

**EUROPEAN LOYALIST AND POLYNESIAN
POLITICAL DISSENT IN NEW CALEDONIA:
THE OTHER CHALLENGE TO RPCR ORTHODOXY**

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Introduction

Analysis of New Caledonian politics since the early 1980s has focused mainly on the question of the territory's possible independence from France. Works such as those written by Helen Fraser, John Connell, and Claude Gabriel and Vincent Kermel have concentrated on the political rise of the territory's independence movement.¹ The local Melanesian (or "Kanak") independence movement's demands for greater autonomy and eventual independence were among the major problems that confronted President François Mitterrand's French Socialist government in the mid-1980s. The embodiment of that movement is the FLNKS (Front de Libération Nationale Kanake et Socialiste; Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front). A coalition of parties and activist groups, the FLNKS represents the majority of the Kanaks supporting independence.

Since its establishment in 1984 the FLNKS's major dilemma in its pursuit of independence has been that, although it represents a majority of the largest ethnic group in New Caledonia, that group itself forms a minority of the territory's total population: the indigenous Melanesian population formed 44.8% of New Caledonia's inhabitants in April 1989 (see Table 1). The FLNKS thus holds the support of a minority of the New Caledonian electorate: in the provincial elections of June 1989 it

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TABLE 1. **New Caledonia's Population by Ethnic Group, 1989**

	Number	% of Population
Total	164,173	100
Melanesians	73,598	44.8
Europeans	55,085	33.6
Wallisians	14,186	8.6
Indonesians	5,191	3.2
Tahitians	4,750	2.9
Vietnamese	2,461	1.5
Ni-Vanuatu	1,683	1.0
Other Asians	642	0.4
Others	6,577	4.0

Source: Institut Territorial de la Statistique et des Études Économiques, Nouméa, 1989.

obtained 28.3% of the territory's votes (see Table 3 below). As John Connell has pointed out, although the FLNKS is one of the strongest political expressions of Melanesian nationalism in the South Pacific, it is, paradoxically, the one most unlikely to succeed by gaining independence through the ballot box.²

The principal local body in opposition to the FLNKS's independence claims has been the RPCR (Rassemblement Pour la Calédonie dans la République; Assembly for Caledonia in the Republic), formed in 1978. It is a coalition party of various political tendencies. A multiracial party, the RPCR's leadership and membership are nevertheless predominantly European, or of European descent. Whether born in metropolitan France or in New Caledonia, these French citizens are loyal to the concept of New Caledonia's remaining within the French Republic. French citizens living in New Caledonia of Asian, Polynesian, or Melanesian origin who support the RPCR are no less loyal to France, but they have not exerted as great an influence within the party as the Europeans. As a body, they are referred to as "French loyalists" in this article.

Much analysis of New Caledonian politics by the Pacific media has tended to concentrate solely on the FLNKS's and RPCR's political and ethnic divisions over the question of Kanak independence. It has been too readily assumed that the FLNKS is the united voice of all local Melanesians and that the RPCR is the sole voice of French loyalists, representing New Caledonia's European and non-European immigrant population.

Such a simplification of New Caledonian politics does not stand up to close scrutiny. It is Important to delve beyond this analysis to gain a greater understanding of political interaction between the territory's intermixed ethnic and social groups, Just as the FLNKS does not enjoy the following of a minority of Melanesian voters (due to abstentions and support for either French loyalism³ or minority independence parties such as LKS [Libération Kanake Socialiste; Kanak Socialist Liberation]), so too the RPCR does not command the support of all European and non-European immigrants. Since the assassination, in May 1989, of the FLNKS president Jean-Marie Tjibaou and his deputy, Yeiwené Yeiwené, by Djubelly Wéa, the South Pacific press has been obliged to become aware of Kanak factionalism within and outside the FLNKS. Outside the French media, on the other hand, little attention has been given to French loyalist factionalism.

This essay examines internal differences among New Caledonian French loyalists, highlighting the opposition of nonindigenous voters to the dominant RPCR party line. Such opposition has been a neglected area of study in New Caledonian politics, but it is worthy of scrutiny. As will be seen, the RPCR has been subject to loyalist critics, both within and beyond its party ranks, due to a complex interplay of social, economic, political, and personal factors. What influence such critics have exerted on New Caledonia's political scene will be discussed, along with the implications their opposition to the RPCR may hold for the territory's future. Periodically these individuals and the minority political groups behind them have shown the capacity to exert political influence out of all proportion to their actual strength.

Historically, French party politics has been noted for shifting allegiances between several parties in the pursuit of electoral power. Numerous ill-defined parties and candidates without permanent links to any particular party have been characteristic of French electoral politics. Under the Fifth Republic these characteristics have given way to a gradual bipolarization of voter preference for either left- or right-wing options. The outcome has been disciplined parties and governments considered to be relatively stable compared with those of the Third and Fourth French republics or modern Italy, although not as stable and bipolar as party politics in Great Britain, the United States, Australia, or New Zealand.⁴

Political parties in New Caledonia, as in metropolitan France, are polarized. However, New Caledonian electoral politics is characterized by a level of party instability uncommon in contemporary French parliamentary politics. The RPCR, the oldest loyalist party in New Caledo-

nia, has a comparatively short history, having been founded in 1978, while parties farther to the right, such as the FN(NC) (Front National [Nouvelle-Calédonie]; National Front [New Caledonia]) and the FC (Front Calédonien; Caledonian Front) were founded more recently still, in 1982 and 1984 respectively.⁵

Just as political parties come and go in New Caledonia (there have been more than fifty since the inception of party politics in the 1950s), so too party adherence is quite fluid. Certain high-ranking figures in the RPCR began their political careers in the UC (Union Calédonienne; Caledonian Union), now the largest party within the FLNKS. Dick Ukeiwé, the former Melanesian RPCR president and French senator, is a notable example. His is a moderate case of shifting party allegiance, as he left the UC as long ago as 1960. An extreme example and a figure consequently lacking in political credibility is François Néoéré, an electoral candidate for the FI (Front Indépendantiste; Independence Front) in 1979, who had become, by 1984, the secretary-general of the extreme right-wing FN(NC).⁶ Less dramatic have been the shifting loyalist allegiances of figures such as Justin Guillemard and Bernard Marant, who are also flexible in their choice of parties.

Such shifts in party allegiance often have less to do with political ideology than with personality politics, a factor underestimated or ignored in the analysis of New Caledonian politics. Given the smallness, by the end of the 1980s, both of New Caledonia's population of 164,173 inhabitants' and its electorate (91,259 eligible voters in the provincial elections of June 1989--see Table 3), the effects of personality politics in the territory should not be disregarded. Personality politics form an important element behind many of the differences and rivalries examined in this article, along with the political, ethnic, and social considerations usually outlined in accounts of New Caledonian politics.

The RPCR--Internal Opposition

When formed in 1978, the RPCR attracted followers of various French conservative political tendencies, *broussards* (rural Europeans), and Nouméan business interests. The RPCR also attracted the electoral support of some Melanesians (see note 3) and especially of nonindigenous minority groups (principally Wallisians, Indonesians, Tahitians, and Vietnamese), who did not identify with the goals of Kanaks wanting independence, and who were concerned about the uncertain prospects that independence would hold for them.

The RPCR's electoral support is predominantly centered on greater

Nouméa (the *communes* [districts] of Nouméa, Mont-Dore, Dumbéa, and Païta), where 59.4% of New Caledonia's population live. All of New Caledonia's ethnic groups except its indigenous Melanesians live largely in the south of the Grande Terre (the New Caledonian mainland). The 1989 census recorded 39.2% of the territory's Melanesians living in the South Province, where they constituted 25.8% of the 111,735 inhabitants. By comparison, 89.7% of New Caledonia's European population lived in the South Province, as did 97.8% of its Wallisians, 86.4% of its Indonesians, 95% of its Tahitians, and 97.2% of its Vietnamese. Within the South Province, Europeans comprised 44.3% of the population, Wallisians 12.4%, Indonesians 4%, Tahitians 4.1%, and Vietnamese 2.1%.⁸

This uneven nonindigenous demographic base has limited the extent to which the RPCR enjoys electoral support throughout New Caledonia. While retaining the following of a majority of the territory's voters, the RPCR's support is largely limited to the southern part of the Grande Terre. This situation was clearly demonstrated in the regional elections of September 1985, the first in which the FLNKS participated (see Table 2). The total RPCR vote of 37,146 (52% of the vote) greatly exceeded the FLNKS's 20,544 votes (28.8%) and formed an indisputable majority. But of the total RPCR vote, 71.6% (26,615 votes) was obtained in the South Region, one of four regions in the territory at that time (see below), with 72% of that total from greater Noumea alone. Elsewhere in the Grande Terre, 13.5% of the RPCR's support came from the Center Region (5,003 votes) and 7.8% from the North Region (2,888 votes). In the Loyalty Islands the RPCR obtained 7.1% of its support (2,640 votes). The RPCR attracted majority support in the South Region alone, where it gained 70.6% of the vote, in stark contrast with the FLNKS's 7.5%. Elsewhere, regional totals fell in the FLNKS's favor: 45.4% in the Center Region compared with the RPCR's 41.9% of the vote there; 59.6% for the FLNKS in the North Region compared with 23.3% for the RPCR; and 52.1% for the FLNKS in the Loyalty Islands compared with 28% for the RPCR.

