

## THE PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT IN TONGA

The group behind the intensifying drive for a more democratic system of government in Tonga, designated the 'Pro-Democracy Movement' in December 1991, came to public attention when the Chairman of its Committee, Fr Selwyn 'Akau'ola, announced its formation on 28 August 1992.<sup>1</sup> He revealed plans to organise an international convention on the Tongan Constitution and Democracy in Tonga.<sup>2</sup> Initially the government was prepared to participate, but two months later decided against doing so and with its supporters strongly opposed the convention, banned outsiders as well as Tongans who had changed citizenship from participating,<sup>3</sup> prevented coverage by the government radio and spread rumours of likely violence if the convention went ahead. The convention however was an unqualified success.

Most Pacific nations gained independence during the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Their constitutions, with notable exceptions, have enshrined democratic ideals and reflect the aspirations of the modern Pacific. Tonga having remained free of direct colonial rule has retained its constitution, which with some minor amendments remains substantially the same as it was when promulgated 118 years ago. This has helped to maintain Tonga as a relatively stable, peaceful but rather conservative society with a comparatively undemocratic system of government. Emergence of a pro-democracy movement in the 1990s seems inevitable; its formal existence represents the culmination of courageous efforts of individuals both Tongan and non-Tongan in conjunction with a significantly changing religious, educational, social and economic situation.

Christian teachings that all people are equal in the sight of God; the relatively democratic Wesleyan church structure; and the mission's establishment and promotion of formal and universal education - all had helped to introduce certain important measures of democracy from 1826 onward to an extremely stratified society where the powers of chiefs over commoners were absolute and arbitrary.<sup>4</sup> Tonga's most remarkable ruler, Tāufa'āhau who later became King George Tupou I, embraced Christianity, united Tonga into a kingdom and, with the willing assistance of the Wesleyan missionaries, introduced the rule of law among his people, all of which contributed significantly to democratisation, particularly through the various codes of law which he promulgated beginning with the Vava'u code in 1839 and culminating with the Tongan constitution in 1875.<sup>5</sup> Through legislation he drastically limited the powers of the chiefs and, in so doing, consolidated his own; he emancipated the

<sup>1</sup> This decision was made by a Committee established in Oct. 1991, to organise a conference for the following year, for an open dialogue on the need for social, economic and political change in Tonga. Uili Fukofuka, 'The Pro-Democracy Movement in Tonga : A Brief Historical Account', 1-2, a document compiled in Feb. 1993 at the present writer's request.

<sup>2</sup> *Matangi Tonga*, Sept.-Nov. 1991, p5

<sup>3</sup> Fukofuka, 'The Pro-Democracy Movement', 2.

<sup>4</sup> S. Lātūkefu, *Church and State in Tonga* (Canberra 1974), 54-6, 74-80, 190-1, 195-6; 10, 22.

<sup>5</sup> S. Lātūkefu, *The Constitution: A brief history* (Nuku'alofa 1975), 43-63, 90-116.

commoners from the traditional stranglehold of the chiefs and gave them a share, limited though it may now appear, in decision making through elected representatives in parliament equal in number to those of the newly established nobility. Democratisation continued but has been relatively, and at times painfully, slow. It has always been imposed from the top, first by the foreign missionaries, then by their monarchical protégé, King George Tupou I, and his successors. Not surprisingly, opposition to it has always been strongest among chiefs.<sup>6</sup> A decade or two after World War II commoners began to be unequivocally heard for the first time, raising questions about the undemocratic nature of the current socio-economic and political system; the most outspoken were from highly educated Tongan church leaders, primarily prompted by their religious convictions and concern for questions of social justice, inequality, exploitation of the poor, uneducated and marginalised as well as problems of corruption in high places. The prestige of their overseas education, and their positions as church leaders at home, enabled them to speak out. Among the few commoners openly critical of the inequities of Tongan society as early as the 1960s and 1970s were three prominent church leaders: Dr Sione 'Amanaki Havea and the Rev. Siupeli Taliai of the Wesleyan (Methodist) Church and Bishop Pātelesio Fīnau of the Roman Catholic Church. Havea had studied in the United States, Taliai in Australia, and Bishop Fīnau in New Zealand and the Philippines.

