

With limited farming capital, the village farmers will continue to rely on traditional methods of clearing forested land (shifting cultivation) for better soil and yields. Hence, protected areas have to continue with the threat that at some stage, they could lose some land to cultivation.

Where some parts of national parks have been cultivated and settled, the problem is much more difficult and sometimes dangerous to resolve.

Perhaps the most difficult situation is where permanent settlement and establishments have been created on protected areas — and this is not an uncommon problem in the Pacific.

Naturally, this will mean prosecution under law but one often wonders whether

Similarly, village support for government projects imposed on their land could be at least, temporary, thus making the long-term security and success of such projects doubtful.

Alternatively, national parks and other conservation projects involve modest capital and could be undertaken by village people with technical and professional guidance provided by government.

In this approach, the much needed village support can be counted upon as village rule can be called upon to enforce conservation measures upon village people. Furthermore, the people's suspicious feelings of eventually losing their land to government can be eliminated and the long-term protection of the area is there-

However, the reduction in the number of people to deal with in the protected areas makes the problem easier to handle. Also the identification of farmers working within the protected areas will provide the necessary screen preventing other people from trespassing into the core zone.

### An educational effort

How do we go about getting people's support for a concept that they hardly understand and may require them to give up their hunting rights and access to other commodities which have been available to them for ages?

This is probably the biggest question faced by park managers and administrators in our region.

**Opposite:** In the Pacific there is very little public land. More than 90 percent of the region's native forests are owned at the grass-roots level by local people under traditional tenure systems. For conservation proposals to succeed, they must be adopted by the owners themselves. *Photo: Guy Salmon*

**Right:** The needs of the shifting cultivator or subsistence farmer can conflict with national parks, unless the needs of both are carefully planned and accommodated from the start. *Photo: Rod Hay*

**Below:** In Samoa, decisions about lands and forests are of the highest importance. Such decisions are taken by the chiefs (matai) meeting in the fono, the characteristically Samoan meeting house. *Photo: Guy Salmon*



the law could achieve the best solution which will not only enable the encroacher to agree to settle elsewhere but equally importantly, assure the park managers of his co-operation in future. I strongly feel that the law will badly fail in the latter requirement.

The exercise of Government authority over village lands may create more problems than it can resolve, particularly if such authority should require village people to stop their traditional ways of life.

Where government authority is exercised over village land, the following requirements must at first be assured:

- Funds are available to buy rent/lease or compensate the people for the land.
- Government can count on village support for the undertaking and protection of the parks.
- There is adequate security that the area can be protected in perpetuity.

Whilst some countries may be better off than others, Pacific Island countries are generally faced with considerable difficulties in allocating funds for "non-developmental" projects.

fore assured.

Whatever incentives and benefits offered, it is crucial that village support is assured, and there may be no better way of getting this than letting them have a feeling of belonging and a sense of responsibility of being involved in actually setting up protected areas.

### Accommodating traditional practices

Until educational and promotional programmes are fully under way, it is desirable that serious consideration be given to ways and means of accommodating certain traditional practices within protected areas. This may call for comprehensive research into land capabilities and potential uses. It might be feasible to set up a "core area" for perpetual protection. Other areas can be subjected to other forms of land uses based on the capability of that land.

Naturally such an arrangement will require close supervision and strict adherence on the part of the farmers to restrict their activities within their assigned boundaries, and to conform to certain practices.

In our small island countries with limited land but with high rates of resource depletion, it may be necessary to look at setting up pilot national park areas for demonstration to be backed by extensive educational programmes.

The availability of demonstration projects will make teaching the concept much easier and the effect of incompatible practices easily seen. Educational and promotional programmes are crucial to the sustenance of the people's interest and national acceptance of the concept.

The concept of national parks must not be promoted through trial and error. We have to understand right from the beginning what we need and what we wish to achieve. Thus, the need for demonstration areas becomes critical.

The example set by Western Samoa appears to be slowly working, and it is expected that on-going educational programmes will eventually lead to full acceptance and adoption of the concept.

I believe a desirable goal, in fact, will be to identify and describe a form of national park which is truly "South Pacific".