there is no safe level of exposure to a carcinogen so all contact should be reduced to the lowest possible level. The French mining industry's attitude towards the problem is that the industry's own scientific studies negate the connection between the high lung cancer rates and the industry. These studies have been described by WHO in its 1991 publication on environmental health criteria for nickel as having "weaknesses in statistical power and definition of the control population" and "methodological problems".

International concern for an issue, one it has been brought to people's attention, can bring pressure to bear on governments and industry to enforce much needed change. Unfortunately, environmentalists - both Kanak and non-Kanak - have been subjected to a campaign to discredit their work publicly by members of the Kanak independence movement who now have a financial interest in the mining industry. It is hoped that, with the New Caledonian nickel mining and smelting issue, avenues such as the International Water

Tribunal or the World Court will not be needed to guarantee that France really is, as prominent New Caledonian politician Jacques LaFleur recently told the New Zealand people, "a country which takes care of its people". It is entirely up to industry and government to convince the general public of the safety of any practice that they undertake, something which in the case of mining and smelting of Garnierite in New Caledonia has been conveniently overlooked. The onus is now on the French Republic and New Caledonian territorial government to prove otherwise in order not to risk another black mark to an already marred regional reputation.

Photo: David Robie

Tonga: The Pro-Democracy Convention and its Aftermath

By Lopeti Senituli

Lopeti Senituli is General Co-ordinator of the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre and Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement. He visited his homeland to attend the Pro-Democracy Convention.

"In our beloved Tonga today there is still structural injustice after a century of so-called constitutional rule. Political and economic power is concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority who are able to command financial rewards out of all proportion to their actual work. This is why the pursuit of justice always labours under the disadvantage of appearing subversive". With these words, Rev. Siupeli Taliai of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga laid down the challenge during his opening morning speech at the November 24-27, 1992, Pro-Democracy Convention. Under the theme of "The Tongan Constitution and Democracy", the convention was held in the Catholic Church Basilica in Nuku'alofa.

On the eve of the convention, organising committee members had genuine reasons for concern. Prime Minister Baron Vaea had taken ten days official leave beginning 23rd November and Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Hu'akavameiliku was on an extended overseas trip. These two are generally regarded as the more enlightened and liberal of the government ministers. In their absence, Minister of Police and Immigration Akau'ola became Acting Prime Minister. One of his first acts in this capacity was to unceremoniously deport one participant invited to address the convention. Filia Uipi, a member of the Utah State Legislature (U.S.) of Tongan origin, had been invited to make a comparative analysis of the U.S. and Tongan parliamentary systems. Despite written assurance from Akau'ola on 3rd November that overseas participants of Tongan origin would be allowed into the country, Filia and his wife were hauled back on to the Hawaiian Airlines flight on which they arrived.

Akau'ola had earlier declared that no foreigners would be allowed to participate in the convention. Nalesoni Tupou, a Tongan lawyer in New Zealand who has represented Pro-Democracy leader Akilisi Pohiva in Tongan courts, was at the last minute given approval to attend on the condition that he not participate in any way during the convention. Interestingly, the U.S. Peace Corps office in Tonga instructed its volunteers to stay away from the convention and there was also no sign of Japanese, Australian or New Zealander volunteers, of which there are many in Tonga.

Then there were the instructions by the Tongan Broadcasting Commission to the local government owned radio station not to broadcast any convention speeches or news. The general manager of the radio station, Tavake Fusimalohi, who is Secretary General of the Pacific Islands News Association and who had given Rabuka's regime in Fiji a roasting after the military coups in 1987, was also conveniently outside the country on an extended trip.

The radio station however repeatedly broadcast an announcement paid for by one Tupou Malohi suggesting that the convention could be violently disrupted and that there could even be bloodshed. The announcement called for all descendants of the "martyrs of Malinoa" to gather so they could prepare to fulfil their "duty to God, King and Country". The so-called "martyrs of Malinoa" were six men who attempted to assassinate the private secretary to the promulgator of Tonga's Constitution, King Siaosi Tupou I, in January 1887 because they felt he was misleading His majesty. Rev. Shirley Baker, survived the attack but one of his daughters was paralysed for life as a result of gunshot wounds. The would-be-assassins were caught and executed by firing squad on the island of Malinoa. Despite attempts by convention organisers to have the announcement stopped, it continued to be broadcast up to 23rd November. After the convention, the government newspaper, The Chronicle, stated that members of the Royal household had intervened and persuaded Tupou Malohi and company not to disrupt the convention.

On 23rd November, too, a regiment of soldiers from the Tonga Defence Forces held a military exercise complete with M16s, Uzis and war-paint at Pangai, the barb-wired football field adjacent to His Majesty's Palace. The field was until recently a public park accessible to all and sundry, especially those seeking shade and rest under its many trees.

In the organising committee's final preparatory meeting, it was agreed that the convention must go ahead as scheduled, come what may. Accordingly, contingency plans were mooted in the event of incapacitation of committee members or disruption of convention proceedings.

In declaring the convention open, Rev. Dr. Amanaki Havea stated that, though the event was unprecedented in Tongan history, it had its parallels. He described how King Tupou I established the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga in 1885. The "Free" signified the cutting of formal links with the Wesleyan Church in Sydney and London. The Tongan population did not

convert quickly enough for the King, so in July of 1885 he sent his soldiers to every household and those that refused to convert were publicly thrashed. Households that refused to comply with the King's wishes despite their persecution were sent into exile in Fiji. Dr. Havea's father, was amongst those thrashed and his mother's family were amongst those sent into exile. Dr. Havea brought tears to the eyes of the 600 convention participants by concluding, "I am a firm believer in God's justice and I will die with that belief. I am willing to be publicly thrashed and even sent into exile in defence of that justice".