In addition to their strong positions in their respective churches - Dr Havea was the first Tongan President of the Wesleyan Church since the 1920s, and Taliai, the first Tongan Principal of the well known Methodist boys' college, Tupou College, established by the Rev. Dr E. Moulton in 1866<sup>7</sup> - these men had highly respected family backgrounds, albeit commoner origins, to back them up in spite of relatively strong disapproval of their stand on these issues by the majority of the Wesleyan Church leaders. The Wesleyan is the strongest church in the country. Havea and Taliai, despite being held in high esteem by their peers and the majority of Tongans, were unable to gain the support of many of the Wesleyan clergy.<sup>8</sup> The lay leaders of the church - the Royal Family, the chiefs and many commoners - were also unsupportive. Bishop Fīnau, on the other hand, quietly spoken but more aggressive and persistent, favoured by the more autocratic system of authority within the Catholic Church, gained the solid support of the Catholic hierarchy. Whether he has the backing of lay leaders

<sup>6</sup> Noel Rutherford, *Shirley Baker and the King of Tonga* (Melbourne 1971), 17; Lātūkefu, *Church and State*, 103-116.

<sup>7</sup> Lātūkefu, *Church and State*, 76.

<sup>8</sup> Dr Havea, Bishop Fīnau and some of the People's Parliamentary Representatives led a march of 2,500 people on 7 March 1991 to the Palace to present His Majesty with a petition requesting the dismissal of the Minister for Police, Hon. 'Akau'ola, for the unconstitutional sale of Tongan passports to foreigners. It called for the revoking of the amendments to the Constitution, which had retrospectively made legal the sale of passports, which had been passed in an emergency session of parliament on 18 February 1991. Apparently only one other Wesleyan Minister besides Dr Havea took part in this historic demonstration, and some senior ministers questioned Dr Havea's right to participate in this politically motivated march at the following church quarterly meeting.

and ordinary parishioners is not clear. Recently, 'Ēseta Fusitu'a,<sup>9</sup> Deputy Chief Secretary to Government, and wife of the Speaker of the Parliament, Noble Fusitu'a, claimed that the Roman Catholic community is as divided on these issues as the Methodist Church, and she may be correct, though I suspect that only a small minority of Catholics would dissent, in contrast to the Wesleyans. Bishop Finau also has the unqualified support of the international Roman Catholic Church. Leaders of other church groups, such as the Tonga Free Church, the Constitutional Church, and the Tokaikolo (Maamafo'ou) movement (themselves splinter groups from the Methodist Church), the Mormons and the Seventh Day Adventists appear to be solidly behind the status quo. To most of them, any significant or radical change or challenge to the establishment would be dangerous if not evil!<sup>10</sup>

Another influential supporter of the movement has been Futa Helu, a first cousin of the Rev. Siupeli Taliai. The Helu family has established a reputation in education. Grandfather Helu was a distinguished student of Dr J.E. Moulton. His offspring were known for their sharpness and fearlessness in criticising anything they believed to be wrong in the society, including church and state. After Tonga High, and Newington College in Sydney, Futa read philosophy at Sydney University under John Anderson (Challis Professor of Philosophy 1927-1958). Futa returned to Tonga with a passionate interest in the Greek philosophers and the Socratic spirit of criticism which questioned opinions and traditions, founded a small private school in the early 1960s and named it 'Atenisi (Athens), 'dedicated to the spirit of free and open inquiry'.<sup>11</sup> 'Atenisi offers degrees up to Master level. When Futa first began 'Atenisi in the early 1960s and claimed that it was to be the nucleus of a future university, most educated Tongans, including myself, regarded this as a joke. Futa has made his dream a reality. He is charismatic, a clear thinker and superb communicator. His support for the Pro-Democracy Movement gives it a definite boost, although his atheistic views have been used by his detractors as a weapon. His admirers are solidly behind him in his unwavering support for political changes in Tonga.

Without doubt, however, the person most actively, consistently, fearlessly and effectively to promote the issues has been the very outspoken critic of government, Samiuela 'Akilisi Pōhiva, who is currently Tongatapu number one People's Representative (that is, he gained the highest number of votes). Educated at Tupou College and the Government Teachers' Training College, he became a primary school teacher. Later he studied at the University of

<sup>9</sup> 'Ēseta Fusitu'a was the first Tongan woman with a university degree, BA in History from Auckland University and later an MA from the Australian National University. She conducts a weekly broadcast from the Prime Minister's office in which she explains Government activities, vigorously defending its actions and attacking government opponents.

