

Ancients called in last ditch attempt

The mighty See El Pee is about to call the Ancients back in a last ditch attempt to save the glorious party from extinction.

The Ancients possess wisdom acquired over many years of poring over rare manuscripts. It is said in the chronicles of the banana republic that they rose to glory in the pre-independence days, long before legendary hero Paw Kee ascended to the throne. They have passed on to the dusty history pages which are about to be undusted when the See El Pee's new breed of Young Turks meet at Storktown next Saturday.

It is said that one Few Inns, who happens to be the Chief Warlord of the Night Leaf branch of the See El Pee, will move to eject the party's whole board of directors and have it replaced by the Ancients.

The move appears to have the support of Supreme Commissar Hat On, who feels he can use some of the accumulated sagacity that only the really old have.

Faithful

Hat On, for reasons best known to himself, would like to see Ancients Ber Nee, Hoo Pa and Bum Time sitting with faithful and loyal supporters like K-Rees and Soo San.

Rabbit and Rough must follow Loo Ees into temporary exile. This still leaves the powerful and enigmatic litigator, Shame Rock, untouched. He will undoubtedly have the support of Young Turks everywhere as well as mighty warlords like Ty La and Trench Ant.

Shame Rock acquired control of the party after a coup that saw former leader He Slip sent unceremoniously into exile. The coup sent tremors



across all the party's branches with rumors of impending civil war. Unbeknownst to the rank and file, Hat On met a few recalcitrant warlords in his sumptuous quarters at the Charlie Building last Thursday evening in an attempt to stymie possible bloodshed at Storktown.

Compromise

The warlords consumed copious quantities of lotus, indeed it is said that the Supreme Commissar's icebox was quite empty when they left, but were not in a mood to compromise. They offered Hat On little or nothing. The litigator Shame Rock will be asked to vacate the chair temporarily in favor of Hoo Pa or Ber Nee although he will be enticed to contest the leadership in the See El Pee's annual fest of the long knives in Tsugua.

Shame Rock is most unlikely to accept for this would be seen as tantamount to admission of guilt on his part for He Slip's demise. Also, Shame Rock is by nature a pugnacious litigator who enjoys nothing better than a scrap.

For all those things the Middle Conclave meeting at Storktown next Saturday is shaping as one of the bloodiest affairs the

Bid for old timers' 'wisdom' to save party

See El Pee has had in its tumultuous 14 years history.

Waiting on the sidelines is the former supreme commissar, Tux Ee, who last Sunday met the second supreme commissar, Ba Ree, at an extremely confidential meeting called to patch up differences between the Nuts and the See El Pee.

They both swore convoluted commentator, El Ko Tah, into silence. El Ko Tah, who is not normally cowed into submission by Commissars and Mandarins, inexplicably accepted the pact of omerta, thereby missing the story of the year which will now in all likelihood fall into the lap of his *Daily Blab* rival, Nice On.

Alliance

For Ba Ree and Tux Ee signed a secret pact with far-reaching consequences for the banana republic. In effect the pact amounted to an alliance between the talented 2IC of South Irian's Government and wily Tux Ee.

Only Hat On and Mushel stand in the way of Tux Ee's return to the fold.

It may well accelerate depending on the See El Pee warlords attending the Storktown Conclave. If they decide to engage in wholesale purges it is rumored He Slip may join Tux Ee's forces, thereby precipitating the implementation of Bar Ee's alliance.

MPs' mission of diplomacy

CANBERRA

WARWICK COSTIN



A delegation of up to nine Federal MPs will board an RAAF aircraft for a Cook's tour of the South Pacific in two weeks' time.

Their flight from Canberra's winter will take them to holiday havens, and to a disturbing number of trouble spots.

This won't be your average parliamentary fact-finding mission.

Its first call will be to Vanuatu — the neighbor that last week, after a civil riot, had two Australian warships on standby for a mass evacuation of tourists.

The possibility of intervention by Australian troops was discussed at Government level.

The chance of Australia being called to play a police role in Vanuatu is likely to be a key topic among the MPs.

Next, the team will visit Fiji.

Two coups last year have left that country a republic. It faces many economic hurdles and its political stability is finely balanced.