The programme consisted of lectures and panel discussions with time for questions and contributions from the floor. Speakers focused on Tonga's constitution and its provisions on the King and his powers, the nobility, the structure of Parliament and its powers, the Judiciary, land, women, human rights and justice. The speakers and open discussions invariably diverted from their topics to focus on His majesty the King and his powers as entrenched in the constitution. As one of the speakers bluntly put it, "Tonga is commonly referred to as a constitutional monarchy but this is a misnomer. Tonga is in fact a monarchy-with-a-constitution".

Apart from the fact that the King is immune from impeachment without his consent, he has a wide range of absolute powers. Some of these are:

- to appoint and dismiss ministers including the Prime Minister.
- to summon and dissolve Parliament at any time and to appoint its Speaker.
- to veto Parliament.
- to appoint nobles and grant estates (there are 33 noble titles each of which is inalienable and associated with hereditary estates).
- to suspend habeas corpus, proclaim martial law, make treaties and command the Tonga Defence Forces.

In the exercise of these powers, the King is neither constitutionally required nor bound by convention to consult or seek the advice of his ministers, Parliament, the Judiciary, or anyone else for that matter.

One of the speakers rationalised the Monarch's absolute powers in terms of "political necessity" when Tonga's constitution was promulgated by King Tupou I in 1875. When Tupou I was baptised by Wesleyan missionaries in 1831, he was "King" of only the Ha'apai Group (one of three main island groups in Tonga). He went on to conquer the other two groups, Vava'u (in 1833) and Tongatapu (in 1845), unifying Tonga as a country under his rule. With the help of the Wesleyan missionaries, Tupou I promulgated a series of codified laws (including the Emancipation Act of 1862 which freed all slaves and serfs) culminating in the 1875 constitution. These laws were not welcomed by the

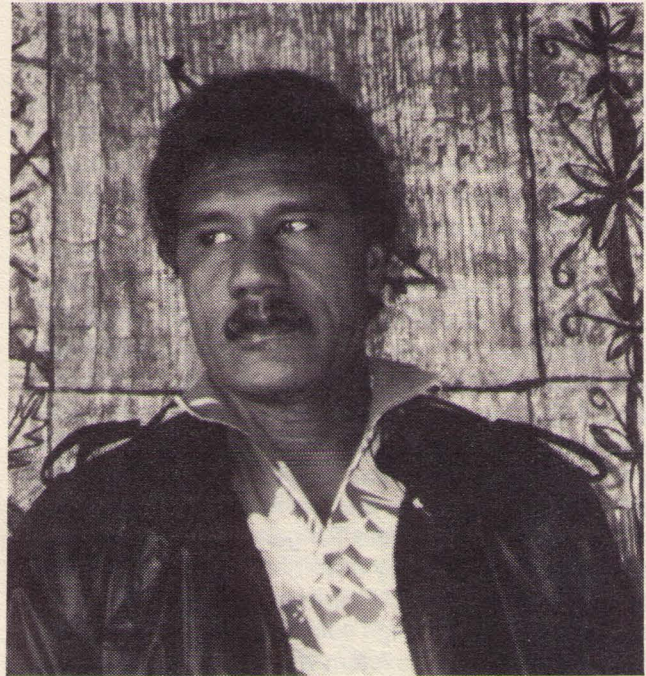


Photo: David Robie

Akilisi Pohiva , MP and leader of the Pro-Democracy Movement

nobles/chiefs he had defeated who were angered by the emancipation of the slaves and the confiscation of their lands. Tupou I created the 33 noble titles and their associated hereditary estates, but ensured this group's allegiance by reserving for himself the final say as to who is appointed to which noble title. He also ensured that the nobles would have disproportionate representation in the country's Parliament.

Tonga's Parliament now has 30 members. The nobles have 9 members who are elected from and by the 33 noble title holders. The King appoints 12 members (1 Prime Minister, 9 ministers, 2 governors - 1 for Ha'apai and 1 for Vava'u). These 12 members are not elected under universal suffrage and, with one or two exceptions, all are nobles or related directly to the King. They also make up the cabinet. The remaining 9 members are elected by universal suffrage by the people who make up over 99% of the population.

As pointed out at the convention, 21 members of Parliament (9 nobles and 12 appointees) owe their positions and primary responsibility to the King. Therefore initiatives by the 9 people's representatives are doomed to fail as they will be outvoted. Examples of this recounted at the convention were: attempts in 1990 and 1991 to ascertain from the Minister for Finance the whereabouts of the proceeds (reported to be US\$25 million) from the illegal sale of Tongan passports to foreigners; attempts to view Parliament's financial accounts (in the possession of the Speaker) in 1992; attempts to stop another Parliamentarian's salary rise (currently at T\$50,000 range) in 1991; attempts to increase the number of people's representatives in Parliament in 1991.

It was also reported to the convention that, faced with these set-backs, the people's representatives with the help of church leaders requested to present petitions and have an audience with the King as is constitutionally sanctioned and culturally acceptable. All of these initiatives including one preceded by a march of 500 people in 1990 were turned away by the King's private secretary on the King's instructions.

One of the best attended sessions was on "The Political Status of Women and Democracy in Tonga". In her address, Dr. 'Ana Taufeu'ulungaki (Deputy Director of Education in Tonga) pointed out that girls attained higher academic results than boys in Tongan primary and secondary school examinations. This pattern levels out at the tertiary level, but clearly bears out that Tongan women are the academic equals of if not superior to men. Yet in the Tongan civil service not one department is headed by a woman. She also pointed out that, in comparison to other cultures, women in Tonga hold relatively high social status. This is based on the Tongan "fahu" system where a woman holds certain proprietary and familial rights over her male relations. However, this social status cannot be translated into political power because of sexist laws (such as those relating to succession and land ownership) and cultural norms that belittle women's contribution to society. Dr. Taufeu'ulungaki noted that there have only been two women members of Parliament in Tongan history, one a noble, the other a business woman.