The provincial elections of June 1989 demonstrated a similar pattern (see Table 3). As part of the Matignon Accords (a development plan signed by the RPCR, the FLNKS, and the French Socialist government in Paris in 1988, with provision for a self-determination referendum in 1998), New Caledonia's four regions had been altered to three provinces (see Figure 1). Once again, in spite of its having gained a firm relative majority (27,777 votes or 43.9% of the total), compared with the FLNKS's 17,898 votes (28.3% of the total), the RPCR achieved a

TABLE 2. Regional Election Results, 29 September 1985

Region ^a	Electorate	Votes Cast	FLNKS	RPCR	FN (NC) CN ^b	LKS	PFKO ^c	RPC ^d	
Total	89,784	71,440	20,544	37,146	5,263	514	4,596	2,319	1,058
South	48,678	37,690	2,820	26,615	5,263	514	1,232	1,246	
Center	14,260	11,951	5,434	5,003			788	726	
North	15,040	12,384	7,382	2,888			709	347	1,058
Loyalty Islands	11,806	9,415	4,908	2,640			1,867		

Seats

South (21): RPCR 17, FN(NC) 3, FLNKS 1.

Center (9): FLNKS 5, RPCR 4.

North (9): FLNKS 6, RPCR 2, RPC 1.

Loyalty Islands (7): FLNKS 4, RPCR 2, LKS 1.

Source: J. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?* (Canberra, 1987).

^aThe four regions used in the regional elections of 1985 differ from those which existed in New Caledonia between 1969 and 1985. Their creation was a result of the French Socialist government's Pisani/Fabius Interim Statute of 1985.

^bCalédonie Nouvelle; A New Caledonia.

^cParti Fédérale Kanak d'Opao; Federal Kanak Party of Opao.

^dRassemblement Pour la Calédonie; Assembly for Caledonia.

TABLE 3. **Provincial Election Results, 11 June 1989**

Province ^a	Electorate	Votes Cast	FLNKS	RPCR	FN(NC)	CD	UO	FC	LKS	Other
Total	91,259	63,225	17,898	27,777	4,204	3,219	2,429	1,611	2,258	3,074
South	57,278	39,759	4,615	20,844	3,860	2,751	2,429	1,611	817	2,251 ^b
North	21,537	14,939	9,371	4,041	344	361				666 ^c
Loyalty Islands	12,444	8,527	3,912	2,892		107			1,441	157 ^d

Seats

South (32): RPCR 21, FLNKS 4, FN(NC) 3, CD 2, UO 2.

North (15): FLNKS 11, RPCR 4.

Loyalty Islands (7): FLNKS 4, RPCR 2, LKS 1.

Source: *Le Monde*, 13 June 1989.

^aThe three provinces used in the provincial elections of 1989 were created in 1988 as a result of the Matignon Accords.

^bIncludes UPPT (Un Pays Pour Tous; One Country for All) 1,526, RCM (Regroupement des Centristes et Modérés; Centrist and Moderate Group) 320, VDF (Vérité, Dialogue, Fraternité; Truth, Dialogue, Brotherhood) 405.

^cUPC (Union Pour Construire; Union for Construction).

^dFUPCE (Front Uni Pour Construire Ensemble; United Front for Building Together).

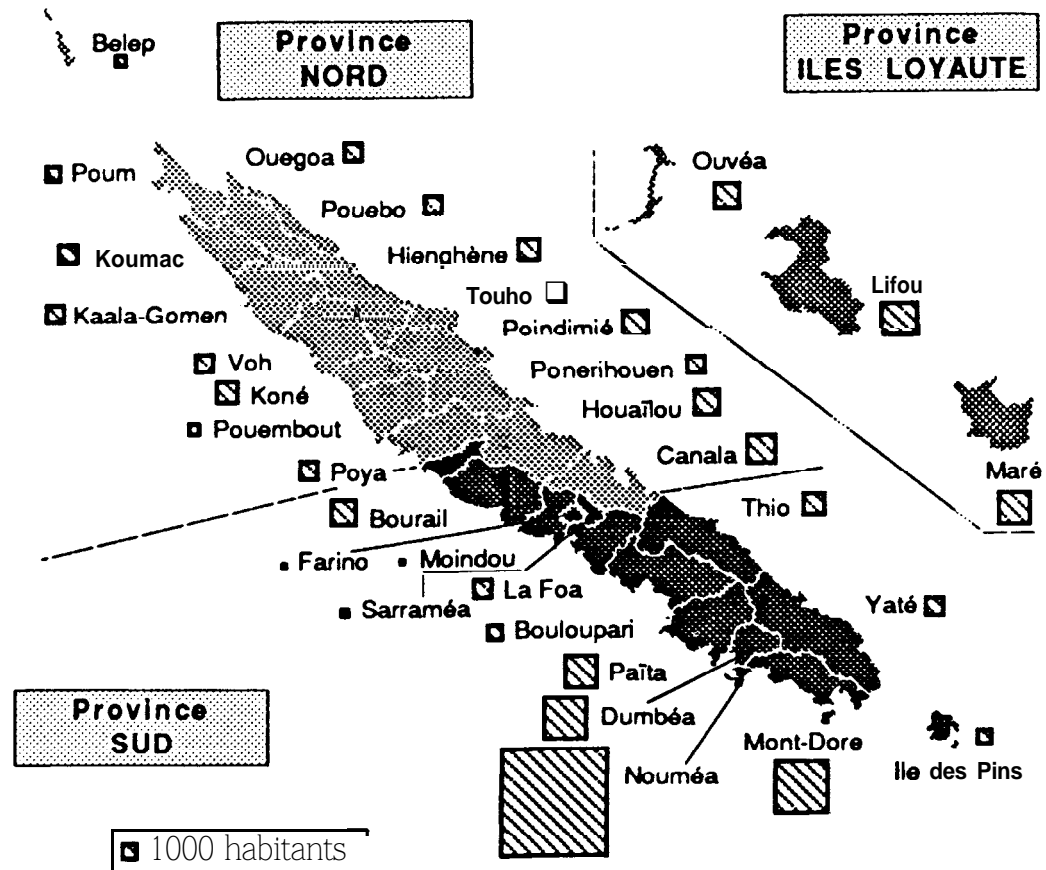


FIGURE 1. New Caledonia's provinces as established under the 1988 Matignon Accords, showing population size for each *commune*. The *commune* of Poya is divided between two provinces, with most of the *commune's* inhabitants in the North Province. (Reprinted from Institut Territorial de la Statistique et des Études Économiques, *Images de la population de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Principaux résultats du recensement 1989* [Nouméa, 1989], 11.)

majority only in the South Province. It received 75% of its support (20,844 votes) in the South Province, 14.5% in the North Province (4,041 votes), and 10.4% (2,892 votes) in the Loyalty Islands. In the South Province the RPCR gained 52.4% of the vote, compared with the FLNKS's 11.6%, 27% in the North Province compared with the FLNKS's 62.7%, and 33.9% of the Loyalty Islands vote compared with the FLNKS's 45.9%. The redefinition of regional boundaries had done little to alter either the nature of the RPCR's uneven voter distribution or the FLNKS's electoral predominance outside the south of the Grande Terre.

While being its major political strength, the RPCR's overwhelming following in greater Nouméa--over 70% of its territorial total--has been a cause of dissatisfaction, and occasionally of open dissent, among

the *broussard* minority. Of New Caledonia's European inhabitants, perhaps only 500 families are still employed solely in agriculture. The 1983 census listed 227 male and 23 female cattle ranchers, and 204 male and 41 female farmers. These *broussards* and those who mix agriculture with part-time work in provincial centers or who work solely in rural service industries have felt marginalized socially, economically, and politically by the RPCR'S Nouméan bias. European commercial agriculture in New Caledonia has been in a state of decline since the 1960s, its importance greatly eroded by the nickel boom of the late 1960s. The most important rural European economic activities are now based on commerce and services rather than agriculture.⁹

The RPCR did little to reverse rural economic decline before it signed the Matignon Accords in 1988, largely because Nouméan business interests have played an important role in the party. From the RPCR's foundation in 1978 a major constituent party was EDS (Entente Démocratique et Sociale; Social and Democratic Entente). Formed in 1972 by Senator Henri Lafleur, his son Jacques Lafleur (who later became the RPCR president), and Roger Laroque (mayor of Nouméa until his death in 1985), the EDS was a conservative group of interests that relied on Nouméan support. RPCR leadership and policy have continued in this vein. In spite of Dick Ukeiwé's 1983 statement that the RPCR wants "the maximum of decentralization and dispersal,"¹⁰ there was little evidence of initiatives by the RPCR to decentralize New Caledonia's economy prior to 1988. In 1988, a decade after the RPCR's formation, Nouméa remained the focal point of a highly centralized economy; it will remain so for years to come.¹¹

Broussards feel marginalized from the Nouméan-based RPCR. Their resentment stems from social differences, accentuated by Noumea's prosperity and the rural decline. *Broussards* tend to have lower standards of living than their Nouméan counterparts, particularly the wealthy elite known as the "fifty families." *Broussards*, who have experienced substandard health and educational services, and low incomes from rural employment, have had cause to resent the "fifty families"--the Lafleur, De Rouvray, Lavoix, Barrau, and Ballande clans among others--who live affluently on the proceeds of substantial financial investments in various commercial operations. The members of these families not only live affluently but also hold key positions in the territory's economy and administration, as well as important posts in the RPCR, forming a plutocracy of considerable influence. They are popularly perceived as having traditionally held a monopoly on New Caledonia's socioeconomic power.