<sup>10</sup> The unofficial spokesperson for this more conservative group appears to be the Rev. Liufau Saulala, a well educated, widely informed and relatively young head of the Tokaikolo religious movement (an offshoot of the Wesleyan Church), and editor of their monthly, 'Ofa ki Tonga (Love for Tonga).

<sup>11</sup> I.C. Campbell, *Island Kingdom: Tonga Ancient and Modern* (Christchurch 1992), 206, 169.

the South Pacific, where he appears to have come under the influence of Marxists.<sup>12</sup> Pōhiva had neither the strong backing of a distinguished and highly respected family background, like Havea, Taliai and Helu, nor the strong organisational support both local and overseas that his church provided Bishop Finau. Pōhiva became a lecturer at the Government Teacher's College. Disagreeing with the current educational system, he introduced 'an educational radio programme which questioned the bureaucracy and what [he] felt was the absence of appropriate checks and balances in government and statutory bodies'. The cabinet banned the programme after it publicly disclosed corruption in the highest echelons of the government bureaucracy. He provoked further anger when he introduced courses in sociology and political science in the belief that teachers and students needed to know how their government operated - tantamount to teaching future teachers and their students to be critical of their customs and traditions. Pōhiva was dismissed from his Public Service position in 1985.<sup>13</sup> Meantime, frustrated with what he believed to be 'corrupt practices in high places', he and a few others produced a monthly political news-sheet, *Kele'a* (conch-shell), which detailed unjust actions by government, and corrupt practices. It published 'details of the allowances and salaries the elite pay themselves. It told . . . of parliamentarians collecting allowances for trips they never made'.<sup>14</sup> Circulation jumped from 1,000 to 10,000 in three months.<sup>15</sup> In the 1987 parliament election Pōhiva won in the Tongatapu electorate, which has three People's Representatives, gaining third most popular vote. The young lawyer and strong supporter of the *Kele'a*, Laki Niu,<sup>16</sup> was elected as second People's Representative in the 1987 election. With every effort made to discredit Pōhiva and persuade voters to drop him from parliament in the following election in 1990, he won a record majority as elected number one<sup>17</sup> People's Representative for Tongatapu. Laki Niu was re-elected to the number two position. The number three People's Representative went to Viliami (Uili) Fukofuka, a

<sup>12</sup> Pōhiva's strong anti-social discrimination feelings are reflected in 'Fono', a three page typed document accompanying a circular letter requesting funds for the Pro-Democracy Convention organised for Nov. 1992. On p.1, it refers to a Tongan saying, *ngulungulu fei' umu*, 'rumblings of the 'umu-makers' ('umu is the Tongan earth oven, its makers here refers to commoners). 'The 'Umu-makers can grovel and moan to the high heavens about their lot in life but in the end come to accept that they are not in a position to change, let alone address the status quo'.

<sup>13</sup> *Islands Business Pacific*, Dec 1990, 19, 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Kele'a*, 7:4 (Oct. 1992), 4, published the amount of money each member of cabinet and Privy Council received from ministerial salaries, parliamentary salary, from membership of various Boards, overseas travel etc, ranging from T\$51,000 to T\$127,000. In 4:6 (Nov.-Dec.1991), 1, it claimed that one minister had received a total amount of T\$148,175; see *Islands Business Pacific*, Dec. 1990, 20.

<sup>15</sup> Fukofuka, 'Pro-Democracy Movement', 1(a).

<sup>16</sup> Laki Niu became popular with the general public when he organised a petition, late in 1986, against the sales tax introduced by the government. It was signed by 11,000 people and was presented to His Majesty. *Ibid.*, 1(c).

<sup>17</sup> The person with the most votes in an electorate is designated 'Number One' representative of that electorate. There are 5 electorates: Tongatapu (3 representatives); Ha'apai (2 representatives); Vava'u (2 Representatives); the Niua (1) and 'Eua (1). The second most popular candidate is designated 'number two' and the third is 'number three' in the case of Tongatapu. This applies both to nobles' and people's representatives.

well qualified, university educated former public servant, now a businessman and highly respected churchman, editor of the *Kele'a* from 1986 to Jan. 1990. In that election the former number one People's Representative, a pro-establishment businessman Matekitonga Lemoto, was dropped by the voters, whereas two other supporters of Pōhiva, Teisina Fuko from Ha'apai and Havea Kātoa (a *Kele'a* Publications Board member) from Vava'u were elected, giving Pōhiva four of the remaining eight People's Representatives as supporters. This group immediately began to press not only for more honest, responsible and accountable members of parliament, but also for a more open and democratic system of government.