The constitution stipulates that all land belongs to the King and that land cannot be sold. With the exception of the 33 nobles who hold vast hereditary estates, all Tongan men hold life-long leases from the King. These leases are made possible by a constitutional stipulation that youth (men) who have reached the age of 16 are entitled to lease 8 acres of land. In practice, the youth must first attain the estate holder's consent (be it the King or a noble) before this application for a plot of land can be considered for registration by the Minister of Lands. This further obligates the youth and his relatives to be subservient to the estate holder, whose refusal cannot be appealed. In 1976, as a result of complaints by farmers that arable land was not being cultivated, either because the lease-holders were living permanently overseas or the estate-holder was too lazy to cultivate it, Parliament passed a law to temporarily redistribute such land to those that are willing and able to cultivate it. The King vetoed Parliament in fear that this would undermine his constitutional prerogative and those of his nobles.

Perhaps the picture that had developed in participants' minds toward the end of the convention about the future of Tonga is summed up by one speaker who said, "the legal status of the King and the Nobles is protected against changes in the law if they wish to exercise their constitutional rights. Therefore

any significant change towards a more democratic system of government would require negotiations with the King". The convention did not conclude with specific recommendations, but the general feeling was that it is time for change in Tonga. However, what are the appropriate changes and what is the most appropriate democratic system for Tonga was not clearly spelt out.

In the evaluation of the convention, participants were unanimous that further public education programmes such as seminars in the villages and the outer islands and the mass distribution of convention papers and cassette recordings should immediately follow. A sizable number of participants also stated that a national referendum on the constitution, the electoral system and the King's absolute powers should be conducted. There was also a call for a People's Committee to work on a draft of a new constitution.

On the final day of the convention, Acting Prime Minister Akau'ola finally broke his silence and issued a press statement saying that he looked forward to receiving the convention's recommendations in Parliament. The Chairperson of the Pro-Democracy Movement, Father Seluini, replied that he would take up this offer "but we certainly hope these will not be treated like the various recommendations the peoples' representatives in Parliament have made in the recent past. That is to say, we hope that they will not simply be dumped in the rubbish bin". Fr. Seluini also stated that, had the government taken the opportunity to participate in the convention, "they would have learnt that it is constitutionally impossible to make any political reforms from within the present Tongan Parliament because of its undemocratic structure and ethos. They would also have learnt that the legitimacy and mandate of any democratic Parliament anywhere in the world originates from the people and not from a handful of handpicked men".

The week after the convention, candidates for the election of nine people's representatives in Parliament for the 1993-96 term were announced. The majority of candidates in their campaign statements identified with the need for democratic changes. The elections were held on February 4. Pro-Democracy candidates won all three seats in Tongatapu, both seats in Ha'apai, and one of two seats in Vava'u, bringing their total to six, one up from the previous Parliament. The seat from Niua was won by a woman. The seat in 'Eua was won by a Pro-Royalist. But the outstanding feature of this election was the huge winning margin of Pro-Democracy candidates in Tongatapu and Ha'apai. The election of the nine noble representatives, which was conducted a week prior, saw the election of four new members, all of whom seem more conservative than the ones they replaced. So the next three years promise to be very interesting for Tonga.

The Sea Around Us

by Derek Ellis and Gunnu Pillai

Derek Ellis is Professor of Biology at the University of Victoria, Vancouver Island, Canada. Gunnu Pillai is Senior Lecturer in the Biology Department, University of the South Pacific.

For centuries the sea has been playing a pivotal social, cultural, economic and dietary role in the lives of South Pacific peoples. We now know that these tropical seas are just as vulnerable to marine pollution as the seas around the harbours and shipping routes of the industrialised world. Rachel Carson back in 1951 described in her famous book, *The Sea Around Us*, how the seas are interlocked with us, our fisheries and our recreation. We know for example that sewage, treated or not, when discharged to Suva and Honiara coastlines raises bacterial levels. A short walk along the shore near almost any South Pacific city will show toilet paper and other wastes. Clams and other marinated raw fish and shellfish have been detected with bacteria and trace metal contaminants.

Some industries springing up throughout the region are known to be bad polluters unless strict controls are applied. They include fish and food processing plants, including sugar mills and breweries. Waste water from these is overloaded with nutrients. Not only is food wasted, but if the wastewater is discharged to poorly flushed lagoons it changes the balance of nature, reduces the fisheries and generates poisonous red tides. Regional people suffer from loss of their foods, epidemics of water-borne diseases like hepatitis, or even worse chronic sicknesses like Minamata disease in Japan, whose cause is only found too late. The tourist industry, with its economic benefits to the South Pacific, will also never develop to its fullest if shoreline pollution is not prevented.

The University of the South Pacific (USP) decided to do something about this in 1990. It combined with the University of Victoria (UVIC) to implement a joint training program for students and a career development program for public servants in the South Pacific nations. The program is to develop skills for assessing and controlling pollution in the sea. Although the land area of the nations involved is a scanty 63,000 sq.km., the total area is enormous, about 30,000,000 sq.km. A training program at the university level will influence pollution control over much of the South Pacific.

Undergraduate science students at USP are beginning to see benefits from the program. Two students each from the Marshall Islands and Solomon Islands have already been assigned to work terms back in their home countries with visiting scientists and Co-operative

Education scientific assistants from UVIC. This co-operative education programme is being expanded over the next 3 years so that 2 undergraduates per year should have 6-8 week work terms assisting their national government environment ministries.

