

6. Independence

The British Solomon Islands Protectorate was proclaimed in 1893, and onwards from 1896 was administered by a Resident Commissioner under the Western Pacific High Commissioner in Suva, Fiji. A small Advisory Council was begun in November 1921, continuing until November 1941, when it was suspended during the Second World War. The Advisory Council was reinstated in October 1945. In 1952, the WPHC headquarters shifted from Suva to Honiara, which meant the Resident Commissioner position was abolished and the High Commissioner became the chairman of the Advisory Council. In the 1950s, regionally based Local Councils began, feeding into the government system and providing a training ground for membership for the national legislative bodies. In 1960, the Advisory Council was replaced by a nominated Executive Council and a Legislative Council.

Various constitutional reforms were made in the 1960s and 1970s to prepare the Protectorate for independence. The Legislative Council included Solomon Islanders as official and unofficial members. The first national elections for the Legislative Council were held in 1965. In 1970, the Legislative Council was replaced by a Governing Council, which was replaced in 1974 by a Legislative Assembly, with an unchanged membership. Self-government was conferred in January 1976, under the leadership of a Chief Minister. The Legislative Assembly was replaced at independence on 7 July 1978 by a 38-seat National Parliament (later enlarged to 50 seats).

The unicameral National Parliament comprises members elected for four-year terms under a first-past-the-post voting system. The Prime Minister is elected by a simple majority of members of the National Parliament. The Speaker of Parliament is elected by the members, although the Deputy Speaker is a member of the House. The Attorney-General is appointed from outside the Parliament. The Governor-General, elected by the members of the Parliament, occupies a vice-regal position representing the British monarch. Party structures in Solomon Islands are fluid, with extensive coalition-building required to form government. In addition to the national government there are nine elected provincial assemblies, each led by a Premier.



6.1. The Solomon Islands National Coat of Arms. (Solomon Islands Government)

6.2. The Solomon Islands National Flag. (Solomon Islands Government)



6.3. Members of the Legislative Council, 1961. (Clive Moore Collection)



6.4. Members of the Governing Council, 1972. (Clive Moore Collection)



6.5. Solomon Islands Delegation to the Independence Constitution Conference, Lancaster House, London, September 1977. (Clive Moore Collection)



6.6. Chief Minister Peter Kenilorea moving the resolution to accept and adopt the Independence Constitution in the Legislative Assembly, April 1978. (Clive Moore Collection)



6.7. Prime Minister Peter Kenilorea being sworn in by Governor-General Baddley Devesi, watched by Attorney-General Donegan, at the Independence Day celebration, Lawson Tama, 7 July 1978. (Clive Moore Collection)

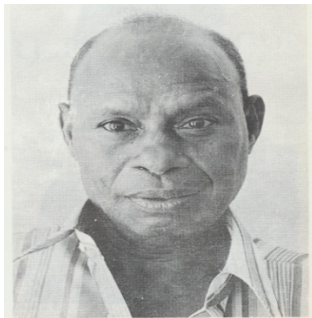


6.8. The first Governor-General Sir Baddley Devesi, 1978. (Clive Moore Collection)



- 6.9. Important leaders from the colonial years were invited guests at the Independence celebrations. One was Pelise Moro (1920s–2006), an important custom leader from the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal. (Solomon Islands Government)
- 6.10. Sir Jacob Vouza (c. 1900–1984), the major Solomon Islands war hero, also attended. He is shaking hands with the new Prime Minister, Peter Kenilorea. (Solomon Islands Government)

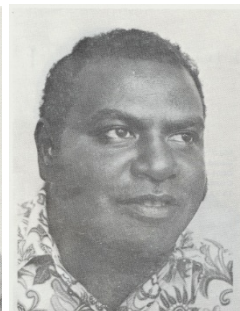
The Thirty-Eight Members of the first National Parliament in 1978



