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Tonga

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tion of crops is also an issue, with Māori largely opposed to it. The apparent lack of performance of many Māori members of parliament was another issue. One commentator noted that of the sixteen Māori members in the last parliament, fewer than six could be relied on to advocate for Māori and only one, Tariana Turia, was prepared to fight publicly in support of Māori issues. The poor performance was not unexpected, given the severe attacks from both the media and conservative opposition parties on any outspoken Māori members and the fact that party loyalties have effectively prevented their acting as a single bloc.

Yet the July 2002 elections saw a record number of 20 Māori members in a parliament of 120, with 11 representing their own electorates and the rest as list members for their parties. But none of these were independents. All 7 Māori electorate seats remained with Labour, with the Labour Māori caucus at a record 10 members within the full Labour caucus of 52. Yet despite the strong Māori numbers, shortly after the elections the Māori caucus indicated that it was requesting just three ministerial appointments inside cabinet and three outside cabinet in what it appears will be a Labour-led minority government.

Of the remaining parties, the traditional mainstream conservative party, National, returned only 27 members, with their vote dissipated among right-wing minor parties. Only 2 of their members are Māori. Of the other three right-wing parties represented in the house, New Zealand First gained 13 seats, while ACT and United Futures each gained 9. The New

Zealand First party is led by a Māori, the charismatic Winston Peters, and despite a general impression that he is Māori bashing, 6 of his 13 members are Māori. ACT has 1 Māori member, while United Futures has none. The left-leaning Green Party gained only 8 seats, 1 of which went to a Māori. The Progressive Coalition has 2 members, neither of whom are Māori. At the time of writing, Labour had entered negotiations with both the Greens and United Future about the composition of the next government.

MARGARET MUTU

TONGA

The triennial general election was held again in March 2002. Democracy supporters claimed that their win of seven of the nine People's Representatives' seats was a conclusive victory for the movement throughout the kingdom. Other observers did not find the outcome so clear-cut.

The Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement (THRDM), which was formed in 1998 to replace the Pro-Democracy Movement, did not formally field candidates for the election because, as it claims to be merely a mass movement that seeks political change, the conditions under which it receives funding from various overseas agencies prevent it from doing so (*MT*, May 2002, 12–16). After the outcome, however, the movement was quick to claim a win. The most vocal of its representatives—'Akilisi Pohiva, Dr Feleti Sevele, and 'Isileli Pulu, who became the Tonga-tapu No 1, No 2, and No 3 People's Representatives respectively—claimed

that the result represented a mandate from the people to institute the government restructure that had formed the basis of their campaign. This idea, namely, that all thirty members of the Legislative Assembly (from which the monarch would still appoint his cabinet ministers) be elected by common roll, has been previously aired, discussed, and defeated in parliament in 1992. Although the idea appeared better understood by the electorate than previously, especially in Tongatapu, there is little evidence that the idea was the primary factor that swayed the voters there or in the other island groups. Indeed, pro-government supporters (notably the minister for police, the Honourable Clive Edwards, and Tuisoso, the editor of the government owned and controlled newspaper, *Kalonikali* [*The Tonga Chronicle*]) disagreed, and argued that the results merely reflected the usual contest for votes between individuals to see who would enter parliament. They further asserted that it was conducted in the older-style fashion of personalized politics, rather than as an ideological battle over ideas that remain poorly understood by the mass of people. However, these arguments prove rather equivocal, as in several cases the personalized issues tended to coincide with principles.

Three commoners' seats are allocated for Tongatapu, two for each of the Ha'apai and Vava'u groups, and one each for the Niuafoou and 'Eua. If the result was a nationwide mandate for change, however, it is noteworthy that the voter turnout was the lowest (44.3 percent) in Tongatapu and only 49 percent in the country overall. The

smaller islands had higher turnouts: Ha'apai and Vava'u each had 53 percent, and the Niuafoous and 'Eua had 69 percent and 56 percent respectively. While it is always more difficult to say why people did not vote rather than why they did, the Tongatapu reaction suggests that either a high proportion of registered voters were overseas, or they preferred not to vote because of disenchantment with the candidates or perhaps the whole idea of politics.

It should be noted also that the lead-up to the elections was marked by several disconcerting events. One of the most unprecedented was New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs Phil Goff's attacks on the Tongan government's credibility. He suggested in a series of remarks that the level of corruption and the failure to uphold the constitutional rights of its citizens, along with the fact that no major political change was in the offing, might affect the future level of New Zealand aid. The Tongan government regarded this interference in its internal affairs as an impingement on the nation's sovereignty and an attempt to bias the outcome of the forthcoming election. There was also some suggestion in the local press that Goff's remarks were prompted by Pohiva's ongoing efforts to engage the sympathies and actions of larger neighboring Pacific Rim countries for his political ends (*TC*, 9 March 2002, 1).