Broussard resentment has focused on RPCR leaders, particularly on

the RPCR president, Jacques Lafleur, for his large absentee landholdings, his major investments in twenty-one different companies, and for the privileged positions his relatives enjoy.¹² *Broussards*, like Melaneans, have voiced discontent about inequitable land distribution, which favors large landowners such as Lafleur. By 1988 fewer than 8% of New Caledonia's landowners still owned 75% of the land.¹³ *Broussards* also resent major landowners for their alleged neglect of the land. A metropolitan French commentator, Jean-Claude Guillebaud, wrote of these tensions from Bourail in 1980: "Everywhere, I heard the colonists, small or middle-sized, fuming about the large estates, badly cultivated by a few rich Nouméans. Ballande, Pentecost, Lafleur . . . People of another race. Without real ties to the land."¹⁴

Such resentment had not vanished ten years later. Under the Matignon Accords, *broussards* feel that their economic interests are not considered seriously by the RPCR. Commenting on Jacques Lafleur's sale of 85% of his Société Minière du Sud Pacifique (SMSP; South Pacific Mining Company) to the North Province government, administered by the FLNKS, in April 1990, Olympe Bernanos, a European employed by the North Province, stated: "The *broussards* are listened to more today by Kanak representatives than they ever were by Noumea. Since the sale of the Lafleur mines, they [*broussards*] hold even fewer illusions about the South."¹⁵ In October 1990 Lafleur's mines at Ouaco were transferred to the North Province. The sale was seen by *broussards* as a case of Lafleur's divesting himself of the rural investments, upon which he and his father had built their fortunes, as a result of misguided expediency and self-interest.

An element of self-interest was involved. The nickel industry had experienced a sharp drop in prices from 1989 to 1990, after having recovered from another bad drop between 1985 and 1986. The SMSP had accumulated debts of approximately Fr 80 million, for which the North Province assumed responsibility as part of the sale agreement. Lafleur's sale of 85% of the company for Fr 99 million left him free of this debt. He also made a profit on his investment: in 1987 Lafleur had purchased 65% of the SMSP's shares for around Fr 30 million at a time when the company's value had depreciated after the loss of its Japanese client, Nippon Mining. It was also estimated that the mineral deposits at Ouaco would be exhausted some time between 1995 and 2000.¹⁶ Lafleur had obtained a good price for the SMSP, and the sale furthered the atmosphere of RPCR/FLNKS reconciliation following the Matignon Accords.

Frédéric Bobin of *Le Monde* commented that Lafleur hopes to dis-

courage rural migration to Nouméa, with the attendant economic and social problems it creates, by encouraging economic activity in the other provinces. Under such a scheme the SMSP sale indirectly benefited the development of the South Province, as well as being personally profitable to Lafleur.¹⁷ Following his signing of the Matignon Accords, Lafleur recognized the importance of the rural economy, but much remains to be done to encourage rural economic growth.

Broussards have also felt resentment towards Nouméan members of the RPCR for their relative physical security. *Broussards* were the Europeans most exposed to FLNKS militancy in 1984 and 1985. Materially, *broussards* on the east coast of the Grande Terre suffered the most. Centers on the east coast, such as Hienghène and Thio, were the most severely affected by arson and bombings between November 1984 and February 1985. During this time CFPF 370.5 million and CFPF 401 million worth of property damage were inflicted in Hienghène and Thio respectively. In comparison, the far larger urban center of Nouméa suffered CFPF 2.8 million worth of property damage over the same period. Such property destruction, the erection of FLNKS roadblocks, and the occupation of Thio by the independence leader Eloi Machoro and his followers prompted more than 2,000 “refugees” (mainly *broussards*, but also metropolitan French, plus Polynesians and Asians) to relocate to Noumea, where they were rehoused by the French authorities in the vacant tower blocks of the Nouméan suburb of Saint Quentin.¹⁸ From Hienghène, a special case, 294 *broussards* were evacuated between 4 and 6 December 1984, at the time of the massacre of ten Kanaks, leaving virtually no non-Melanesians there.¹⁹ Justin Guillemard of Bourail defended the interests of these “refugees,” and at the time their situation constituted a source of provincial resentment against the RPCR.²⁰

In his detestation of Nouméan interests in the RPCR, Justin Guillemard is the most outspoken *broussard*. He has repeatedly criticized the RPCR from the right, both within its ranks and outside. Guillemard was expelled from the RPCR in 1987, ostensibly for his rejection of the party’s proposed three-year residency qualification for voter eligibility in the self-determination referendum of September 1987. His personal attacks on RPCR leaders would also have influenced the decision to expel him. Guillemard attacked “the Nouméan racketeers” during an address to the Territorial Congress on 23 March 1987.²¹ He opposes what he considers self-centered business interests for their lack of concern toward people of modest means living in the bush, blaming them for neglecting the economic well-being of the *broussards*. Guillemard’s

criticisms have some validity. They reflect his long-standing concern for *broussard* welfare; at the same time they are motivated by his animosities towards RPCR leaders and imply a personal as well as a political agenda.

Guillemard was not alone in opposing the RPCR from a rural perspective. Another strand of rural dissent in New Caledonia originated from moderate right-wing voters, who had followed the centrist FNSC (Fédération pour une Nouvelle Société Calédonienne; Federation for a New Caledonian Society), and before that, the UC in the days before it supported autonomy. The FNSC, opposing what it saw as the RPCR's inflexible response to the political demands of the FI, formed a coalition government with the FI in June 1982, but this ultimately discredited the FNSC in the eyes of the bulk of its followers. The FNSC collapsed in 1984, a victim of voter polarization over the question of independence. Most of its supporters shifted their allegiance to the RPCR or even farther to the right in response to the founding of the FLNKS. By the time of the territorial elections of November 1984, which the FNSC contested under the title UPLO (Union Pour la Liberté dans l'Ordre; Union for Liberty in Order), the party's following was marginal (see Table 4). The number of seats held by the FNSC in the territorial elections of 1979 had been seven. The elections of November 1984 reduced this figure to one. The FNSC retained significant support only in Bourail and Pouembout, with Jean-Pierre Aïfa, its sole elected representative, isolated in the center ground between the FLNKS and the RPCR. Frustrated by the situation, Aïfa resigned in May 1985.²²

Attempts by Aïfa to recapture moderate voters from his electoral base in Bourail have not resulted in widespread *broussard* support. In the regional elections of September 1985 (see Table 2), his involvement with the PFKO (Parti Fédérale Kanak d'Opao; Federal Kanak Party of Opao), the renamed FNSC which now advocated a moderate form of independence, eroded his following even further. Aïfa failed to regain a seat. For the provincial elections of June 1989 (see Table 3), Aïfa joined with Raymond Bouvard, an RPCR dissident and president of the Chamber of Trades, to form UPPT (Un Pays Pour Tous; One Country for All). UPPT, which presented electoral candidates only in the South Province, likewise failed to gain any seats. Aïfa's support in territorial elections had declined significantly, although the community of Bourail had earlier voiced its confidence in his capacity as mayor by reelecting him in the municipal elections of March 1989.

There was another attempt to recapture some of the center ground in New Caledonian politics. In September 1985 Henri Leleu, then the

TABLE 4. **Territorial Election Results, 18 November 1984**

Region ^a	Electorate	Votes Cast	RPCR	LKS	FN(NC)	Others
Total	79,271	39,227	27,851	2,879	2,379	6,118
South	40,894	27,251	19,685	1,074	1,838	4,654 ^b
West	15,766	7,495	5,611	335	376	1,173 ^c
East	12,507	2,350	1,537	425	165	223 ^d
Loyalty	10,104	2,131	1,018	1,045		68 ^e

Seats

South (17): RPCR 16, FN(NC) 1.

West (9): RPCR 8, UPLO 1.

East (9): RPCR 7, LKS 2.

Loyalty Islands (7): LKS 4, RPCR 3.

Source: J. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?* (Canberra, 1987).

^aThe four electoral regions into which New Caledonia was subdivided at the time of this election were created in 1969. They were redrawn in 1985 as a result of the implementation of the French Socialist government's Pisani/Fabius Interim Statute.

^bIncludes UPLO (Union Pour la Liberté dans l'Ordre; Union for Liberty in Order) 902, UF (Uvea mo Futuna; Wahis and Futuna) 566, ETPP (Entente Territoriale Pour le Progrès; Territorial Entente for Progress) 269, FC (Front Calédonien; Caledonian Front) 732, LPC (Liste Pour la Calédonie; List for Caledonia) 712, EPA (Ensemble Pour l'Avenir; Together for the Future) 826.

^cUPLO 739, LPC 200, AT (Alliance Territoriale; Territorial Alliance) 30, EPA 185.

^dLPC 42, AT 23, EPA 66.

^eEPA and AT.

RPCR secretary-general, was expelled from the party for his personal animosity towards Lafleur and his business interests. Leleu conducted what *Le Monde* described as "an all-out guerrilla war against Mr. Lafleur."²³ In 1987 he set up the RC (Renouveau Calédonien; Caledonian Renewal), a moderate right-wing party of RPCR dissidents. Despite this, he was accepted back into the RPCR in April 1988. This acceptance displayed a great degree of RPCR pragmatism, and suggested that Leleu was not intransigent either. The moderate right in New Caledonia has not enjoyed a separate electoral identity, as it does in metropolitan France under the UDF (Union pour la Démocratie Française; Union for French Democracy). Instead, it has largely been subsumed in the RPCR's broader right-wing following.