The parliamentary delegation is from the joint standing committee on foreign affairs and defence.

A sub-committee two years ago was given the assignment of reporting on Australia and the South Pacific — a perceptive move given the mostly tranquil state of Pacific Island affairs.

A submission from the Department of Foreign Affairs several months later, in March 1987, described the island states as politically stable, underpinned by subsistence economic systems.

It has proven a suitable reminder of how rapidly situations can change in our region.

These upheavals have forced Australia's defence and foreign policy analysts to reappraise their attitude towards the South Pacific.

The visit by the Federal politicians is seen by the Government as a significant diplomatic exercise.

It will allow a first-hand exchange of views by parliamentarians; it will be seen by islanders as a sign of Australia's concern about and commitment to the region; and it will prepare the way for meetings of Government leaders at this year's South Pacific Forum.

The group's use of a VIP HS748 plane was won after strong pressure was applied to the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke. The Foreign Minister, Mr Hayden, and the Defence Minister, Mr Beazley, supported calling in the RAAF to overcome transport problems.

AUSTRALIAN AID

Australia's aid to the South Pacific amounts to \$68.2 million this financial year.

Here's how the cake is shared:

• Fiji — \$10 million. Originally \$20 million, but was halved after democratic government was ousted by Colonel Rabuka in May last year. The remaining money was diverted as a bonus payment to other island states.

Solomon Islands — \$8.8 million.

Western Samoa — \$8.4 million.

Vanuatu — \$7.74 million.

Tonga — \$7.6 million.

Kiribati — \$2.8 million.

Tuvalu — \$1.64 million.

Cook Islands — \$1 million.

Niue — \$0.53 million.

Micronesia — \$0.9 million.

An extra \$18.8 million was shared between these countries in the form of multi-country and regional programs, as well as subsidies for students to learn in Australia.

Aid to Papua New Guinea has been set at \$275 million for each year until 1990-91.

A new form of aid delivery set on specific projects will begin also in the next financial year.

It begins at \$15 million and will rise over three years to \$25 million.

They are anxious that a political perspective — as distinct from diplomatic reports — be available to the Government as it assesses what is now a complex and unpredictable neighborhood.

The mission will spend 18 days island-hopping to Tonga, Western Samoa, Tuvalu, Nauru, Kiribati, and the Solomon Islands.

Of these tiny nations, Tuvalu and Kiribati have basic subsistence economies, Nauru is facing depopulation as its phosphate resource dwindles, Tonga is supported by Australian aid, and the Solomon Islands recently have been torn by political instability.

The Pacific's present flashpoint — New Caledonia — has been deliberately excluded from the committee's itinerary.

Talks between the French and Australian Governments agreed that a visit should be deferred for a few months.

The re-election of President Mitterand and the arrest of Kanak separatists this month have left a mixture of uncertainty and hostility in the French territory.

Other French territories in the South Pacific are also off the immediate agenda.

But there is strongly held and continuing opposition to nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll. Another test — the second this year — was reported last Wednesday.

Moves for independence in Tahiti are another potential source of unrest in the region.

The rumblings have been caused by a variety of reasons.

A tiny economy and, with it, the lack of development has prompted islanders such as Kiribati to accept a Soviet fishing agreement and repel US tuna boats from poaching in their waters.

American arrogance towards the puny new nations has fuelled ill feeling for years, although the political leaning of each nation is towards the West. Anger against

the French, both locally and in Paris, has also simmered over the years as moves for independence in New Caledonia were denied.

Vanuatu, having shaken off its French and British administration in 1980, moved towards non-alignment under an anti-nuclear and anti-colonial policy.

By 1986 it found a sympathetic supporter in Libya's Colonel Gaddafi.

Meanwhile, Australia and New Zealand remain the traditional big brothers of the south seas island family.

But their role has changed. Now the emphasis is on patching up a legacy of benign neglect.

An expert on South Pacific affairs, Dr Richard Herr, says Australia spent more than 15 years from 1970 pursuing a policy of protecting property values by seeking to exclude undesirables from the neighborhood.

He says this fence was showing signs of buckling under internal pressure by mid 1985.

The issues then were Australia's proposal for a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, tuna fishing and French colonialism.