A formal Pro-Democracy Movement had not yet been established but the five People's Representatives informally led by Pōhiva began to work closely together. Changes in Tonga's educational, social and economic situation provided them with fertile ground: higher standards of education (literacy had been universal for many decades); the introduction of radio communication, the broadcasting of parliamentary debates in particular; the recent development of several independent newspapers which broke the monopoly held by the government owned *Tonga Chronicle*, for almost 25 years the only non-religious newspaper in the country. The new publications have provided critical analysis of current events and a forum for public opinion through letter columns. The overseas migration of so many Tongans has also broadened outlooks, awareness and sophistication, as well as economic independence. Indeed the emergence of a sizeable middle class contributed significantly to this situation.<sup>18</sup> The new People's Representatives are better educated than their predecessors and, more prepared to challenge, have confronted ministers, Representatives of the Nobles and the Chairman of Parliament to question misconduct and misuse of public funds. They launched a vigorous campaign to expose the unconstitutional sale of Tongan passports to foreigners, and highlighted the undemocratic nature of parliamentary representation. The present parliament consists of 12 members of the Government (10 ministers and two governors), appointed by the King; nine representatives of the 33 Nobles, elected by them; and only nine members representing the people, elected by the registered voters. Their challenges to Government Ministers in court, the organising of petitions to His Majesty, the holding of peaceful demonstrations such as the march to present a petition to the Palace in 1991, are a clear manifestation of their having been frustrated by the fact that they are outnumbered by the ministers and Nobles' Representatives who usually vote together on crucial issues.

In November 1990 Pōhiva and Mahe Tupouniua (the first Tongan to gain a university degree in Commerce and the first Tongan Minister for Finance, who was on a short visit from New Zealand where he has migrated) invited ministers, noble members of parliament and People's Representatives to an informal meeting. Only two ministers and no nobles met them but the talks led to 'a tentative decision to call a conference for open dialogue on the need for change'. Next month a public meeting with strong support from the four People's Representatives present, 'Akilisi Pōhiva, Uili Fukofuka, Teisina Fuko and Havea Kātoa, and

<sup>18</sup> See I.C. Campbell, 'The emergence of parliamentary politics in Tonga,' *Pacific Studies*, 15:1 (1992).

from Bishop Finau, Dr Havea and Futa Helu, decided to call a conference along the lines suggested by the previous meeting. At a public meeting in October 1991, a committee was formed to organise the conference, now deferred to September 1992, on the theme 'Tonga in the Year 2000', a theme thought sufficiently general to attract people from all walks of life to hold an open dialogue on national issues. The committee chairman was Fr Selwyn 'Akau'ola, editor of the Roman Catholic monthly *Taumu'alelei*, the deputy chairman was the Rev. Simote Vea, the editor of the Wesleyan monthly, other members included the editor of the influential weekly *Taimi-Tonga*, Mr 'Eakalafi Moala, the secretary of the committee was Havea Kātoa, People's Representative in Vava'u, and its treasurer was Pōhiva. In November 1991, Uili Fukofuka, first editor of the *Kele'a*, took over from Havea Kātoa as secretary. By December 1991 committee members had begun to favour a conference on the constitution and democracy. More importantly, they decided to call the group the Pro-Democracy Movement. In April 1992 a further re-examination of the conference theme to which Bishop Finau, Havea and Helu were invited decided the movement should openly declare that their main aim was democratisation of government and that the conference theme was to be 'National conference on the Tongan Constitution and Democracy'. In late August the chairman of the committee, Fr Selwyn 'Akau'ola, called a press conference and formally announced the existence of the Pro-Democracy Movement, and that a convention on the Tongan Constitution and Democracy would be held on 24-7 November.<sup>19</sup>

In early 1975 when I had the privilege of being invited by the Tongan Government to write a brief history of the Tongan Constitution for the celebration of its centenary later that year, I said the following:

