

NATIONS IN PACIFIC CRITICIZE U.S. RULE

Washington Said to Oppose Island Self-Government

By ROBERT TRUMBULL

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"American colonialism seems to me to be more the French than the British type," Sir Kamisesse Mara, the Chief Minister of this British colony, soon to be independent, told a visitor from the United States recently.

The Western educated Fijian leader's comment was mild compared to appraisals of the American performance in the Pacific by other observers.

An Australian, with an international organization in a dependent territory, and a British official, interviewed the same week on another island hundreds of miles away, used the same phrase in describing the posture of the United States as "worse than the French."

Comparisons between French and United States rule in the Pacific have cropped up behind the scenes at the current session here of the South Pacific Conference, a meeting of island leaders. The gathering is sponsored annually by the national regional development body representing the United States, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Western Samoa and Nauru.

Champion of Progress

Political repression in the French territories of Tahiti and New Caledonia have long tarnished France's image among the island people. The United States, on the other hand, traditionally has been portrayed as the leading champion of political advancement for dependent populations.

Lately France has gained, and the United States has lost in standing as awareness has spread that the people in the French territories have a greater say in their own affairs than the indigenous inhabitants of the American dependencies of Guam and American Samoa.

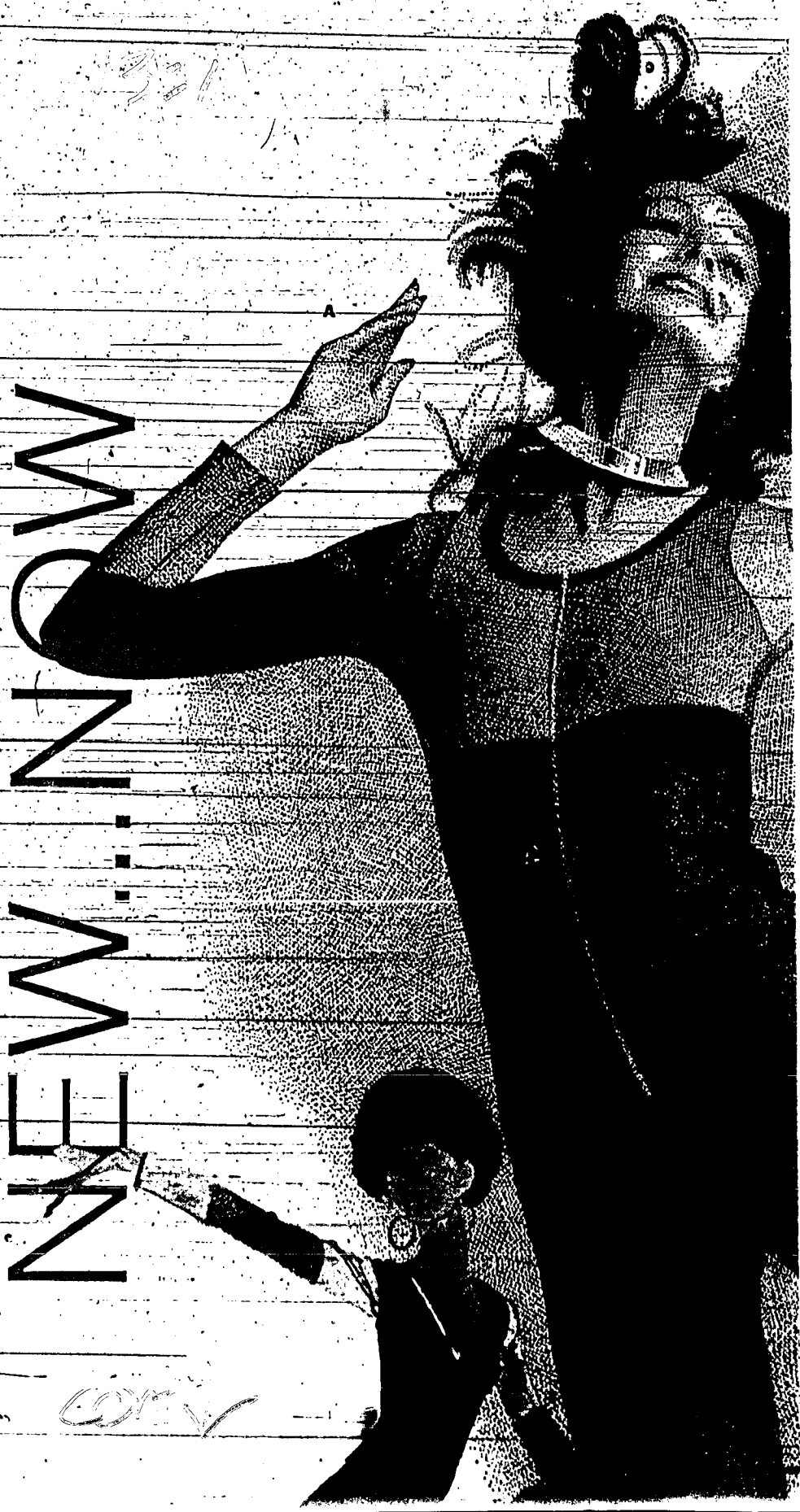
The United States is interested only in the strategic value of Pacific islands," said a distinguished Polynesian leader from Western Samoa. "Americans aren't interested in the people."

Besides enjoying varying degrees of autonomy in local matters, the French territories of Tahiti, New Caledonia and the islands of Wallis and Futuna elect their own representatives in both houses of the French Parliament in Paris.

Neither Guam nor American Samoa, the United States possessions, elects a senator or in Washington. Nor did Hawaii until that Pacific island group became the 50th state.

Two Positions Compared

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"Both France and the United States sought ways of avoiding the outcome accepted by the others, self-government or independence in line with the United Nations Charter," he continued. "If self-government were unavoidable, then it should be a self-government within their sovereignty."

Paris has been criticized for insisting that the farflung French territories politically are an integral part of France, thus barring independence as a possible alternative.

"The French are losing this fight," a leading Polynesian of the South Pacific Conference declared the other day.

"Independence is the 'in' thing today," said Aflofa Afoufouale Misimoa of Western Samoa, the Secretary General of the South Pacific Commission and first Pacific islander to hold the prestigious post.

Recent events in American Pacific territories have tended to bring upon the United States the same sort of criticism leveled at France as an acquisitive power.

An example this year was the pressure brought by Washington upon the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Micronesia) an American administered United Nations trusteeship, to accept permanent status as a commonwealth of the United States like Puerto Rico.

"The Micronesians want to make offers to Washington, not the other way around," said Senator Frank T. Palaolos of Saipan, chief delegate from the Trust Territory to the South Pacific Conference. He is a member of the upper house of the Congress of Micronesia, an elected legislative body with limited powers.

The United States administration of American Samoa was branded as "essentially colonial" in a study of the political status of those islands by a commission of Samoa legislators earlier this year.

"Even if the Samoans choose to be independent, the United States may refuse to allow this secession," the report declared.

Workers Switch Unions

BOSTON, Sept. 26 (AP)—Traffic workers at the New England Telephone Company voted Thursday to be represented by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The workers voted out the past representative, the Independent Federation, 5,226 to 3,044.