Another matter that arose was the amount and source of the king's private funds. The issue came closely on the heels of the Tonga Trust debacle, in which US\$20 million appeared to have gone missing as a result of a series of dubious investment maneuvers (or a long-term scam) on the part

of the fund's advisor, J D Bognadoff. Bognadoff is a US citizen who first claimed the king's attention in the role of court jester. The trust's lack of proper administration by the two cabinet ministers placed in charge of it—the Honourable K T Fakafanua (the former minister of finance) and the Honourable T Tupou (the former deputy prime minister, attorney general, and minister of justice)—resulted in their resignations from office in September 2001. The loss of the money invested with a US-based company, Millennium Assets Management, was confirmed in a report to the Tongan government on 7 June 2002, following ten months of speculation about its fate. After investigations in the United States by Auditor General Pohiva Tu'ionetoa, the trustees have instructed a team of San Francisco lawyers to commence legal proceedings against Bognadoff and two others. The trust has claims against six companies alleged to have been involved in the transference of the money, some of which relate to failure to pay or default on payment of a promissory note, fraud, conspiracy, aiding and abetting fraud, negligent misrepresentation, material misrepresentation, and fraudulent conversion (*TC*, 13 June 2002, 17). It now remains to be seen who, if anyone, laughs over the loss to the kingdom of T\$50 million.

While this was going on, *Ko e Kelea*, the radical newsheet now edited by Pohiva's son, published a letter allegedly written by a former palace secretary stating that the king had a personal fortune of US\$350 million. In an interview, the king freely admitted that he has a bank account

in Hawai'i in which he invests the proceeds from his vanilla production but that the amount is not near the one quoted. The letter involved an allegedly forged signature, however, and the week before the election, police raided Pohiva's home and the THRDM office and confiscated a hard disk on which a copy of the letter was allegedly found. Some people felt that this find might promote a conservative vote, but in the event, the harsh treatment meted out to Pohiva, his son and daughter, and 'Isisleli Pulu, a THRDM office-bearer, appears to have swung voters toward the movement. In another landmark development following the election, Pohiva and his son were charged with sedition, fraud, and defamation, and Pulu with fraud. If these two members of parliament are convicted of criminal charges later this year, they stand to lose their seats.

In the Tongatapu elections, 14,734 people actually voted from a roll of 33,232 people registered. Of these, Pohiva romped home with 9,437 votes, scoring electoral victories at all polling stations, to return as the Tongatapu No 1 People's Representative as he has for the last twelve of the fifteen years since he was first elected to parliament in 1987. Dr Fred Sevele was returned for a second term as the Tongatapu No 2 People's Representative with 8,498 votes, and newcomer Pulu came into the No 3 place with 5,500 votes. In Ha'apai, a democracy supporter, Teisina Fuko, was ousted, and newcomer Fineasi Funaki became the No 1 People's Representative. The longtime THRDM parliamentarian, 'Uliti Uata, came back in the No 2 Ha'apai position. In the Niua, a reputed THRDM supporter, Sione

Haukinima, was newly elected, and in 'Eua, another THRDM supporter, Sunia Fili, was returned to parliament. Vava'u, however, voted in two newcomers who oppose the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement, with Trevor Guttenbeil and 'Etuave Lavulavu taking the No 1 and No 2 People's Representatives' seats respectively. Lavulavu has remarked that the monarchical form of government was ordained by God for Tonga, which goes some way toward explaining why it might prove difficult for Tonga to transform itself into a western-style democracy.

Perhaps the only way to test Pohiva's and Sevele's claim that people voted overwhelmingly for their proposed government restructure is to conduct a referendum on the issue. But this would have to be carried out by the government because the cost is beyond the means of the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement. It would also be difficult to work out what questions to put to the people.

As matters stand, it is also difficult to separate ideological from personalized issues in the case of the more radical supporters. All commentators agree that people across the social spectrum vote for Pohiva because he leaks government business to the people. There is a degree of corruption, nepotism, and cronyism in middle-level management that many government employees resent but feel powerless to address. Also, although the Tongan people remain loyal to their monarch, many people were privately incensed at his remark that his children have the same rights as everyone else in the country to build

up their business interests. This fails to acknowledge the extreme social and cultural advantages they possess. In addition, they have picked the plum opportunities that rely on common property rights of all citizens: through her company, Tongasat, the Princess Royal controls the ownership of Tonga's orbital slots, and through his company, Shoreline, the Crown Prince now has a monopoly on the generation and distribution of Tonga's power supply. Through a fully owned subsidiary company, Tonfon, the Crown Prince also expects shortly to introduce wireless technology to compete with the existing government-owned Tonga Telecommunications Corporation. These moves indicate to ordinary people how the most privileged cash in on their country's common heritage and resources. They rely on 'Akilisi to give vent to their concerns in parliament, and to continue his tireless fight for public accountability and transparency. Sevele is a smart, educated, and successful businessman who, it is hoped, might improve people's livelihoods through support of private-sector development and the removal of the government's heavy hand over much business enterprise. Pulu might have received a sympathy vote over his police detention in regard to the alleged forged letter, and might also have gained from the lack of a strong opposition figure. 'Esau Namoa, the previous Tongatapu No 3 People's Representative and a popular young businessman, was disqualified from the election for not paying a government-imposed fine.

