

'A result of the inability of our leaders to manage the affairs of our country'

Let us now part on good terms with Bougainville

I FEEL rather sad in having to make this statement not because I am sorry to see the North Solomons go, but because it comes as a result of the inability of our leaders to run and manage the affairs of our country.

At last came the long awaited talks between the PNG Government and the land rights fighters of Bougainville.

The on-again, off-again, negotiation was finally set July 29, 1990. The venue was aboard *HMNZS Wellington* and *HMNZS Endeavour*, New Zealand naval ships specially organised to provide a neutral venue for the meeting.

Another feature worth noting is that of the heavy involvement of the Catholic Church's role in the entire exercise.

There appeared to be two parties involved. The Foreign Affairs Minister Sir Michael Somare met with Premier Joseph Kabui while the Minister for Justice Bernard Narokobi met with Bishop Singkai and the others. And why did the meetings take place separately? Whose decision was it to organise the meetings separately?

The most ironic thing about these meetings is that by sitting

We Nau
with
Nahau Rooney



national Government of Papua New Guinea, would have at least guaranteed that the national Government was still nominally in power.

The most logical person to be nominated as the administrator would have been the premier himself. And if this had been unconstitutional the national Government could have changed the Constitution to allow for it to happen.

But as it is, no one really cares. Or is it just a case of manipulation by interested parties in Government to exploit the situation for their own ends.

However, our record of handling the Bougainville crisis has not been very good. First we underestimated the land dispute from the beginning and allowed the problem to get out of hand before the Government tried to come to the rescue.

And then we sent the Defence Force across. That could have been alright if we had given them the full responsibility to handle the situation.

their land to the mining giant but now they have lost the communications between their relatives and loved ones.

The question that many of them would be asking right now is this: Is it worth being part of a Government that treated you like that? One does not have to be intelligent to draw that conclusion. And I think that is exactly what the Bougainvilleans have decided.

THE people who were originally responsible for the issue, namely Francis Ona and his second in command Sam Kauona, were not even there. They have done their job; now it is up to the administrators, political leaders and the Catholic Church on Bougainville to re-establish services.

Now that the PNG Government has given *de facto* recognition to the new Bougainvillean government and left the initiative for the so-called negotiations entirely in the hands of the Bougainvillean leaders, we must now consider what options are

further loss of life and more suffering for our people.

In the long run it would be most unpopular with the grass roots of all of Papua New Guinea including Bougainville, and worst of all would almost certainly involve an increasing contribution by foreign forces in the military action on both sides.

At the other end of the scale Papua New Guinea could simply recognise Bougainvillean independence, and the two independent countries get on with the business of government with no mutual responsibilities or obligations.

On this scenario Bougainville is going to have to face up to the realities of independence rather more maturely than they appear to be at the moment.

They are going to have to re-establish their own services and commerce. They are going to have to assume that Papua New Guinea will not be interested in being an aid-giving country.

They are going to have to compensate both CRA and the Government of PNG if they wish to either restart the mine or hand it over to another company.

All expatriate Bougainvilleans living in Papua New Guinea will have to decide where they belong and be prepared to lose their jobs if they decide to take out the citizenship option in the

possible while they depend on PNG for medical, educational, communication and transport services and while such dependence exists they are going to have to moderate their demands.

Any sensible Papua New Guinean must feel compassion for the Bougainvillean's plight which has been brought about by lack of understanding and lack of communication and has resulted in death, sickness and a total collapse of the mechanisms of modern life.

However, such sympathy and compassion is not likely to survive if the Bougainvilleans continue to humiliate and treat with contempt the rest of Papua New Guinea and its bungling leadership.

WHILE IT may be regarded as a legitimate action for Francis Ona to have led his young men to battle and death on the strength of an impossible demand for K10,000,000,000 compensation, it is unworthy of a group of intelligent leaders claiming to be a responsible government of a newly-declared state to attempt to negotiate with a neighboring state (Papua New Guinea) a claim for K18 billion (K18,000,000,000).

Until a realistic agenda for constructive discussions is agreed upon by both sides, I can see no alternative than to say

Joseph Kabui while the minister for Justice Bernard Narokobi met with Bishop Singkai and the others. And why did the meetings take place separately? Whose decision was it to organize the meetings separately?

The most ironic thing about these meetings is that by sitting down with those people we are recognising them as a legitimate authority.

There must come a time when the Government has to differentiate between illegal government and proper government.

The question which comes to mind immediately is why is it that in that past two years when it was very clear that the North Solomons government had not been functioning effectively, the Provincial Affairs Minister did not exercise his power to suspend the North Solomons Provincial Government?

The suspension of the North Solomon government, and the appointment of an administrator who would be responsible to the

the problem to get out of hand before the Government tried to come to the rescue.

And then we sent the Defence Force across. That could have been alright if we had given them the full responsibility to handle the situation.

But even then, just as they may have been having some effect they were removed hurriedly, causing further instability in the security forces of the nation.

Shortly after that the Government ordered a blockade on all major and essential services to the island of Bougainville.

EXCEPT for its economic effect on the national economy, Bougainville is no longer an issue.

The only people who care now are the Bougainvilleans themselves, both those who are left on their island and those who are living outside the North Solomons.

Not only have the people lost

Now that the PNG Government has given *de facto* recognition to the new Bougainvillian government and left the initiative for the so-called negotiations entirely in the hands of the Bougainvillian leaders, we must now consider what options are left for Papua New Guinea.

At one end of the scale the national Government could simply change its mind about how it has handled the situation so far, claim back Bougainville as part of Papua New Guinea and try to enforce that claim by force of arms.

Such action would certainly have support in some sections of the national Government and would be applauded by our international neighbors and mentors as being the strong, stern action required to prevent the disintegration of the nation.

Such action, however would, given the record of our Defence Force, be unlikely to be successful, and would result in the

to either restart the mine or hand it over to another company.

All expatriate Bougainvilleans living in Papua New Guinea will have to decide where they belong and be prepared to lose their jobs if they decide to take out the citizenship option in the new state.

It could be that this option becomes just as inhuman and traumatic as the military option.

In between these extremes, in order for any other option to become viable, both sides are going to have to change their attitudes and aspirations.

THE NATIONAL Government must begin to lead with determination, understanding and clear objectives and stop being manipulated by foreign commercial interests as well as the apparent long range planning of the secessionists.

The Bougainvilleans are going to have to accept that their desired independence is not

ernment of a newly-declared state to attempt to negotiate with a neighboring state (Papua New Guinea) a claim for K18 billion (K18,000,000,000).

Until a realistic agenda for constructive discussions is agreed upon by both sides, I can see no alternative than to say ... Adieu Bougainville!

Go with the blessing of God and the Catholic Church, and may we some day soon sit down together in mutual respect and understanding under the leadership of good governments committed to the welfare of the ordinary citizens and the utilisation of the natural resources of our countries for the benefit of all and equitable justice for the displaced landowners.

At the moment I am not convinced that either the Kabui-Ona Government or the Namaliu-Diro Government is capable of delivering that welfare and justice to the ordinary citizens of our nations.

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