The two main aims in granting the Constitution were to maintain efficient administration as a means of attaining internal stability, and to encourage the recognition of the country's sovereignty by the main powers... The crucial issue which should now be seriously considered by every Tongan, especially the leaders of the country, is the question of whether this document, which was written one hundred years ago can continue to serve those lofty ideals for which it was intended... The Constitution was designed to safeguard the welfare of the country in perpetuity, but many of its provisions were concerned with the specific needs of their day. Some of these needs have changed over the years, as Tonga has become modernized... Those who love Tonga, however, and desire to see the Constitution in its essence preserved, should not shrink from facing them calmly and courageously while time is on our side.<sup>20</sup>

Considering the Tongan traditional polity, as well as the world situation in the 19th century, the Tongan Constitution was a radical document. Everyone was supposed to be equal in the eyes of the law. A Bill of Rights provided for everyone. The monarch was to rule according to the constitution, a modern system of government was provided in which, for the first time, commoners were to be represented in decision-making in parliament, and the land system was designed to cater for the needs of everyone. On closer examination and in the light of accumulated knowledge and political sophistication of the 1990s, the Constitution is in need

<sup>19</sup> Fukofuka, 'Pro-Democracy', 2(a), (d), (f), (g), (h), (i), (k).

<sup>20</sup> Lātūkefu, *The Constitution*, 89.

of major revision. The following are a few examples of the more glaringly undemocratic aspects:

The constitution gives the monarch almost absolute authority to rule Tonga. The system of government has three arms - the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. The Executive is made up of the monarch, the Privy Council and the cabinet. The monarch has power to appoint for life or dismiss the ministers of the cabinet (Clause 51) who sit with him in the Privy Council, and the two governors (of Ha'apai and Vava'u). In respect of the Legislature, the monarch has authority to appoint the Speaker and to dismiss or recall the parliament at any time and, any bill passed by the House must receive royal assent to become law. The Judiciary too is appointed by the monarch who has the power to pardon criminals. All land in Tonga belongs to the Crown (Clause 104) and the monarch has authority to grant hereditary title and estates (Clauses 44 and 104) and in the absence of an heir, such estates will revert to the Crown (Clause 112). Commoners have to apply to noble holders of the estates for land and the permission to register it. This gives the nobles constitutional power over the people to the present day.

The monarch is Commander-in-Chief and has the power to declare war or make treaties with foreign countries. The constitution guarantees succession to the throne to the lineage of Tupou, originated by King George Tupou I, and clause 41 declares that the reigning monarch cannot be impeached. Finally, 'the Constitution which protects the monarch cannot be changed without his consent', and 'some of the more traditional attributes of status and chiefly responsibilities of the head of the highest Tongan lineage are unwritten. These are parts of the customary law of the Kingdom. The monarch combines traditional status with constitutional office.' 'The constitution intends the King to have the real political and legal powers unaffected by the sort of unwritten constitutional conventional conventions which normally limit the powers of the crown'.<sup>21</sup> As was pointed out earlier, the present make-up of the Tongan parliament gives complete dominance to the nobles and government with nine People's Representatives representing 95% of the population, nine nobles representing the 33 nobles and 10 cabinet ministers appointed for life by the King, and two governors appointed by the King. In a background paper circulated before the convention the present situation is summed up:

Tonga is commonly referred to as a constitutional monarchy but this is a misnomer. Tupou I in fact created a constitution under a monarchy. The constitutional pre-eminence of the sovereign arises from the fact that the authority which granted the Constitution has secured perpetual succession, and is immune from impeachment under a charter which cannot be changed without his consent . . . The Constitution ensured that the 33 nobles remain forever subordinate to the monarch while at the same time entrenching their powers, as hereditary title holders, to control Parliament and together with six estate-holding matapule (chiefs) control most of the land as well.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Jan. 1993, 17, 18.

<sup>22</sup> 'Background Paper to Convention on the Tongan constitution and Democracy', 1992, 3.