Loyalist opposition to the RPCR is found predominantly in greater Nouméa, the largest population center in the territory. Reasons for Nouméan opposition to the RPCR vary. The same social distinctions that prompt *broussards* to distrust RPCR leaders are broadly applicable to

Europeans in urban areas. Owners of small businesses at times harbor resentment about the RPCR leaders' control of Nouméa's economy. Entrepreneurs starting new businesses, frequently recent arrivals from metropolitan France, find themselves in competition with established Nouméan companies, owned by figures such as Jacques Lafleur, that have dominated New Caledonia's import/export trade for decades.²⁴ Nouméa's urban proletariat, in its pursuit of better working conditions and wages, can also find itself at odds with the Nouméan plutocracy that employs it. In 1990 increasing numbers of non-Kanak workers turned to the USTKE (Union des Syndicats des Travailleurs Kanaks et Exploités; Combined Union of Exploited Kanak Workers) for union representation. This development was regarded as sufficient threat to the interests of RPCR leaders for Jacques Lafleur to threaten RPCR members who joined the USTKE with expulsion from the party.²⁵ Urban loyalists disaffected with the RPCR for social reasons may find that sufficient cause to vote for the minority loyalist parties of the far right. Some metropolitan French inhabitants of greater Nouméa may also feel a greater affinity for the FN(NC), with its close metropolitan links, than for the RPCR, with its more parochial concerns and leadership.

Lafleur has never been able to dispel entirely his image of a materialistic despot, despite active measures taken by him, for example his 1988 defamation suit against FN Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Stirbois, who had remarked that Lafleur was the "godfather of a mafia of racketeers."²⁶ Although there has been some indication of corruption within the RPCR hierarchy (see below), no substantial evidence confirms that Lafleur's French loyalism is motivated more by consideration for the protection of his finances than by patriotism or wider developmental prospects for New Caledonia. Lafleur does hold investments in metropolitan France and in Australia, but if financial considerations formed his sole concern, he would have left New Caledonia years ago. Considering the substantial role his family has played in New Caledonia's politics and economy, and his publicly professed concern for the future of the territory, it is unlikely that Lafleur would leave.

Another cause of differences within the RPCR has been the perceived extent to which the party's leaders have opposed the FLNKS and its independence goals. Compared with statements made in 1984 and 1985, by 1988 there had been a public softening of RPCR opposition to the FLNKS. In 1985 Roger Laroque, then the RPCR's elder statesman, stated categorically that "the FLNKS is an organization that does not have the right to exist."²⁷ At the height of the troubles of late 1984-1985 Jacques Lafleur stated his belief that the FLNKS was a marginal party,

representing only 10-15% of voters, motivated by “a racist, Marxist, Kanak, hateful concept,” and commented that “this country has no desire to become independent.”²⁸ The RPCR’s hardline views at that time led Laroque to advocate armed militias to defend loyalist interests, while Lafleur lent them material support.²⁹

By the time of the Matignon Accords the public attitudes of the RPCR’s leaders had changed considerably. By the middle of 1988 Lafleur was stressing the need for peaceful dialogue with the FLNKS; he complimented Jean-Marie Tjibaou for his responsible attitude in negotiations. Lafleur claimed on 25 June 1988 that his personal desire for negotiations with the FLNKS was that of the RPCR in general: “The RPCR has agreed to conduct a dialogue . . . everyone agrees about having dialogue, but that doesn’t mean they’ll accept any old thing.”³⁰ This statement was made only a month after RPCR militants demanded during the hostage incident on Ouvéa (22 April to 5 May 1988) that FLNKS leaders be arrested and their party outlawed. This incident involved the murder and abduction of French gendarmes by Kanak independence activists. Such militancy does not dissolve in a matter of weeks, and it is questionable whether Lafleur did command the total support of the RPCR at that stage. Privately, conservatives within the RPCR may have objected to Lafleur’s wish for dialogue with the FLNKS, but there was no public indication of any challenge to his leadership of the RPCR.

Justin Guillemard, who by 1988 was no longer an RPCR representative, spoke out against what he saw as the RPCR’s “shameful capitulation” and “pseudo-dialogue,” as he described it to the Territorial Congress on 20 September 1988. Haranguing the RPCR councillors present, Guillemard claimed that the Matignon Accords had “shared out political and economic power between the politico-racketeers [the RPCR] on one hand, and the terrorist assassins [the FLNKS] on the other hand, supposedly for ten years, a time lapse that will allow you to carry out some good and juicy deals!”³¹

It later became clear that not all RPCR voters were convinced of the need for dialogue with the FLNKS. In spite of the RPCR’s public support of the Matignon Accords, in the referendum on the accords in November 1988, five southern *communes* voted overwhelmingly against them. Not only did these five *communes* include Bourail and Dumbéa, centers of RPCR dissent where Justin Guillemard and Bernard Marant³² respectively were prominent, but also Nouméa itself, the cornerstone of the RPCR’s support. In Nouméa, 63.7% of the voters rejected acceptance of the Matignon Accords. 56.4% did so in Mont-

Dore, 53.0% in La Foa, 79.3% in Farino, 65.9% in Dumbéa, and 56.3% in Bourail. Fortunately for the RPCR, such opposition did not command majority support, either in New Caledonia, where 57% of the overall vote supported the accords, or in metropolitan France, where 80% of voters favored them.³³

Overall, although opposition within the RPCR has prompted the occasional dispute with outspoken figures such as Marant, Guillemard, and Leleu, dissent within the party has not adversely affected its progress. *Broussard* interests, while arguably still not satisfied under the Matignon Accords, are not significant enough for the Nouméan-based RPCR to alter its outlook. Urban dissent has also failed to articulate itself in a form that would pose any major threat to Lafleur's leadership. Lafleur has managed to lead the RPCR away from its former hardline opposition to the independence movement into a period of formal conciliation and dialogue with the FLNKS under the Matignon Accords without upsetting the RPCR's electoral dominance of New Caledonian politics.

Of greater electoral importance to the RPCR (and damaging to its reputation as a multiracial party) has been its loss of some Wallisian electoral support to the UO (Union Océanienne; Oceanic Union). The UO was formed in May 1989 to represent the interests of Wallis and Futuna Islanders living in New Caledonia. Wallisians have overwhelmingly supported conservative European parties in past years, most significantly the RPCR since 1978. The UO's formation is claimed by its leaders to be a result of dissatisfaction with the RPCR's lack of assistance to the Wallisian community (see below). Younger Wallisians in particular feel resentment over the RPCR's past tendency to take Wallisian support for granted and have decided to respond by following their own party.

The Extreme Right

The two main parties of the extreme right in New Caledonia, the FN(NC) and the FC, are essentially marginal in terms of loyalist electoral support. Nonetheless, they are both worth examining for their loyalist criticisms of the RPCR from the right and for their ability to exert an occasional influence on local politics out of all proportion to their size.

The FN(NC) was formed in May 1984 with the help of the metropolitan French FN. Initially led by Pierre Guillemard (no relation to Justin Guillemard), the FN(NC) started with only a few dozen members, but

rapidly gained further support. In the June 1984 elections for French representatives to the European parliament, the FN obtained 16% of the New Caledonian vote, exceeding the 11% of the vote the FN gained in metropolitan France. The FC lent support to the FN, which swelled its vote.³⁴

Like the RPCR, the FN(NC)'s voter support has consistently been based in Nouméa where, by no coincidence, the majority of metropolitan French in the territory live. In the Territorial Assembly elections of November 1984 (see Table 4), the FN(NC), under the campaign title *Paix, Fraternité, Liberté* (Peace, Fraternity, Liberty), obtained 1,369 votes in the *commune* of Nouméa. These votes formed 57.5% of its 2,379 total, spread over all three regions of the Grande Terre. The FN(NC) achieved 77.2% of its total support (1,838 votes) in the South Region, with negligible support elsewhere--a mere 376 votes in the West Region and 165 votes in the East Region. No FN(NC) electoral list was presented in the Loyalty Islands, probably due to a combination of the party's racist image and the islands' exclusively Melanesian population. Roger Galliot, the FN(NC) mayor of Thio, was elected to the Territorial Assembly. Nonetheless, only 65 votes were cast for the FN(NC) in Thio itself, compared with 353 for the RPCR. The FLNKS's boycott of the election encouraged greater electoral success than the FN(NC) would otherwise have achieved, as extreme right-wing voters were able to vote for right-wing minority parties without splitting the loyalist vote to the advantage of the FLNKS. Such support for the FN(NC) also sent a message to RPCR leaders that some of the loyalist electorate were dissatisfied with their leadership.

From its earliest days the FN(NC) stood to the right of the RPCR's comparatively mainstream conservatism. The FN(NC)'s formation, like that of the FLNKS some months later, was a consequence of New Caledonia's increasing political polarization over independence. Unlike the RPCR's more autonomous relationship with the metropolitan French RPR, the FN(NC) is subordinate to the FN. The views of the FN's leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, have had an important influence on the FN(NC). A good example of this influence concerns François Néoéré's resignation from his post as the FN(NC) secretary-general in January 1986, after the circulation of a letter by Le Pen questioning the presence of a Melanesian in such a prominent position within the party. The FN(NC) had appointed Néoéré in 1984, partly as an attempt to dispel the FN's racist reputation. Connell suggests that Le Pen's desire to expel Néoéré was due not to any deficiency in fulfilling his responsibilities as secretary-general but to Le Pen's own racism.³⁵ Néoéré's previous alle-

giances to various parties across a range of the political spectrum may also have counted against him, in Le Pen's view.