Each of these causes brought a display of Melanesian solidarity. It sowed the seeds of trouble ahead.

Writing in 1985, Dr Herr, lecturer in international relations at the University of Tasmania, warned that Australia appeared to be losing touch — despite having the largest diplomatic numbers in the region.

"Perhaps most worrying for Australia is the drifting away of Melanesia in large measure due to a Melanesian perception that Australia has been too close to France and the US on the major issues before the region," he noted. "Papua New Guinea, the Solomons and Vanuatu are the largest and most vital to Australia of all the groups."

Territory divided on nuclear policy

From, P18

I HAD an important advantage over all the other speakers in the debate in the Territory parliament in this regard.

I have recently been out to meeting the traditional owners of the Koongarra project.

I do not think any member of the Territory Government has taken the trouble to do so in recent times, if at all.

I have also spoken to the project developer, Denison Australia.

The traditional owners gave the development the go-ahead three years ago when they signed a joint venture agreement with Denison. The agreement gives them 25 per cent equity in the proposed mine.

This is the type of agreement the Northern Land Council Chairman, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, told the recent Mining Exop in Darwin that Aborigines were now seeking.

The Koongarra project area was excised from Kakadu National Park in the early 1970s.

It covers an area of 12 sq km. It contains proven reserves of 13 000

tonnes, or 30 million pounds, of yellowcake.

Denison could go into production at Koongarra tomorrow.

All of the low cost reserves are already sold to Japan over the 10 year mine life through existing contracts held by the parent company, Denison Mines of Canada.

Australia would earn \$2 billion in export earnings.

Aborigines in the Northern Territory and elsewhere would earn more than \$250 million.

That money will be spent on Education, Health, and a whole range of development areas presently neglected. It will give the children of the traditional owners a chance their parents were never given.

But the mine can't go ahead because some members of the Hawke Government are telling my constituents and the rest of Australia that they know better.

They are telling everyone Denison is a stupid company.

What else would you call a company which has spent \$100 million on a proposed mine which we are told

cannot sell its product? Can anyone believe that the world's oldest uranium producer is that stupid?

I don't think so.

The key traditional owners want mining. I have spoken to them. They left me in no doubt about that.

I talked to George Hunt, the number one man, and many others. They want mining and who could blame them?

Many live at Patonga camp in large sheds with basic standards.

The traditional owners want the Australian Labor Party to change its policy at its forthcoming national conference in Hobart to allow the mine to go ahead. This is a position which any rational person would support.

The Labor Party must make a decision at that conference which is fair to everyone.

They must decide to stop the industry all together or allow mining on a commercial basis.

That means case by case.

If a mining company can gain all the approvals necessary from the regulatory bodies and can demon-

strate to the Government that it has markets then it must be allowed to go ahead.

Denison has done this.

It has shown its contracts to the Federal Government. It has gained all the necessary approvals and agreements on the environmental and Aboriginal side.

The management of Denison has told me that the project will provide 600 jobs in the 18-month construction phase of the mine.

About 80 per cent of the \$180m construction cost will be spent in Australia, as much as possible with local contractors.

There will be 130 permanent jobs ... workers all needing accommodation in Darwin. The supply contracts will obviously be worth a lot of money.

These are real investment, real jobs and real benefits I am talking about.

Mr Coulter obviously has a lot of work to do on his plans and I can't believe his claims of creating 40 000 jobs.

I would prefer him to take a more realistic approach and work to see the mining area advanced.

Luckily our Federal representatives are working to get a step by step improvement in our mining industry.

I fully support the efforts by Senator Collins in questioning current party policy on uranium.

The Federal MHR, Warren Snowdon, is also on record in support of uranium mining on Aboriginal land.

His position is similar to mine.

He told the financial review in September last year he was personally opposed to uranium mining but he would be forced to support Aboriginal land owners if after due debate and discussion they came to a decision to mine uranium.

Mr Snowdon said if land rights were to mean anything at all Aboriginal land owners should be able to decide whether or not they want mining, even if it is uranium.

This was clear support by Mr Snowdon for Jabiluka and Koongarra because they are the only two projects which have received Aboriginal approval.

I congratulate both our Federal representatives for taking such a stand and I would urge all Territorians to help them attain their goals.