In September 1992 the Prime Minister Baron Vaea accepted the invitation from the organising committee of the convention for some of the government ministers to participate, but in October a letter from the Minister for Police and Immigration stated that government did not support the convention and would not issue entry visas to anyone who came with the express purpose of participating. They were prepared to admit anyone who simply wished to observe the meeting. Early in November a press release from the Ministry of Police stated that Tongans holding foreign passports would be allowed to participate.<sup>23</sup> However, this was ignored when Filia Uipi, a US passport-holder and member of the Utah Legislative Assembly and chairman of its Judiciary Committee was manhandled by police at the airport and with his wife, who had accompanied him, was forced to return to USA on the plane on which they had arrived.<sup>24</sup> Misinformation and rumours were spread, even among overseas Tongans. We heard in Canberra early last November that a survey conducted by Radio Tonga had found a majority opposed the convention. It turned out that they had interviewed six people and only one had spoken in favour of it. A survey carried out by the local paper *Tongan International* showed 76% support for the convention.<sup>25</sup> During the meeting plain-clothes police were present<sup>26</sup> and at night police vehicles and uniformed police surrounded the convention centre.

The convention was a very peaceful affair. Its opening session, conducted by the Ex-President of the Wesleyan Church Dr Amanaki Havea, heard Havea pledge love and loyalty for Tonga, its monarchy and government, but stress that his love for what he believed to be the truth could not be compromised, and probably with the rumoured threat of violence and bloodshed in mind, declared that he was happily prepared to suffer (at the age of 71) whatever the consequences of his belief. No one advocated doing away with the monarchy, nor did anyone say anything about turning Tonga into a republic. What most people wanted was a more democratic monarchical government with people electing parliament and the monarch appointing ministers from them.<sup>27</sup> Many speakers emphasised the importance of retaining the monarchy in Tonga as a ceremonial head of state like Britain and some other countries in Europe, and Japan, because of its binding effect on the various communities and interest groups in the society.

The convention immediately disproved the rumours that it would provoke disorder, advocate violence or promote republicanism. It helped enlighten many more people about democracy, although the majority still remain confused,<sup>28</sup> and helped define in general terms the kind of democracy that the Pro-Democracy Movement wants for Tonga; and it probably

<sup>23</sup> Fukofuka, 'Pro-Democracy', 2(m), (n).

<sup>24</sup> *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Jan. 1993, 17.

<sup>25</sup> Fukofuka, pers. comm.

<sup>26</sup> *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Jan. 1993, 17.

<sup>27</sup> An alternative view expressed was for the members of the executive or cabinet to be chosen by the members of parliament and be accountable to parliament, not the King. See *Islands business Pacific*, Dec. 1992, 32.

<sup>28</sup> *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Jan. 1993, 19; *Kalonikali*, 11 Feb. 1993, 5.

helped strengthen the Pro-Democracy vote at the election of People's Representatives in February 1993.

There was no official response from the government after the convention except that it would wait for the promised official report from the organising committee. 'Ēseta Fusitu'a, however, provided a spirited defence of the status quo. She argued that the constitution of a country must reflect the fundamental aspects of its culture and that 'this so-called democracy you are talking about [is] a model associated with a western society'. The departure from the Westminster model in island constitutions such as Samoa's and Tonga's reflects the underlying cultural realities - 'Our Tongan parliament was meant to reflect our multiple criteria for leadership - age, seniority and traditional leaders'. Her response to the reformists' push for more accountability was to point to the corruption still rife in countries such as Australia, New Zealand or USA with fully elected representatives: people in Tonga were better informed about how money was spent, nor did those elected governments serve their people's interests better. She blamed the lack of parliamentary reform in Tonga on the tactics used by the reformists, particularly their antagonistic approach, such as saying to the ministers 'You're all fools, you're corrupt, you should be sacked, you should go home' and to the nobles 'You are uneducated'. She attacked Dr Havea and Bishop Finau for causing dissension within their churches and accused them of hypocrisy in criticising the government for its lack of democracy yet maintaining autocratic leadership within their respective churches.<sup>29</sup> The Speaker, Noble Fusitu'a, scathingly referred to the convention as a gathering of academics having a good holiday and claimed that 'the convention is a ripple that would be gone in a few days'.<sup>30</sup>