Likewise, in its total opposition to greater autonomy for New Caledonia, the FN(NC) has followed the political line of its parent party. Proposals for change in New Caledonia's administrative structure and status--such as the French Socialist government's Pisani/Fabius Interim Statute of 1985, the Chirac government's Regionalized Autonomy Statute of 1987, and the Matignon Accords--have all met with a negative response from the FN(NC). This stance is the FN(NC)'s major policy difference from the RPCR, and it became more pronounced as the RPCR moved to support administrative reform in New Caledonia in the late 1980s. Both the FN(NC) and the RPCR stood united on the right in their opposition to the Socialist Pisani/Fabius Interim Statute. There was no such unity of views in their responses to the Regionalized Autonomy Statute: the FN(NC)'s total opposition was not shared with the RPCR, which broadly supported the statute, although it expressed certain reservations to Chirac's RPR/UDF coalition government. In its opposition to the Matignon Accords in 1988, the FN(NC), like the RPR, was at odds with the RPCR's support for dialogue with the FLNKS under the new French Socialist government.

From its inception the FN(NC) has vigorously opposed the FI/FLNKS and has criticized the RPCR for allegedly weak opposition to Kanak independence. In January 1985 Roger Galliot accused the FLNKS of being in league with the Eastern bloc: "Our adversaries [the FLNKS] don't want a decolonization, but a transfer of colonization towards the countries of the East." Even more remarkable was Néoéré's assertion at the same time that Lafleur supported Kanak socialist independence.³⁶ Néoéré based this claim on the assumption that Lafleur's financial interests would profit from an independent Kanaky. Like some other people within the RPCR, Néoéré felt that Lafleur placed his personal interests ahead of continued links with the French Republic. In 1985 nothing could have been farther from the truth, considering Lafleur's own pointed dismissals of the FLNKS and the considerable amount of money he had spent on the RPCR and operations supporting *broussard* communities.³⁷ By 1989 such a claim seemed more plausible to some loyalists, given the unprecedented amount of RPCR dialogue with the FLNKS and Lafleur's sale of the SMSP to the FLNKS-governed North Province, a sale financed by the French state. The high levels of opposition expressed to the Matignon Accords in the referendum of November 1988 in the *communes* of Nouméa, Mont-Dore, Farino, La Foa, Dumbéa, and Bourail were certainly fueled by distrust of RPCR dialogue with the FLNKS.

In the regional elections of September 1985 (see Table 2), the FN(NC) presented only one electoral list, in the South Region. Initially, a list for the Center Region had been put forward too, but this was withdrawn on Le Pen's orders, following his arrival in the territory just days before the elections. His fear was that the FN(NC)'s presence in the regional ballot would split the loyalist vote between the FN(NC) and the RPCR and allow the FLNKS to gain a regional majority. In this instance Le Pen overrode the FN(NC)'s rivalry with the RPCR in the interests of the wider loyalist cause. Despite their earlier anti-RPCR polemics, FN(NC) leaders followed his wishes, suggesting that they were not as entrenched in their views as might have been believed earlier. Even so, the FLNKS gained 5,434 votes in the Center Region, and the RPCR obtained 5,003 votes. As a result, the FLNKS gained five of the region's nine seats, while the RPCR held the other four.³⁸

In the South Region, once more the overwhelming majority of the FN(NC)'s support came from Nouméa. Of the party's total of 5,263 votes, 75.4% (3,970) came from the *commune* of Nouméa. This gained the FN(NC) three seats in the South Region, consolidating its earlier support in the Nouméa *commune*. In the South Region, the FN(NC) was mainly competing with the RPCR for votes, as the FLNKS secured only 7.2% of the regional vote (2,820 votes). The FN(NC) aimed to attract loyalist European voters, rather than Melanesians, for whom the party's image held little appeal.

The FN(NC) showed further capacity for cooperation with the RPCR during the French legislative elections of March 1986: it combined with the RPCR to contest the elections with a joint electoral list, displaying a level of cooperation unlikely to eventuate in metropolitan France between the FN and the RPR. These elections, like those of September 1985, demonstrated that both parties could, if they wished, find common ground. When faced with an urgent need to present a united front against the independence movement, loyalist parties can coalesce and work together.

The FN(NC) continued to gain electoral support in 1988, and during that year it became increasingly hostile towards the RPCR over that party's signature of the Matignon Accords. The regional elections held on 24 April 1988--and disrupted by an active FLNKS boycott, which forced the closure of thirty-eight rural polling offices--were the FN(NC)'s most successful. These regional elections were contested under the framework of the Chirac government's Regionalized Autonomy Statute of 1987. This statute redrew the regional boundaries of 1985 eliminating the Center and North regions through the creation of East and West regions on the Grande Terre. The FN(NC) campaigned

without its former level of cooperation with the RPCR. The absence of the FLNKS from the polls, as in the territorial elections of November 1984, allowed loyalist voters to support the minority parties of the extreme right without fear of eroding the RPCR's electoral power relative to the FLNKS. For the first time the party ran lists in all four regions. In the South Region, the FN(NC) gained 23.6% of the vote (7,329 votes), sufficient to obtain five of the twenty-one seats. The party also polled well in the West Region, gaining 28.6% of the vote there (3,275 votes) and winning three of the nine seats. This support for the FN(NC) was evidence of a right-wing protest vote against the hostage incident, which was then unfolding on Ouvéa, against FLNKS militancy in general, and against the RPCR's response to the situation.³⁹

The FN(NC)'s success in the West Region can partly be attributed to Justin Guillemard's presence at the head of the party's list there. In Bourail he obtained 41.8% of the *commune's* votes, as opposed to the trifling 2.1% (or 28 votes) gained by the FN(NC) there in November 1984.⁴⁰ The absence of the FLNKS from the elections was also an important contribution, allowing *broussards*, like loyalists in the South Region, to vote for the FN(NC) without concern for the consequences of splitting the loyalist vote.

The FN(NC) was also perceived as having won a victory over the RPCR in the national referendum on the Matignon Accords in November 1988. After the referendum it appeared that FN(NC) councillor Bernard Herpin's earlier insistence that the accords had surrendered New Caledonia to the "murderous folly of the FLNKS" had been accepted by a substantial portion of the loyalist electorate.⁴¹ That majority opposition to the accords was expressed in RPCR strongholds such as the *communes* of Nouméa and Mont-Dore was assumed to indicate rejection of the RPCR's cosignature to the accords and support for the FN(NC)'s opposition to them. Guy Georges, the FN(NC) secretary-general, expressed the party's hope that the French Socialist government would overturn the accords in light of the referendum results and renegotiate them with non-RPCR loyalist parties involved as well. It was highly unlikely that the RPCR, the FLNKS, and the French Socialist government would redefine the Matignon Accords to satisfy a marginal, extremist formation such as the FN(NC), particularly when the referendum's overall results indicated majority support for the accords.

But such success as the FN(NC) experienced was only temporary, and did not lead to the party becoming a major loyalist force. Factional disputes hindered its development. Bernard Marant joined forces with FN(NC) dissident Matelot Dubois to form CD (Calédonie Demain;

Caledonia Tomorrow). Dubois, a former territorial councillor, president of the Territorial Union of Cattle Breeders, and a major landowner, had fallen out with the FN(NC). The cause of Dubois's departure from the FN(NC) was reputedly a brawl with Camille Fournier, an FN(NC) representative and local novelist. Marant led the CD list in the South Province in the provincial elections in June 1989 (see Table 3), while Dubois led the party's list in the North Province. CD polled 5.1% of the territorial vote, with 6.9% of the votes in the South Province (2,751 votes), 2.4% in the North Province (361 votes), and 1.3% in the Loyalty Islands (107 votes). CD gained two seats in the South Province.

Bernard Marant stated that CD would push back all "systematic opposition" to French loyalism by figuring among "the natural allies of the RPCR."⁴² It might legitimately be asked why CD did not join the RPCR and thereby contribute more effectively to the loyalist cause. The answer lies in the personal animosities that existed between Marant and the Nouméan RPCR hierarchy. Cooperation with the RPCR was out of the question, considering that Marant had just won a major personal victory against the party in the municipal elections of March 1989. The RPCR had presented Dick Ukeiwé as its mayoral candidate for Dumbéa. Marant successfully opposed this challenge to his local preeminence by obtaining 51.1% of the local vote. This was an important indication of local loyalist dissatisfaction with the RPCR, particularly after Lafleur had warned that if Ukeiwé failed to win the Dumbéa mayoralty, it would be regarded as "a break with me."⁴³ While Marant could agree with the RPCR's political opposition to independence, he was not prepared to abandon his autonomy to the RPCR.

While CD gained two seats in the South Province in June 1989, the FN(NC) lost two, leaving it with only three. The FN(NC) gained 9.7% of the vote (3,860 votes) in the South Province. In the North Province it obtained 2.3% (344 votes). The party's total support was 6.6% (4,204 votes) of the territorial vote. This decline marked a return to pre-1988 levels of support, and the FN(NC)'s electoral significance was reduced, being largely confined to Nouméa. The FN(NC)'s inability to hold its ranks together and its failure to expand by forming a coalition with the FC contributed to this setback.

The RPCR's mobilization for the elections of June 1989 also contributed to the FN(NC)'s diminished vote. The RPCR made a concerted effort to canvass support during the elections, unlike the referendum in November 1988, preceding which the party did not publicly campaign to explain its position because the RPR in metropolitan France opposed the accords. Jacques Lafleur devoted his attention to regaining votes *in*

those southern *communes* where opposition to the Matignon Accords expressed in the November 1988 referendum had been high. Prior doubts about the strength of RPCR support were dispelled in June 1989, when the party gained 43.9% (27,777 votes) of the territorial vote. The loyalist electorate had stood firmly with the RPCR.