The training program is developing a final year course in marine pollution for science students so that graduates can take back the appropriate technical training and theoretical background to their own nations. The career development part of the training program consists of a series of short courses given throughout the region. UVIC has presented two to date. One, on the wastes of fish-packing plants, was held in the Marshall Islands, where a new plant is being considered. The other, on mining wastes, was in the Solomon Islands where a gold mine is being considered and the experience of Bougainville is only too vivid. The staff scientist seconded to USP from UVIC has contributed his expertise to courses organised by USP's Institute of Applied Sciences and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. Other short courses will be generated over the next few years in other nations.

The career development component provides funds for USP lecturers, demonstrators and graduate students to undertake advanced training programs at UVIC. These can be formal post-graduate degrees or informal attachment terms at the university or a government or industry laboratory nearby.

All this has been brought about by the initiatives of USP faculty and administration. Regional and expatriate staff and visitors combined to seek funding. In 1991, the Canadian International Development Agency realised the benefits which could accrue throughout the South Pacific and the program got underway. We have now seen more than 30 public servants from 8 nations participate in the short courses, 3 staff members visit UVIC (with 3 more expected to attend in 1992-93), and development of the undergraduate degree credit course and the co-operative education program.



Participants at the short course in the Solomon Islands

Photo: Derrick Ellis

BOUGAINVILLE: PNG DEFENCE FORCE CAPTURES CAPITAL

A mid-February landing by PNG troops has resulted in the capture of the Bougainville capital, Arawa. Following the capture, PNG Prime Minister Paias Wingti repeated his call for the unconditional surrender of the secessionists, who now control only a few areas in Central Bougainville (including the area of the Panguna mine). Wingti also reiterated that PNG will never agree to Bougainville's secession. However, a subsequent Bougainville Revolutionary Army attack on a PNGDF patrol resulted in the death of eight members of the patrol, the most serious military blow against the Defence Force since the outbreak of hostilities in 1988. Critics of the PNG Government's current push for a military solution to the Bougainville crisis continue to push for a political solution. The PNG Government also apologised to Solomon Islands in January for a number of PNGDF raids into Solomon Islands and committed itself to pay compensation for the raids. [From: Pacific Report, Vol 6 No 3, Feb 22/93; Pacific Report, Vol 6 No 4, Mar 8/93]

FORMER PNG PRIME MINISTER FACES CHARGES

Rabbie Namaliu, prime minister of PNG until last year's elections, was charged in December with misappropriation of government funds. The charges relate to funds that Namaliu is alleged to have provided to four supporters in 1990 in return for their support during a planned vote of no confidence in the Namaliu Government. Namaliu joins a lengthy list of colleagues who have faced various charges related to corruption while in office. Former Finance Minister Paul Pora has also been charged. [From New Zealand Herald, December 15, 1992; Pacific Report, Vol 6 No 2, Feb 8/93]

FIJI'S PROPOSED GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY A "LONG TERM PROJECT"

Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka electrified the nation with his December proposal for a government of national unity embracing the opposition parties. Rabuka suggested that such a government could be soon formed and the major opposition parties expressed their openness to the idea. However, opposition developed from conservative elements in the indigenous Fijian community and apparently from within Rabuka's own party, the SVT. The SVT recently announced that a government of national unity was a "long term project". Others suggest that it may never happen. [From Pacific Report, Vol 6 No 4, Mar 8/93]

HAWAIIANS COMMEMORATE U.S. TAKEOVER

January saw events to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the coup which saw white business leaders and sugar planters depose the last Hawaiian monarch, Queen Liliuokalani, in favour of American annexation of the islands. Some 10,000 native Hawaiians and supporters marched through Honolulu denouncing the U.S. government, with sentiments ranging from support for an independent Hawaii to others favouring a U.S. apology for the events of a century ago. Intense controversy also accompanied the decision of Hawaii Governor John Waihee (Hawaii's first indigenous Hawaiian governor) to have U.S. flags removed from state buildings in favour of the Hawaiian flag for the week of events. [From: Islands Business Pacific, Vol 19 No 3, March/93]

EAST TIMOR: TRIAL BEGINS, REPRESSION INCREASES

The trial of captured East Timorese resistance leader, Xanana Gusmao, has begun in Dili, East Timor. He has been charged with rebellion (punishable with up to a life sentence) and possession of illegal firearms (possible death penalty). From his behaviour and statements while under Indonesian control, even East Timorese who are supportive of Indonesia have stated that they believe he has been tortured. There have also been reports out of East Timor, including from the Catholic Bishop of East Timor, that the level of repression in East Timor has increased since the arrest of Gusmao. [From: The Age, Feb 13/93; ETAN Newsletter, Feb/93; Pacific News Bulletin, Vol 8 No 2, Feb/93]

POLYNESIANS PROTEST POLITICAL SCANDALS

Thousands of people participated in protests in French Polynesia, calling for the resignation of two top politicians tainted with scandal. Territorial President Gaston Flosse was recently convicted of abuse of his position. Territorial Assembly President Jean Juventin was convicted of both abuse of position and corruption. The protests were spear-headed by Oscar Temaru, President of French Polynesia's largest separatist party. Demonstrators concluded their protests by placing brooms, symbols of the clean-up demanded, in front of government offices.