Concerted efforts were made before the election on 4 February 1993 to discredit pro-democracy candidates, Pōhiva in particular, through the government-owned paper *Kalonikali (The Chronicle)* and the government-owned Radio Tonga, the only broadcaster in the country. Independent periodicals such as *Kele'a*, *Taimi-Tonga*, and Wesleyan and Roman Catholic publications supported the pro-democracy candidates. Voters re-elected 'Akilisi Pōhiva as number one representative, with a 1.1% increase on a record vote in 1990; Uili Fukofuka was voted number two representative with a 17.9% increase on his 1990 vote; and 'Uhila Liava'a, a former government Accountant-General and Secretary for Finance, a new member of their team, was elected number three representative. Laki Niu, who had fallen out with Pōhiva, had an almost 50% drop on his 1990 result and was not re-elected. In Ha'apai, which has two representatives, the voters dropped the conservative sitting member and elected Pro-Democracy candidates. In Vava'u one pro-democracy and one independent, known to be sympathetic to change, were elected. In the Niuaus the conservative sitting member was dropped and an independent (the only woman candidate) was elected, and in 'Eua the conservative sitting member was returned by 85 votes.<sup>31</sup> In all there will be six Pro-Democracy members, two Independents (who are likely to work closely with the

<sup>29</sup> *Islands Business Pacific*, Dec. 1992, 33-4.

<sup>30</sup> *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Jan. 1993, 18.

<sup>31</sup> *Kalonikali*, Feb. 1993, 1; *Matangi Tonga*, Mar.-Apr. 1993, 21.

Pro-Democracy members according to Pōhiva) and only one conservative, pro status quo member ('Eua). This gives the Pro-Democracy representatives a much stronger position than in the previous House where four definitely conservative members supported the government and the nobles.

My own assessment is that there will be no significant changes during the life of this parliament, for the following reasons:

(a) There is still a sizeable proportion of the population, perhaps 30 to 40%, who genuinely believe the status quo is best for Tonga, or who are unclear about what democracy means and therefore uncertain about the future it may bring. A survey carried out by the *'Ofa ki Tonga* newspaper a fortnight after the February elections found an overwhelming majority (77%) wanted social justice, only 10% wanted political change, 5% for reasons of family loyalty, 2% for the quality of the candidate and 6% for other reasons.<sup>32</sup>

(b) Many Tongans feel accustomed to a monarch with political power. It would take considerable time and persuasion to convince them that elevating the monarchy above politics might, in the long term, be more beneficial for both the monarchy and the country.

(c) Typically Tongans show two faces, private and public. The majority of people who voted pro-democracy in a secret ballot will show undivided support for the Royal Family and the chiefs in public. This was evident during public celebration in July for the Jubilee of His Majesty King Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV's reign and his 75th birthday. Overwhelming public support and enthusiasm on that occasion must have strengthened the conviction of the government and the chiefs that the people were solidly behind them.

(d) The 10 ministers, two governors and nine Nobles' Representatives will never support any motion detrimental to their interests. During the last election campaign Hon. Ma'afu Tuku'i'aulahi, a minister and noble said: 'It is absolutely unrealistic to think that you could talk your way in and take away the power of the nobles or the government without any violent confrontation, it is unheard of . . . and it will never happen . . . If you want power you have to fight for it, and the consequences of war is suffering . . .'<sup>33</sup> Making significant political changes within the House is virtually impossible. (e) Any hope therefore for the radical changes demanded by reformists would rest with His Majesty, but so far he has not given any indication that he is prepared to initiate such a move. The seemingly solid public support shown during the recent celebrations in July 1993, and the undivided loyalty of his ministers, the nobility, leading public servants, a certain number of influential and successful entrepreneurs and many of the Protestant clergy, have not helped to make him feel that there is urgent need for change. (f) Tonga still remains a very stable, peaceful and in many respects happy and successful country. The past 25 years have seen a marked improvement in communications, housing, health and education and Tongan families enjoy a higher standard of living. A recent survey found that the Tongan Teachers' College is the best in

<sup>32</sup> *'Ofa ki Tonga*, Feb.-Mar. 1993, 1,3. The survey randomly picked 2,000 from the four districts of Tongatapu.