Like the FN(NC), the FC had experienced mixed fortunes since its foundation in 1982. Formed by Justin Guillemard, the FC was a break-away group of the PNC (Parti National Calédonien; Caledonian National Party), itself established in January 1982 by Georges Chate-nay, with the support of Guillemard, Rogert Galliot, and Henri Morini.⁴⁴ The PNC claimed to offer a forceful assertion of New Caledonian nationalism, advocating a conservative form of multiracial independence for the territory, led by non-Kanaks. By the end of 1982 Guillemard had successfully won over most of the PNC's supporters after founding the FC. An important exception was Roger Galliot. Guillemard chose to break away from the PNC as the organization had fallen into inactivity, another in a long line of short-lived New Caledonian political groups.

Unlike the FN(NC), with its predominantly Nouméan support, including metropolitan French inhabitants, under Guillemard the FC combined *broussard* interests with those of the metropolitan French and settlers from Algeria living in New Caledonia. The FC strongly opposed land reform and made threats of direct action against the FI for its land claims. The FC also opposed Kanak independence, proposing instead that New Caledonia should receive the less autonomous status of a French overseas department. The notion of departmentalization for New Caledonia had previously attracted a minority following among older leaders in the RPCR, notably Roger Laroque, but support within the RPCR for the concept had dwindled by the time the FC came to advocate it.⁴⁵ Departmentalization is a concept that, by the late 1980s, had fallen out of favor with the RPCR. Lafleur's signature of the Matignon Accords formally signaled the RPCR's support for moderate territorial autonomy.

Guillemard left the FC in 1984, taking his Bourail supporters with him. He had viewed the FC as a pressure group, a focus for rallies and demonstrations of loyalist discontent with reforms advocated by the French Socialist government. He found himself in disagreement with FC members who wished to see the FC compete in local elections as a political party. Claude Sarran assumed the leadership of the FC and led the party in the territorial elections of November 1984 under the campaign title *Renouveau de l'Opposition en Calédonie* (Caledonian Oppo-

sition Renewal). The name was a reaction to the formation of the FLNKS two months earlier: a call for the rallying of loyalist opposition to Kanak independence. Sarran held to policy set under Guillemard and added his own economic views in stressing the importance of a free market economy in New Caledonia. The FC gained substantially fewer votes in the elections than the newly established FN(NC). Sarran led an electoral list in the South Region alone and gained a mere 732 votes, 1.9% of a territorial vote diminished by abstentions enforced by the FLNKS (see Table 4). This was little to show for two years' presence on the New Caledonian political scene. By February 1985 the FC had only 300 members.

In 1985 the FC raised its public profile and its level of loyalist political credibility as a result of the Thio "picnic." On 17 February 1985 the FC organized a motorcade to the mining center, then occupied by FLNKS militants. Some 400 people, of whom around 170 claimed to be Thio "refugees," crossed the Humboldt Massif to the east coast and sparked protests from FLNKS supporters in the Saint Philippe tribe. In the ensuing clashes, several people were injured: gendarmes dispersed participants with tear gas grenades. Media attention to the incident offered Sarran the opportunity to expound his views to the metropolitan French press. He placed the FC to the right of the RPCR, but stated that the FC's members were "extremely legalist" in wanting the stricter application of French Republican law in New Caledonia. It was another way of saying that he felt the French Socialist government had been treating the FLNKS too leniently.⁴⁶

Edgard Pisani, New Caledonia's high commissioner at the time, did not concur with Sarran's view that the FC's members were "extremely legalist," and he ordered that Sarran, three other FC leaders, and one sympathizer (Emile Lebargy, president of the local parachutists' association), be deported from the territory. The FC leaders went into hiding for several months. Lebargy pleaded for clemency and was allowed to stay in New Caledonia. After the FC leaders refused an RPCR offer of safe passage to Tahiti, the RPCR publicly lent support to them through a public rally in Nouméa.⁴⁷

The Thio "picnic" backfired on the FC. With Sarran hiding until July 1985 from the French authorities (who made little effort to catch him), the party did not succeed in mobilizing for the regional elections in September 1985. In the municipal elections in January 1986 the FC was able to gain 10% of the Nouméan vote, but was still far from achieving a broad loyalist support base.⁴⁸

The FC managed to make limited electoral progress during the rest of

the 1980s. In the regional elections of April 1988, which were boycotted by the FLNKS, the FC gained two seats in the South Region, the only region in which the party presented candidates. The FC's total was 9.2% (2,916 votes) of the vote, a considerable gain by comparison with the territorial elections of November 1984, yet substantially less than the FN(NC)'s level of support in 1988. Even this achievement proved to be short-lived. In the provincial elections of June 1989 (see Table 3), the FC's losses were heavier than the FN(NC)'s. The FC lost both of its seats in the South Province, obtaining only 4.1% (1,611 votes) of the vote there. This figure represented only 2.6% of the territorial vote. Once again, the South Province was the only area where the FC offered an electoral list.⁴⁹

It may seem surprising that the FN(NC) and the FC have not formed a coalition in order to broaden their support. Both parties stand on similar ideological ground in their opposition to increased territorial autonomy, stressing the importance of retaining close ties with the French Republic to a greater degree than the RPCR. For this reason, both the FN(NC) and the FC oppose the Matignon Accords and criticize the RPCR's signature of them. They feel that the RPCR's undertaking of reconciliation and cooperation with the FLNKS, prior to a self-determination referendum in 1998, poses unnecessary risks to New Caledonia's maintenance of strong links with France. The RPCR's opening of cooperation with the FLNKS is seen as a weak, and potentially dangerous, centrist concession.

Both the FN(NC) and the FC have also criticized corruption alleged to involve the RPCR. Such criticisms allow FN(NC) and FC leaders to claim for themselves a patch of moral high ground over the RPCR, whence they can pronounce upon the unscrupulousness of its leaders. FN(NC) and FC leaders' criticisms of the RPCR's signature of the Matignon Accords exude a similar moralistic tone, permitting them to proclaim themselves more loyalist than the RPCR. In 1987 Guy Georges, the FN(NC) secretary-general, described the RPCR's administration of the Agence de Développement et d'Aménagement Foncier (ADRAF; Rural Development and Land Management Agency) as "a permanent scandal," accusing its RPCR managers of corrupt administration. This occurred two years before François Asselineau, a French inspector-general of finances, officially confirmed RPCR mismanagement of the agency, in September 1989. Similarly, in April 1989 Claude Sarran demanded that the West Region's budget of 22 December 1988 be annulled due to the misappropriation of funds by RPCR councillors. His claims were supported by the findings of a French government commission, but were rejected by a Nouméan administrative tribunal.⁵⁰

The FN(NC) and the FC have displayed the capacity to work together on occasion: their joint Armistice Day protest on 11 November 1989 is one example. But despite their common ground, they remain apart, probably more due to the temperamental differences of their leaders than for ideological reasons. Without a coalition the FC has remained stalemated as a poor second to the FN(NC) in voter support.

By the end of the 1980s the FC, like the FN(NC), had still failed to capture a significant and stable share of the loyalist vote. Both parties have found that, electorally, most loyalists prefer to support the RPCR in opposing the independence claims of the FLNKS. In elections boycotted by the FLNKS, the FN(NC) and the FC have enjoyed higher voter support than they would otherwise have gained, as loyalist voters lodged protest votes against the RPCR by supporting the minority parties of the extreme right. But both are far from presenting an electoral threat to the RPCR's majority support. As a result, these two extreme right-wing parties have yet to break out of mere fringe politics. In absence of a major decline in loyalist support for the RPCR, their future role will be that of pressure groups to the right of that party.

Wallisian Dissent

A group that has greater potential to undermine significantly the RPCR's predominance in New Caledonia is the territory's Wallisian community. Wallisians form the third largest ethnic group in New Caledonia (see Table 1). Their presence in the territory has been politically contentious for Kanaks. The FLNKS has proposed criteria for electoral eligibility that would exclude recent immigrants from voting and from residency in any future Kanaky. Wallisian immigrants have been regarded by Kanaks as intruders, introduced by the French government in league with local loyalist politicians in order to flood New Caledonia with cheap labor and tip the electoral balance in favor of loyalist opinion. Since the arrival of Wallisians in the 1950s, when they found employment in public works programs and the construction of the Yaté dam, considerable racial tension has intermittently existed between local Melanesians and these Polynesian immigrants. The permanent settlement of these islanders, to the point that their number in New Caledonia is now greater than in their home islands, has been an important source of this tension. For example, in 1980 the territorial administration proposed the reallocation of an estate near Dumbéa to Wallisians for settlement. Madame Pidjot led an FI campaign against the proposal and claimed the land in question for various dispossessed clans. The administration eventually abandoned the reallocation amid rising

racial hostility between Kanaks and Wallisians, which culminated in a sizeable brawl in Nouméa.⁵¹

It has been suggested that this incident was part of a larger plan by the territorial administration to use Wallisian settlements as "barriers" against Melanesians. Jean Guiart cites the establishment of Wallisians in lots around the outskirts of Nouméa, the building of a Wallisian village at Thio on land claimed by Melanesians, and a Wallisian settlement at Houaïlou adjacent to the Nédivin tribe as other examples of the provocative strategic location of Wallisians.⁵² Whether the choice of these locations really was a conscious plot, the result of thoughtless planning, or occurred for want of other options is open to question, but such settlements are undeniable sources of tension. With those Europeans who fled Thio in 1985 following its occupation by FLNKS activists were several hundred Wallisians who were unenthusiastic about the prospect of remaining with Kanak militants roaming the area. They felt just as threatened by the presence of Kanak militants as did Thio's Europeans.