[From: Vanuatu Weekly, No 425, Jan 23/93]

MATIGNON ACCORDS RECEIVE CONDITIONAL VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

The three parties to New Caledonia's Matignon Accords met in February to review the success of the Accords to date. The Accords were signed five years ago between the Kanak independence movement, the French Government and the conservative settler-dominated Rally for Caledonia in the Republic (RPCR). They brought peace to New Caledonia with a 10-year development plan and provision for an independence referendum in 1998. All three parties expressed a generally positive assessment, but the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) expressed some concerns over the questionable commitment of the French Government to decolonisation and the failure to implement provisions of the Accords related to establishing a poll of eligible voters. Such a poll is key to ensuring a fair referendum in 1988. [From: Islands Business Pacific, Vol 19 No 3, Mar/93]

SOKOMANU TAKES OVER AS NEW SPC HEAD

Ati George Sokomanu, former President of Vanuatu, is the new Secretary General of the South Pacific Commission. He takes over at a time when financial management at the SPC has drawn fire from member governments. Sokomanu's appointment was not without controversy, coming as it did on the heels of a number of appointments of island politicians to senior positions with regional bodies. [From: Vanuatu Weekly, 09/01/93]

PLUTONIUM SHIP REACHES JAPAN

After a two month voyage dogged by controversy and protests, both popular and official, the Akatsuki Maru reached Japan in early January with its 1.7 tonnes of highly radioactive plutonium. Protests also occurred in Japan. While further shipments are planned, there is some hope that the Japanese Government may reconsider its plans given the unexpectedly strong level of protests. [From: Victoria Times-Colonist, Jan 5/93; Pacific News Bulletin, Jan/93]

NIUE BIDS FAREWELL TO SIR ROBERT REX

Long time Niuean Premier, Sir Robert Rex, died in December. Hundreds of mourners, including foreign dignitaries, attended the funeral in Niue. Rex had been Premier of Niue since it gained self-governing status in 1974. [From: New Zealand Herald, Dec 15 & 15/92]

BRIDGES FOR KIRIBATI

Australia has agreed to fund causeways and bridges throughout the scattered atolls of Kiribati. The Acting Australian High Commissioner in Kiribati, Phil Young, said his Government views the linking of scattered atolls as one of the most important needs for Kiribati. Already, Australia has spent more than US\$2 million on building causeways and bridges on Tarawa, Onotoa and Juria atolls. The programme will be extended to other islands in Kiribati that have numerous atolls so that the small atolls will be attached to the main island in the group. [From: Vanuatu Weekly, 06/02/93]

CYCLONE LIN HITS WESTERN SAMOA

A tropical cyclone, code-named Lin, caused extensive damage to crops on Western Samoa's main island, Upolu. The cyclone also cut electricity supplies in Apia, the capital. The banana crop was heavily hit. The Western Samoa government had recently signed an agreement for the resumption of banana exports to New Zealand which had been halted because of quarantine problems. [From: Vanuatu Weekly, 06/02/93]

SOMARE RESIGNS

In Papua New Guinea, Sir Michael Somare has resigned as Leader of the Opposition and from the Pangu Party which he formed 26 years ago, because of fighting within the party. Sir Michael told Parliament in Port Moresby that he was stepping down with a "sad heart" as, in his words, the Pangu Party had become foreign to him. He said he would remain as an independent member of Parliament and would support the Pangu Party when he thought it was doing something for the people. Reports from Port Moresby say Sir Michael's resignation comes in the wake of recriminations within the party over serious financial difficulties facing its business arm. The Deputy Leader of the party, Jack Genia, has taken over the leadership, but correspondents say it may not be able to survive without Sir Michael. Mr. Genia said party members were not informed of Sir Michael's resignation beforehand and the party is in a state of shock. Sir Michael guided PNG to independence from Australia in 1975 and was the country's first Prime Minister, holding the office for a total of 11 years. [From: PACNEWS / News System, March 12/93]

Resources on Mining in the Pacific

The Gulliver File

By Roger Moody. Minewatch. London, U.K. 1992. 894 pp. Hardcover. Available from SPPF for \$50.00 plus \$4 postage within Canada (\$7 for U.S.).

In 1981, Charles Barbour in a statement to the American Mining Congress compared the mining industry to "a robust Gulliver held down by a million silk strings", referring to the emerging opposition to mining from environmentalists, indigenous peoples and others. Since then, mining has become a major development issue. However, those with concerns about mining and the activities of particular mining companies have long laboured under a severe handicap, the difficulty of obtaining comprehensive, understandable and easily accessible information about the mining industry and specific companies. The Gulliver File goes a considerable distance towards filling this gap. It is a veritable bible for those with an interest in mining issues. An enormous work and the product of 14 years of research, it is crammed with valuable information on almost 700 companies, their areas of operation, connections between companies, major mining projects, etc. Whether one is looking for information on a major project in PNG, an obscure company operating in northern Canada, a subsidiary of the world's largest mining company or whatever, here is a good place to find it.

The Gulliver File is not without its gaps. After all, the global mining industry is a byzantine and ever changing scene. The price may also seem a trifle on the steep side for those with tight budgets. But it's worth it. While a search for information may force one to travel beyond The Gulliver File, it would be foolish to start one's search anywhere else and duplicate the research that has already gone into this major text.

The Gulliver File is also available from:

- **Minewatch**, 218 Liverpool Road, London, N1 1LE, U.K. - 25 Pounds plus airmail postage of 16 Pounds. ((Available free to indigenous and South-based groups upon application to Minewatch.)
- **Friends of the Earth - Fitzroy**, 22 Brunswick St., Fitzroy, Victoria 3065, Australia. Inquire to FOE for particulars.

Plunder!

By Roger Moody. PARTIZANS. London, U.K. 1991. 195 pp. Paper. 4.95 Pounds plus 4.80 Pounds postage.