<sup>33</sup> *Matangi Tonga*, Mar.-Apr. 1993, 23.

the Pacific, and that Tonga also has the highest number of people with PhDs in relation to population in the world!<sup>34</sup> A prominent Samoan public servant told me a few years ago how impressed he was by the way businesses had been developed in Nuku'alofa by Tongan entrepreneurs. Many educated Tongans attribute these developments to the present King's determination to modernise education, health and the economy when he was Minister for Education from 1943 and Health from 1944 to 1948, and Premier from 1949 to 1965.<sup>35</sup> (g) Under the present constitution, the King has managed to appoint highly qualified people from throughout the country to his cabinet. The Premier, Baron Vaea, for example, was one of the sons of nobles who were sent overseas before World War II for further study in preparation for future leadership roles in government. The Deputy Premier and Minister for Education Dr Langi Kavaliku was the first Tongan to gain a PhD degree. The Minister for Health Dr Sione Tapa was the first Tongan to gain a university degree in medicine and has played a prominent role in international and Pacific-wide health organisations.<sup>36</sup> The present Minister for Justice Tevita Tupou is a qualified lawyer and the Minister for Finance Cecil Cocker is an economics graduate. The Minister for Lands Dr Ma'afu Tupou, an ex-medical practitioner and former Governor of Vava'u, is widely respected. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Crown Prince Tupauto'a and the Minister for Police Akau'ola studied at Sandhurst, the latter being dux of his year. The Minister for Commerce Tutoatasi Fakafonua gained a Master degree in Law. Many people are worried by the possibility of losing some of these men if drastic changes are implemented. Some of these ministers, as well as certain nobles, are not averse to change. Indeed they recognise that change is inevitable. Dr Kavaliku, for example, during the 1970s had made a submission to cabinet for changes in the system of government.<sup>37</sup> He and Dr Tapa among other ministers including the Premier and the Minister for Justice want to see a more coherent submission from the pro-democracy people as to the kind of system they would substitute for the present one. The reformists to date have been unable to agree on a comprehensive and coherent plan for the future. Liava'a and Fukofuka believe there is need to form a political party which would offer a policy platform

<sup>34</sup> Dr 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki, 'Educational Achievements - A Jewel in the Crown', paper at Tongan History Association 1993 Conference, Nuku'alofa 29 June; a survey of Pacific islands' students achievements in Australian tertiary Institution in 1988 found Tongans performed best. See 'AIDAB Sponsored Students from Pacific Island countries: A Study of their Problems and Progress in Australia', I.D.P., Canberra 1988.

<sup>35</sup> In 1944 he established the Teachers' Training College, the Tonga High School in 1947 and provided scholarships for promising young Tongans to be sent overseas for higher education. To promote the economy he initiated various projects in industry, national shipping and airlines. He has travelled widely seeking aid and markets for Tonga produce. Though not every project succeeded they did stimulate individuals and families to take up business, commercial farming or send their children overseas for professional training. The government gave support for those seeking temporary work overseas, particularly during the 1970s, and made no attempt to obstruct Tongans from immigrating, all of which has been appreciated by entrepreneurs and the business community. See Campbell, *Islands Kingdom*, 162-7.

<sup>36</sup> Dr Sione Tapa was elected President of the Thirtieth World Health Assembly on 3 May 1977, served as Chairman of WHO regional Committee for the Western Pacific from 1982 to 1983, Chairman of the WHO Executive Board from 1989-90, and in 1991 was awarded the Health-for-All Gold Medal by WHO.

<sup>37</sup> A copy of this submission is held by the present writer.

for people to understand clearly what they stand for, and to provide discipline among its members. Pōhiva is reluctant, arguing that a party will need financial backing, and this will inevitably lead to its being dominated by wealthy business interests who would dictate policies. They will need to reach a decision on these matters if their drive for significant changes is to maintain its present momentum.

It seems clear, then, that the Pro-Democracy Movement has gained support from the educated, including certain church leaders and a prosperous middle class who have become unhappy with the undemocratic nature of the Tongan constitution and system of government. They are pressing for a system in which the people should be given the right to decide who is elected to government through parliament. Exposure of corruption, injustice and lack of accountability among parliamentarians has aroused intense anger among the general public. Their vote appears mainly to reflect their desire to force politicians to restore justice, accountability and honesty to government, rather than a desire to see radical changes to the present system. Pro-democracy leaders will have a tremendously difficult task ahead of them to make the people understand what democracy means, what sort of democracy is most suitable for Tonga and the benefits they believe this can bring. Reforms they demand cannot be achieved under the present system. They will need to devise a diplomatic way of persuading His Majesty of the beneficial effects of their plans for the future of the country and the monarchy itself. The King alone can initiate any move for significant changes if they are to occur peacefully.

SIONE LĀTŪKEFU