In the past, Wallisians have been stereotyped by Kanaks supporting independence as being easily led by local European conservative leaders. The employment of a small number of Wallisians in the 1980s as bodyguards and in anti-independence demonstrations by the RPCR has done much to confirm this characterization. However, Wallisian participation in loyalist party politics extends more deeply than these activities. Local conservative parties sought Wallisian votes as far back as the early 1970s. In 1972 EDS and the MLC (Mouvement Libéral Calédonien; Caledonian Liberal Movement) supported the election of New Caledonia's first two Wallisian representatives into the Territorial Assembly. Since then, with the exception of ETE (Ensemble Toutes Ethnies; All Ethnic Groups Together), a loyalist party aimed specifically at non-European minority groups between 1976 and 1978, Wallisians have mainly voted for loyalist European parties, in particular for the RPCR. In general, Wallisians have viewed the RPCR, with its reputation as a multiracial party, as the political group that best serves Wallisian interests within New Caledonian society. Having no great agricultural holdings in New Caledonia, Wallisians are dependent on RPCR employers in local government and elsewhere for work.

Since the mid-1980s, however, there have been indications that Wallisians are increasingly searching for their own political voice, a search that has involved a drift away from the RPCR. The first sign of differences between the RPCR and its Wallisian supporters came in 1982, when Petelo Manuofiua, the RPCR's only Wallisian representative in the Territorial Assembly, resigned from the party to become an indepen-

dent. UF (Uvea mo Futuna; Wallis and Futuna) was formed for the municipal elections of March 1983. The Wallisian list in Nouméa gained 464 votes (2.4%). In November 1984 UF contested the territorial elections. Led by Kalépo Muliava, the party aimed to serve Wallisians more specifically than the RPCR had done, while still adhering to loyalist principles. UF placed candidates only in the South Region, where its demographic support was concentrated. It gained a mere 566 votes (1.4% of the total).⁵³ At that time Wallisians still preferred the broader electoral appeal of the RPCR, and there was pressure to vote for the RPCR during the FLNKS's boycott of the elections.

Between 1984 and 1989 there is little evidence of independent Wallisian political party organization. The check experienced by UF in 1984 may well have dissuaded further action. That situation changed remarkably following the creation of the UO in May 1989. Although led by the same Kalépo Muliava, the UO was much more radical than UF in that the party did not align itself with the RPCR's loyalist goals. Instead, Muliava proclaimed the UO's "cultural cousinage with the Kanaks." Under the tutelage of the RPCR, he claimed, the Wallisian community "hasn't advanced an inch in ten years. We are as marginalized as the Kanaks." With a Wallisian unemployment rate of 50%, only two Wallisians in the territorial administration, and the Wallisian community's lack of representation at the Matignon negotiations, Muliava's faith in the RPCR had dissipated. He attacked the RPCR's electoral clientelism of Wallisians through its patronage of Wallisian custom authority and its use of Wallisian youths as RPCR bodyguards.⁵⁴

Bluntly stated, Muliava's views contained a plausible assessment of the status of the Wallisian community in New Caledonia. In the provincial elections of June 1989, the UO succeeded in gaining relatively widespread support, considering its then recent formation and the electoral conservatism of the Wallisian community. The UO won two of thirty-two seats in the South Province, ironically the same number held by Wallisian representatives in the territory in 1972. The UO's total support was 2,429 votes, or 6.1% of the votes in the South Province (see Table 3). Assuming that only Wallisians voted for the UO, this totaled around 40% of Wallisian suffrage.⁵⁵

In spite of Muliava's death from cancer in August 1989, the UO has remained active. Its secretary-general, Aloisio Sako, visited Paris in January 1990 to put the party's case to metropolitan French leaders. He expressed the UO's dissatisfaction with the Wallisian community's exclusion from the Matignon negotiations as a result of its being "both despised by the RPCR and rejected by the FLNKS." The UO wanted to

be an active partner in the Matignon Accords so that it could further the well-being of its community in the same manner as the FLNKS and the RPCR. Sako held discussions with a wide range of political representatives during his visit; he later commented that the representatives he spoke to made no promises of political action to support UO claims.⁵⁶ Following Sako's visit there have been no moves by the French government to integrate the UO's claims into the Matignon Accords, because Wallisians had no independent political representation when the accords were signed and, like the FN(NC), lack the electoral power to justify a redefinition of the accords.

On 8 and 9 September 1990 the UO held its first party congress in Nouméa, attended by around 200 delegates from its twenty-five "base sections" in the South Province. UO representatives at the congress declared their sense of sharing common political ground with the FLNKS. Three resolutions were affirmed: first, "to pursue with vigor the fight against injustice, racism, and colonialism"; second, "to clearly undertake a true emancipation of the peoples of the territory" (a veiled reference to a redefinition of the Matignon Accords); and third, to attack the RPCR's "classic methods born of arrogance, scorn, exclusion, and racketeering," as well as its policies "based fundamentally on the maintenance of inequalities and colonial structures."⁵⁷

This last resolution offered an indication of the UO's increasing hostility to the RPCR. Michel Héma, the UO's new president and a former leader of the RPCR Wallisian "security force," stated that the UO's followers were no longer averse to Kanak independence. Paul Neaoutyne, the FLNKS president since March 1990, has indicated that the FLNKS is now trying to cooperate with the UO. He declared to *Pacific Islands Monthly* that, although the RPCR and Jacques Lafleur were "trying to break the UO," "we will not let them [the UO] continue to be held hostages by the French and the RPCR against us!"⁵⁸

It is difficult to see how the UO could be held hostage when it is so outspokenly independent, but Jacques Lafleur has opposed the UO's progress. The RPCR's loss of a portion of its Wallisian support has been damaging to its reputation as a multiracial party. On 13 April 1990, on Nouméa's Radio Rythme-Bleu, Lafleur denounced the UO for its "provocative attitude," its "excessive pretention," and its "racism."⁵⁹ The language of his denunciation bears a striking similarity to his pejorative descriptions of the FLNKS in the mid-1980s. At a meeting of RPCR youth at Sarraméa in September 1990, Lafleur declared that UO members should be deported to Wallis and Futuna if they ever use violence to

further their goals. Such actions would ultimately be counterproductive. If the UO were to use violent means, and there is no indication that it wishes to, the party would alienate conservative Wallisians and block any electoral progress it might have gained by soliciting their votes. Any ill-considered punitive response by the RPCR could equally alienate Wallisians who vote for the RPCR and lead to a loss of support.

Lafleur's immediate response to the UO congress consisted of cultivating the support the RPCR retained in the Wallisian community by making goodwill gestures to Wallis and Futuna. Following the UO's first congress in September 1990, a delegation from the RPCR-administered South Province paid a three-day visit to the islands. The delegation held meetings with Wallis and Futuna's political and administrative leaders to discuss the territory's development. Matters discussed included the improvement of air links with New Caledonia, the encouragement of exports to Nouméa, surmounting problems in Wallis and Futuna's health service, and increasing the number of Wallisians receiving technical and professional training in New Caledonia. This was clearly an attempt by the RPCR to maintain Wallisian confidence and to discourage support for the UO by displaying that RPCR patronage was still capable of improving the material situation of Wallisians.⁶⁰

The cause of Lafleur's antagonism to the UO goes beyond disappointment at having lost a portion of the RPCR's Wallisian following. If the UO can obtain the full electoral support of the Wallisian or the wider Polynesian community in New Caledonia, it could tip the vote in the 1998 self-determination referendum. The UO's maintenance of a good rapport with the FLNKS up to 1998 is a necessary precondition to having the UO urge its followers to vote for independence. The RPCR hopes to discourage any increase in the UO's following and to dissuade Wallisians from supporting independence by reasserting the role the RPCR can play in assisting the Wallisian community. It remains to be seen whether the UO can attract a majority of the Polynesian vote, or whether it will still be a significant political force in 1998. Nine years is a long time for a minority party to survive in New Caledonian politics; the UO could fragment or cease to exist altogether before 1998.

Conclusion: RPCR-dominated Plurality

While the RPCR remains the dominant loyalist party in New Caledonia, it has not been the only voice in loyalist politics. Even at the time of high voter polarization in the mid-1980s, when loyalist support coa-

lesced around the RPCR in order to present a strong front against the independence goals of the FLNKS, differences remained evident among New Caledonian loyalists.

One difference centered on the distrust held by *broussards* for the Nouméan plutocracy, which forms the dominant force behind the RPCR. This rural discontent, stemming from *broussard* feelings of social, economic, and political neglect at the hands of the RPCR, found no strong, independent political vehicle in the latter half of the 1980s. At the time of the collapse of the moderate FNSC, prompted by a loss of confidence in its call for dialogue with the Kanak independence movement, rural loyalist voters shifted their support to the right but felt that their interests were not a high priority for the RPCR. *Broussards* form a minority of the loyalist electorate and do not have the numerical strength, as they did in the 1940s, to influence significantly New Caledonia's political landscape. To some extent the FC capitalized on *broussard* dissatisfaction when Justin Guillemard was its leader, but in later years found that its following, like that of the FN(NC), was largely confined to Nouméa.

Urban loyalist dissent in the south, specifically around Nouméa, is numerically stronger than that of the *broussards* and has stronger representation. Its elected representatives, who have voiced the belief that the RPCR's leadership is overly concerned with personal profit, to the detriment of wider loyalist considerations, are not as intransigent as might be assumed. Occasionally vehement rhetoric often obscures the common ground that exists between the RPCR and parties of the extreme right. As has been mentioned earlier, the FN(NC) has seen fit to cooperate with the RPCR and subordinate itself electorally in favor of wider loyalist considerations. Neither is the RPCR completely insulated from the far right. It has accepted major figures from the extreme right into its ranks, such as Justin Guillemard after he left the FC, and Morini, with his MOP and PNC associations. The fact that Guillemard's FC and Morini's MOP were movements, rather than formal political parties, facilitated their membership in the RPCR. However, the boundary between the RPCR and the groups and parties of the far right is difficult to delineate. It shifted closer to the RPCR in times of confrontation with the FLNKS in the mid-1980s, when Lafleur was willing to give financial assistance to rural militias and to see Morini appointed as head of the RPCR's "security force" (see nn. 37, 44). In less tense times, following the adoption of the Matignon Accords, the boundary has shifted away from the RPCR, as it came to prefer dialogue rather than confrontation with the FLNKS.