Rio Tinto-Zinc, or RTZ as it now prefers to be called, is the world's largest mining company. RTZ's tentacles embrace operations and subsidiaries on every continent (with the possible exception of Antarctica). RTZ's massive Australian subsidiary, CRA

(Conzinc Rio Tinto of Australia) is itself the sixth largest global mining company (1988 figures) and is a major player in Pacific mining. Plunder! was produced by activists from PARTIZANS (People Against RTZ and its Subsidiaries) and CAFCA (Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa) as a guide to RTZ's activities around the globe. It is a compendium of environmental abuses, displacement and damage of indigenous communities, and endangerment of workers through ignoring of safety standards. It is also the story of increasing opposition to this mining giant and its activities. (Available on loan from SPPF)

Plunder! can be ordered directly from:

- **CAFCA**, P.O. Box 2258, Christchurch, New Zealand - NZ\$25 plus postage.
- **Center for Alternative Mining Development Policy**, 210 Avon Street, No 9, La Crosse, WI 54603, U.S.A. - US\$20 (includes postage).

Mining, Politics, and Development in the South Pacific

By Michael C. Howard. Westview Press. Boulder, Colorado. 1991. 251 pp. Paper. US\$28.50

For anyone wanting to obtain a good general overview of the history and current state of mining in the South Pacific islands, this book is a worthy place to look. The book examines the impact of mining on the indigenous peoples of the South Pacific and the complex interplay between mining and political and economic developments in a number of Pacific island states. Separate chapters deal with Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia and the phosphate islands. The influence of mining on political upheavals in PNG, New Caledonia, and Fiji is examined. Mining, Politics, and Development in the South Pacific also makes a useful contribution to the general debate on the merits of resource extraction based models of development in micro-states. There is also a brief discussion of seabed mining. (Available on loan to SPPF members)

Mining and Indigenous Peoples in Australasia

Edited by John Connell and Richard Hewitt. Oxford University Press. Melbourne, Australia 1991. 205 pp. Paper. AUS\$29.92

This collection of perspectives on the impact of mining on indigenous communities is an excellent reference on the topic. It must be - someone walked off with SPPF's copy and it's never been seen again! (If the culprit is reading this, please return the book to SPPF. We'll forgive you.)

MINEWATCH LAUNCHES PACIFIC RIM OF FIRE" PROJECT

Minewatch is based in London, U.K., and links together around 100 communities and groups worldwide that are concerned about mining issues. **Minewatch** was initiated in 1990 by PARTIZANS (People Against RTZ and its Subsidiaries) to gather and provide information on the social, environmental and economic impacts of mining, especially as it relates to the impact of mining on indigenous people. **Minewatch** tries to provide information as needed to groups who are dealing with mining issues and local mining projects. **Minewatch** has developed a large database of information, much of which was recently published in *The Gulliver File*. **Minewatch** continues to update this database. Subscribers to **Minewatch** can receive information updates and other materials.

Minewatch has recently launched a **Pacific "Rim of Fire"** project to more actively monitor mining developments in the Pacific and develop resource materials on Pacific mining issues. For further information on the Pacific monitoring project and other **Minewatch** activities, contact:

Minewatch
218 Liverpool Road
London, N1 1LE, U.K.
FAX: (44) 71 700-6189
TEL: (44) 71 609-1852



Graphic: Minewatch

Na Ma'e! Na Ma'e!

- a 57-min video film that deals with the issues at the heart of the current 2 year long strike by 700 Fiji Mineworkers' Union members at the Vatukoula gold mine site. At issue are the struggle for union recognition, poor pay and conditions, poor safety conditions and record, destruction of the environment and the decline of public health standards, and the political role of the Emperor Gold Mining Company. Written and directed by Dr. Atu Emberson-Bain. Her forthcoming book on the Vatukoula mine will be published soon by Cambridge University Press.

Available for rent through SPPF.

Book review

Nauru: Environmental Damage Under International Trusteeship

By Christopher Weeramantry. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. xx, 448, Maps, \$121.50 Can.

Review by James A. Boutilier, PhD.

This is a tawdry tale of imperial arrogance, rapine, and insensitivity. In the 1880s the German government incorporated the tiny phosphate rich island of Nauru into the Marshall Islands protectorate and awarded the Jaluit Gesellschaft the right to extract phosphate from Nauru. Subsequently, in 1906, that right (and its attendant responsibilities to rehabilitate the mining sites) was transferred to a British firm, the Pacific Islands Company. When the First World War broke out Australian forces overran Nauru and the one-time German possession, like many other conquered territories, became the subject of greed and embarrassment. The dilemma facing the victors was how to genuflect in the direction of self determination (the guiding principle of the peacemaking) while laying claim to German holdings. The solution was a sleight of hand. The League of Nations advanced the idea of trust territories and Nauru was awarded to Australia on the grounds that such a twist was justified by Australia's contribution to the allied war effort

Even before that happened, the Australian, New Zealand and British governments had entered into the Nauru Island Agreement (1919) and established the British Phosphate Commission (BPC). Thus, just as they were about to become legal trustees for the Nauruans, the victors, driven by greed, were creating a body which would enable them to exploit the island's resources ruthlessly. The wisdom of the day was that there was no food without phosphate and over the years until 1968, when the Nauruans gained their independence, the BPC extracted a billion dollars worth of phosphate, laid waste to one third of the island, pursued a highly secretive commercial policy, and paid the Nauruans a peppercorn sum.

In 1986 the Nauruan government established a commission to examine the legal responsibility for and cost of rehabilitating the island. This volume is a summary of the commission's findings. It is a damning indictment of the participating government's failure to honour their fiduciary trust. What makes Nauru so valuable is its universal applicability. With clarity and assurance, Weeramantry explores the global problems of the custodianship, exploitation of natural resources, and indigenous land rights. The duplicity and indifference of BPC is a chilling metaphor for the arrogance of mining companies elsewhere who have attempted to obscure their smash and grab operation with silky legalisms.

(Available on loan to members of SPPF)

Book Reviews - Easter Island

Easter Island, Earth Island

By Paul Bahn and John Flenley. London: Thames and Hudson. 1992. 233 pp. 200 illustrations (15 in colour), indexed. US\$24. Hard cover.
Review by Georgia Lee, Ph.D.