In Ha'apai, it is hard to distinguish the ideological THRDM element from the fact that both of the successful

candidates are also well known as “helping men.” Funaki, for example, had distributed school supplies to the tiny atolls that make up the middle group for a good two years before the election, and when Cyclone Waka struck in February 2002, he was instrumental in getting utilities restored and relief supplies sent to stricken households. Uata has always gained local support because he runs a fleet of interisland cargo vessels and thus provides a service to the community. In the Niuaus, the strength of Haukinima’s loyalty to the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement is untested, while Fili for ‘Eua, like others, at times wavers in loyalty to the movement’s line according to political interest.

In sum, the mandate for government change is not as clear among the island groups as the Tongatapu representatives make out. Many people believe that no change at all will result, and even fervent supporters such as Futa Helu admit that the Tongatapu representatives will lead the way towards reform in the next three years, and that the other pro-democratic People’s Representatives will follow them (*Taumu’a Lelei*, April 2002, 22–23). This is far from the claim that all seven THRD supporters among the nine People’s Representatives share the same degree of commitment to its ideals and goals. Thus, it is also too soon to claim a victory for democracy. In advocating the thirty-elected-member legislature, the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement, in addition to accountability and transparency, is valuably advancing another democratic theme—namely, the greater representation

of commoners in parliamentary decision making. Even if these aspects of good governance were advanced under the rubric of democratic reform, however, it would be wrong to mistake them for a step toward full representative democracy.

Despite the cries from the hustings in March, many people in Tonga still believe fundamental changes in politics, as in other social and cultural affairs, will emanate from the top, that is, from the government headed by the reigning monarch. On 9 August 2001, the principles of accountability and transparency appeared to have been wonderfully promoted when the prime minister announced the appointment of a commissioner of public relations to hear cases of abuse and misappropriation of power. The initiative received the highest praise from the People’s Representatives. Teisina Fuko, the member for Ha‘apai, for example, raved that “HRH the prime minister’s ready agreement for the [appointment] demonstrates his strong support for the public to be aware of what Government does. . . . This is an exceptional achievement in our attempt to bring about better performance and more honesty in Government” (*TC*, 23 August 2001, 5). Since then, nothing more has been reported of the commissioner’s activities. In another move, the government, with the help of a loan from the Asian Development Bank, has recently begun to reduce and restructure the civil service. Top-level meetings have been held, but members of the public have not been invited as participants or observers. Once more, the well-meaning but extremely paternalistic attitude that “government knows best” has pre-

vailed. In the absence of facts, rumors abound with regard to the way the downsizing of the public service will take place, and many civil servants are at present restless and distressed, as they are unsure of their future and remain in the dark about the circumstances of their employment.

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WALLIS AND FUTUNA

On 29 November 2001, French Overseas Secretary of State Christian Paul went to Wallis, where he declared: "I intend that the assistance of France shall not slacken." He confirmed the future opening of a vocational training center and the future implementation of a statute for members of parliament. He proposed the creation of a development council made up of all the local decision makers. In December, it was Didier Quentin, overseas secretary-general of the *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR), and Pierre Frogier, president of the government of New Caledonia (of the party, *Rassemblement pour La Calédonie dans la République* [RPCR]), who went to Wallis to take their turn in preparing for the upcoming elections. The signing of the special agreement between the French Overseas Territory of Wallis and Futuna and

the French Overseas Country of New Caledonia was once again postponed. In the meantime a guidance document on economic development was signed in Paris on 22 January 2002 between the state and the territory in the presence of customary leaders. This document was to be followed by a program contract along with a significant financial initiative.

The year 2002 was significant on the electoral level. First, the election in a single ballot of the twenty territorial advisers took place on 10 March. Thirty-two lists, bringing together a total of 134 candidates, were submitted to 9,353 voters. Of those eligible, 82.7 percent voted. Spoiled ballot papers accounted for 0.75 percent, and 9.8 percent were proxy votes. The elections yielded a right-wing majority affiliated to the national RPR party. On 26 March, Patalione Kanimoa was reelected president of the territorial parliament by 12 votes to 7, with one member absent for health reasons. The opposition unified for the election of the committee of the territorial parliament, in spite of the fact that it included as many right-wing personalities (eg, Soane Uhila) as left-wing elected officials (eg, Donald Mercier).

The 5 May 2002 election of Jacques Chirac as president of the French Republic facilitated the reelection of the RPR member of parliament of Wallis and Futuna. At the time of the parliamentary elections in June, outgoing Deputy Victor Brial was opposed by four other candidates. His two main opponents (Soane Uhila and Kamilo Gata) did not come forward as candidates, but they supported Penisio Tialetagi, a tradesman whose campaign speech privileged the per-