Such shifts are more indicative of tactical differences between the RPCR and the far right than of an ideological gulf. The RPCR has resolved to follow the Matignon Accords as the surest path to maintaining New Caledonia's presence within the French Republic, in the belief that if the Melanesian population receives sufficient development funds under the accords, the demand for Kanak independence will diminish. The RPCR shares with the far right an opposition to the concept of Kanak independence, but differs with the far right over the means by which that opposition will be successfully conducted.

The power of the FN(NC) and the FC does not seem likely to grow unless the Matignon Accords experience some major upset that would cause loyalists to lose confidence in the RPCR; for example, the election of a French government hostile to the accords. The potential threat the rise of the UO has posed has been of more immediate concern to the RPCR. If Polynesian voters joined with Kanaks to vote for independence in 1998, this could tip the electoral balance in favor of independence. New Caledonia's Asian minorities might also have some influence on the 1998 self-determination referendum. In the past, they have avoided any great commitment to politics, but if the prospect of independence became likely, some Asians might seek dialogue with the FLNKS, following the UO's example. However, such comments should be regarded as speculation. In the past, much similar theorizing concerning the prospects of Kanak independence has been proved wrong.

NOTES

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Translations into English of French sources have been provided by the author. All Melanesian and Polynesian names in the text retain their French spellings.

1. See John Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky? The Political History of a French Colony* (Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1987); Helen Fraser, *New Caledonia: Anti-colonialism in a Pacific Territory* (Canberra: Peace Research Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1988); Claude Gabriel and Vincent Kermel, *Nouvelle-Calédonie: la révolte kanake* (Paris: La Brèche, 1985).

2. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 445.

3. For example, in *communes* (districts) such as the islands of Maré, Lifou, and Ouvéa in the Loyalty Islands, where the population is over 98% Melanesian, the RPCR has repeatedly gained support. In the territorial elections of November 1984 (see Table 4), which were boycotted by the FLNKS, the RPCR obtained 29.8% of the vote on Maré, 81.6% on

Lifou, and 73.3% on Ouvéa. In the September 1985 regional elections (see Table 2), the RPCR gained 32% of the vote on Maré, 17.7% on Lifou, and 34.3% on Ouvéa (Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 326, 362-363). In the provincial elections of June 1989 (see Table 3), the RPCR gained 33.9% of the overall vote on the Loyalty Islands (*Le Monde*, 13 June 1989, 9).

4. See Alastair Cole and Peter Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections since 1789*, 3d edition (Aldershot, England: Gower 1989).

5. Throughout this article the initials FN(NC) are used to distinguish the New Caledonian National Front from the metropolitan French FN (Front National; National Front).

6. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 323.

7. Institut Territorial de la Statistique et des Études Économiques, *Images de la population de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Principaux résultats du recensement 1989* (Nouméa, 1989), 11.

8. *Ibid.*, 12, 22-23.

9. See Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 141, 142, 222. Cf. Jean Guiart, *La terre est le sang des morts. Nouvelle-Calédonie du passé au présent* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1985), 235.

10. *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 5 October 1983; Association Fraternité Calédonienne, *Nouvelle-Calédonie: combat pour les droits de l'homme 1981-1984* (Nouméa, 1984), 54.

11. Jean-Paul Besset, *Le dossier calédonien. Les enjeux de l'après-référendum* (Paris: Editions la Découverte, 1988), 97.

12. Jacques Lafleur is the largest individual landholder in New Caledonia; see Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 136. Lafleur's nephew Frederic used to own *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, the territory's only newspaper. His other nephew, Henri, his son Pascal, his daughter Isabelle and his wife control various of his companies. For a detailed description of Lafleur's investments, see "L'empire Lafleur," *Le Point*, 19 December 1988, 81-86.

13. Besset, *Le dossier*, 37.

14. Jean-Claude Guillebaud, *Un Voyage en Océanie* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1980), 125.

15. *Le Monde*, 17 October 1990, 1.

16. *Le Monde*, 19 April 1990, 10; 20 April 1990, 7; 24 April 1990, 9.

17. *Le Monde*, 7-8 June 1987, 6.

18. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 343-344.

19. Lionel Duroy, *Hienghène, le désespoir calédonien* (Paris: Barrault, 1988), 249.

20. Guillemard is notable for his active links with a number of loyalist political groups. A *métis* (half-caste), Guillemard's support is based in and around Bourail. He has been involved with the RPCR since the late 1970s. In 1980 he founded RURALE (Ruraux Unis pour une Réforme Agraire Libérale et Equitable; Rural Inhabitants, United for Liberal and Equitable Agrarian Reform), a *broussard* group opposing Melanesian land claims. He formed the FC in 1982. In 1985 he set up and became president of the CAP (Comité d'Actions Patriotiques; Patriotic Action Committee), a paramilitary reservist formation. After

leaving the FC in 1984 he was an RPCR representative until his expulsion from the party in 1987. Since then he has established links with the FN(NC). Guillemard commented in *Le Monde*, 7-8 June 1987, 6: "Me, I don't defend the fat people, I defend the disadvantaged people, in particular all the *broussards* who sought refuge in Nouméa in 1984 and 1985, who live in the miserable conditions . . . of Saint Quentin [a suburb of Noumea]."

21. *Le Monde*, 27 June 1990, 8.

22. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 329, 355.

23. *Le Monde*, 5 April 1988, 18.

24. *Le Monde*, 3 July 1990, 23.

25. *Le Monde*, 12 May 1990, 8.

26. *Le Monde*, 1 November 1988, 8.

27. *Le Monde*, 21-22 April 1985, 9.

28. *Le Monde*, 6-7 January 1985, 1; 18 November 1984, 10.

29. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 348; cf. n. 37 below.

30. *Le Monde*, 25 May 1988, 11.

31. *Le Monde*, 22 September 1988, 10.

32. The mayor of Dumbéa Bernard Marant, is a former RPCR councillor who left the party in 1987, reportedly over a dispute with Nouméan RPCR councillors about the siting of a municipal golf course. Marant had already upset RPCR leaders in 1986, when he set up in Dumbéa a section of the metropolitan French RPR (Rassemblement Pour la République; Assembly for the Republic). RPCR leaders stand for election to the French National Assembly as RPR candidates.

33. *Le Monde*, 8 November 1988, 8. Stephen Henningham, "Keeping the Tricolor Flying: The French Pacific in the 1990s," *The Contemporary Pacific* 1, nos. 1 & 2 (Spring & Fall 1989): 101-102.

34. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 314.

35. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 370.

36. *Le Monde*, 30 January 1985, 8.

37. Lafleur sold 80% of the SMSP and two properties in Sologne to furnish the RPCR with funds. He also paid for helicopter transport for *broussard* militias in 1984. See *Le Point*, 19 December 1988, 83, 84.

38. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 359.

39. *Le Monde*, 26 April 1988, 36; 27 April 1988, 13.

40. *Le Monde*, 26 April 1988, 36; Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 326.

41. *Le Monde*, 22 September 1988, 10.

42. *Le Monde*, 14 June 1989, 10.

43. *Le Monde*, 14 March 1989, 32; 12-13 March 1989, 11.

44. Chatenay is a lawyer who has been active in New Caledonian conservative politics since the 1950s. Roger Galliot started his political career with the UC, shifted to the centrist FNSC, later joined the RPCR, and in 1982 the PNC. By 1984 he was an FN(NC) representative. In 1979 Henri Morini founded the right-wing extremist MOP (Mouvement pour l'Ordre et la Paix; Movement for Order and Peace). In 1985 he was appointed as head of the newly formed RPCR "security force."
45. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 305, 306. Stephen Henningham, "A Dialogue of the Deaf: Attitudes and Issues in New Caledonian Politics," *Pacific Affairs* 61, no. 4 (Winter 1988-1989): 647-648.
46. *Le Monde*, 19 February 1985, 1; cf. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 347-348.
47. Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 348; *Pacific Islands Monthly*, April 1985, 26.
48. Alain Christnacht, *La Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Notes et études documentaires, no. 4839 (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1987), 57.
49. *Le Monde*, 5 April 1988, 18; 13 June 1989, 9.
50. *Le Monde*, 12 September 1987, 8; 22 September 1989, 10; 15 November 1989, 10.
51. Alan Ward, *Land and Politics in New Caledonia*, Department of Political and Social Change Monograph 2 (Canberra: Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1982), 56-57.
52. Guiart, *La terre*, 281-282.
53. See Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?*, 300, 322, 327; *Le Monde*, 14 March 1989, 32.
54. *Le Monde*, 10 June 1989, 14.
55. *Pacific Islands Monthly*, July 1989, 24; *Le Monde*, 13 June 1989, 9; 14 June 1989, 10.
56. *Le Monde*, 4 January 1990, 7; 2 February 1990, 9.
57. *Le Monde*, 12 September 1990, 10.
58. *Le Monde*, 4 January 1990, 7; 12 September 1990, 10; *Pacific Islands Monthly*, October 1990, 51.
59. *Le Monde*, 14 April 1990, 8.
60. See *Pacific Report*, 13 September 1990.