Easter Island, Earth Island is an important and long awaited book. It is written so that the lay person can enjoy and understand it, yet is based on solid scientific research. In the past, the non-specialist had to rely on often fanciful writings that espoused everything from the Lost Continent of Mu to little men from Outer Space to explain Easter Island's fascinating culture--or the books of Thor Heyerdahl which claimed to be based on scientific evidence, but were in reality heavily biased and laden with errors.

Bahn and Flenley present the facts, as they are known today and, in so doing, effectively skewer Heyerdahl's theories by examining them against solid evidence. We could cite a dozen examples, but one will suffice: Heyerdahl claims that the totora reed found in Easter Island and Peru is proof that the island was settled from South America. Flenley studies pollen samples taken from lake beds on Easter Island and discovered that the reed has been present on the island for at least 30,000 years! Despite this, Heyerdahl's most recent book (published in 1989 after Flenley's research was in print) completely ignores this evidence [Heyerdahl, T. 1989. Easter Island: The Mystery Solved, Souvenir Press, London.]

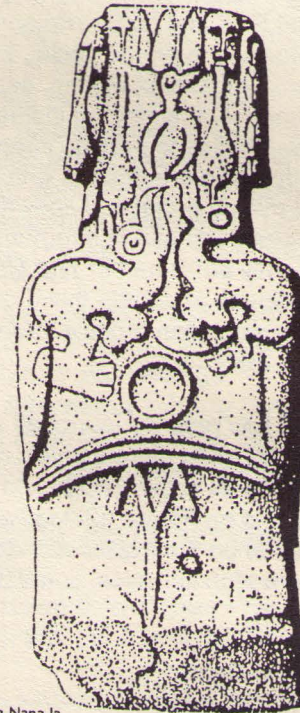
Bahn and Flenley cover all facets of the society, from first settlement to the rongorongo tablets to the marvellous statues for which the island is famed. The prehistoric society is described, as are the processes that led to its downfall--"the island that self-destructed". The unwinding of the ecological clock can be followed as we see deforestation, famine, warfare and finally collapse of the society. Once the ancient forest was cut down, the islanders were trapped for there was no longer suitable wood to build a seagoing canoe and sail off, searching for another land.

Easter Island is not the only place where this has happened in the past. Man continually shapes and reshapes his environment. But on an isolated and finite island, the results are clear--and clearly frightening. Easter Island has been described as a microcosm of our planet; it is a scary parable. In the epilogue, the authors state, "The person who felled the last tree could see that it was the last tree. But he (or she) still felled it." Thus Easter Island becomes a symbol for the larger picture, Earth Island.

The illustrations are great and here I must add a disclaimer. This reviewer supplied many photographs and drawings for the book. Therefore I feel somewhat

ambivalent about reviewing it and feel obliged to comment that, despite my involvement with the graphics, I did not write the book. I wish that I had; it is that good.

(Lee is the Editor/Publisher of Rapa Nui Journal. Her most recently published book is Rock Art of Easter Island: Symbols of Power, Prayers to the Gods.)



Drawing by Georgia Lee

Moai Hoa Haka Nana Ia
Taken from Orongo and now in the British Museum

Easter Island: The Ceremonial Center of Orongo

By Alan Drake. Illustrations by Georgia Lee. Old Bridge, New Jersey: Cloud Mountain Press. 1992. 100 pp. (50 pp. of illustrations). Paper.
Review by SPPF.

As Drake notes in his introduction, "Orongo is a key archaeological site on Easter Island and is normally on every visitor's itinerary. Despite this, little factual information is available for the tourist". Happily, this statement is considerably less true today thanks to this excellent book. Drake has pulled together the relevant information and produced a comprehensive guide to Orongo and the surrounding area. One chapter also reviews the history of exploration at the site. While packed with information, the book has been written in a clear and non-technical manner that makes it easily accessible to a reader new to the topic. Any visitor to Easter Island would be well advised to carry this book.

Not feeling the constraints which Georgia Lee notes in her review of Easter Island, Earth Island, we also can say that Georgia's many excellent illustrations are a vital part of this book and will add much to any visitor's understanding of the Orongo site.

PACIFIC MEDIA AWARDS

Journalists and news photographers from throughout the South Pacific are to have annual awards recognising excellence.

The organisers of the inaugural Pacific Media Awards, the Pacific Journalists Association, say they will feature monetary prizes for the categories of Best Print Journalist, Best Radio Journalist and Best Photographer.

The contests are open to Pacific Island journalists and photographers from all island countries including the French and U.S. territories as well as Hawaii.

This is the first time awards of this kind are to be open to media participants in both English and French-speaking Pacific countries and territories. Pacific Media awards director Barry Young says the awards were created to recognise excellence and to contribute to the development of professional journalism in the Pacific region. So far two sponsors are listed-Tasman Pulp and Paper Co Ltd and Pacific Forum Line. Winners will be announced in Auckland, New Zealand in April 1993. [From: PACNEWS Jan 93]

CULTURAL SURVIVAL announces its *State of the Nations* and Indigenous Rights Campaign

CS recently launched a 3 year Indigenous Rights Campaign. Unlike the UN, which has committed no funding for its 1993 International Year of the world's Indigenous People, CS will devote significant resources to help insure that this historic opportunity will not be lost.

An integral part of the CS campaign will be a report on the political, human-rights, economic, and environmental status of the world's endangered peoples, called *State of the Nations*. The report will combine global reviews, analysis, statistics, and extensive documentation, and it will focus on actions and strategies that can advance the rights of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. Contact CS at 617/374-1650 or 374-1622

Where are you, ex-PNG literature buffs??

SPPF member, Ev Ellerman is looking for 2 former directors of the PNG Literature Bureau from the late 60s to early 70s. If you know the whereabouts of Don Maynard, an Australian, and Roger Boschman, a Canadian, please contact her at: Dept of Comparative Literature, U of Alberta, 347 Arts Bldg, Edmonton, AB Canada T6G 2E6. Tel 403/492-4926 Fax 403/492-9112

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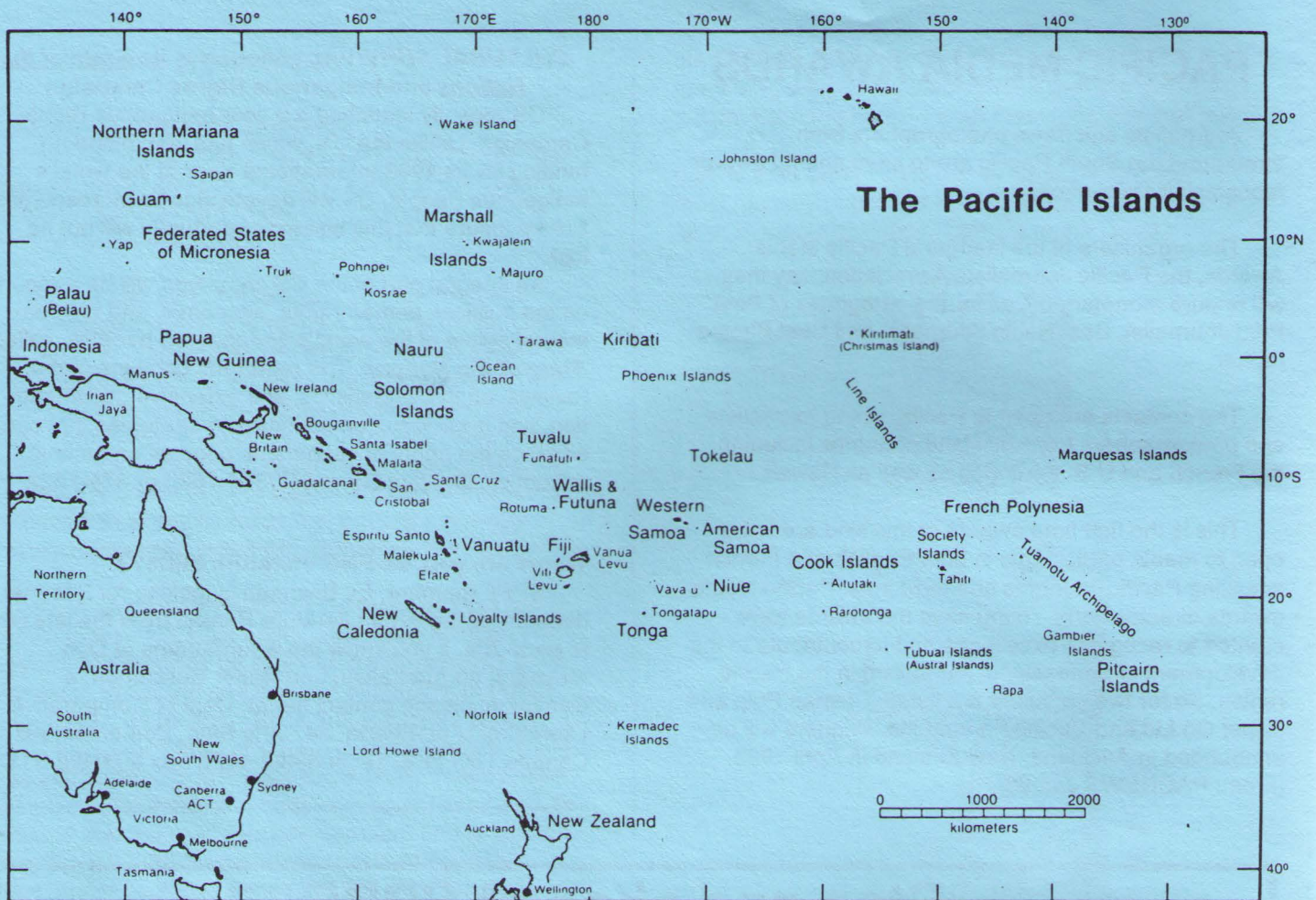
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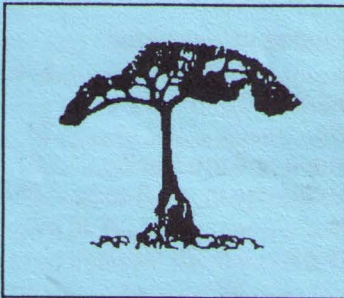
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Garbage Queen Educates Samoans About Pollution



Graphic from Rainforest Echoes

Residents of American Samoa were recently treated to the presence of "Tupu Lapisi, the garbage queen", on their television screens. From her "throne" inside a garbage can at a local park, the garbage queen cautioned would-be-litterers about the negative results of their acts. Local actress, Naomi Orey, was the garbage queen in

the Samoan language TV "spot". The Tupu Lapisi spot was a pilot for a series of shorts on pollution issues being produced by Le Vaomatua, a Samoan environmental group. Funding for the project is coming from the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA). ASEPA is funding a number of Le Vaomatua projects including an "Environmental Health Education Activities" book with 145 activities. A draft version of the book is currently being tested in American Samoan secondary school science classes. Following revisions, a final edition of the publication will be printed.

For more information, contact:
 Le Vaomatua
 PO Box B
 Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799
 Tel/Fax: 684/633-7458

[From: ***Rainforest Echoes***, Vol 4 No 2, December 1992]



Know someone who would be interested in TOK BLONG SPPF? Send us his/her name, address and interest in the Pacific Islands and we will send a complimentary copy. Let us know if we can use your name as a reference.

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