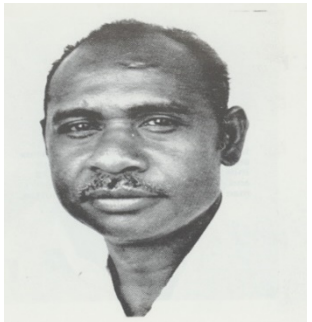
6.11. Matthew Belamtaga



6.12. Waeta Ben



6.13. Geoffrey Beti



6.14. Willie Betu



6.15. Moffat Bonunga



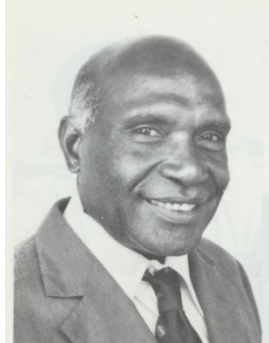
6.16. Jason Dorovolomo



6.17. Remesio Eresi



6.18. Jonathan Fifi'i



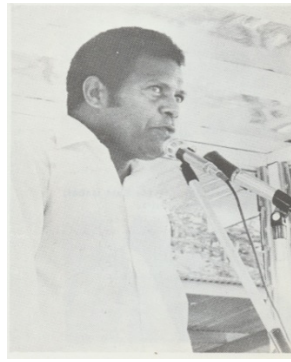
6.19. Colin Gauwane



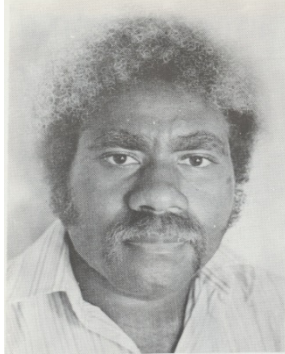
6.20. Pulepada Ghemu



6.21. Francis Billy Hilly



6.22. Daniel Ho'ota



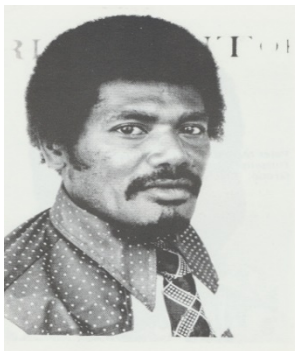
6.23. Philip Kapini



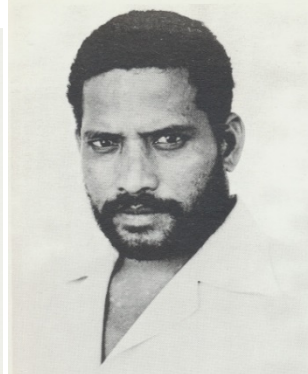
6.24. David Kausimae



6.25. Mariano Kelesi



6.26. Sethuel Kelly



6.27. Johnson Kengalu



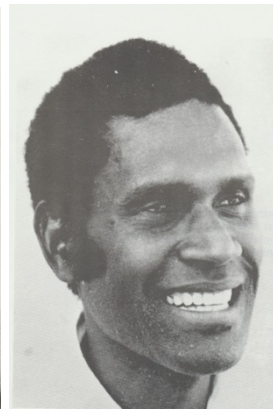
6.28. Peter Kenilorea



6.29. Francis Kikolo



6.30. Benedict Kinika



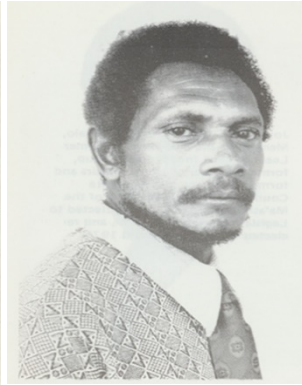
6.31. Andrew Kukuti



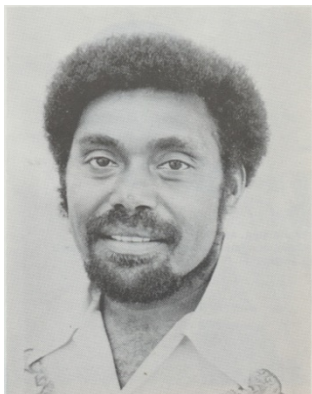
6.32. Peter Manetiva



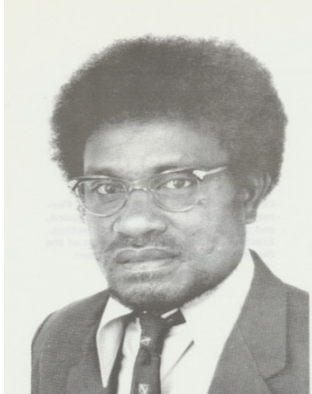
6.33. John Melanoli



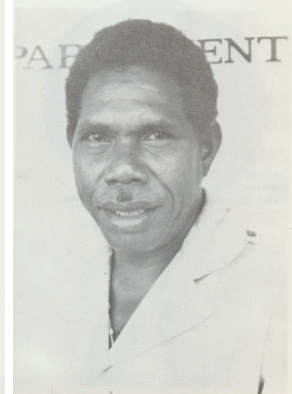
6.34. Emilio Ouou



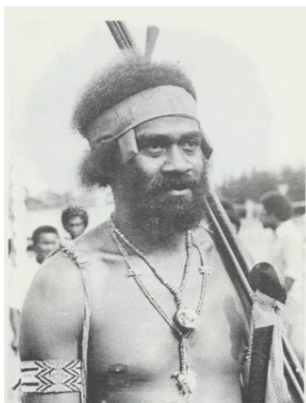
6.35. John Saunana



6.36. Faneta Sirra



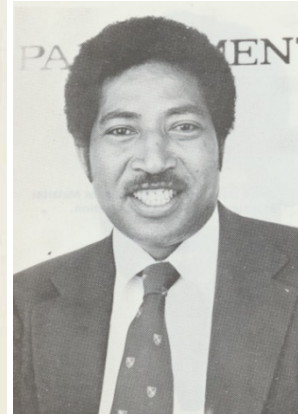
6.37. Joseph Taega



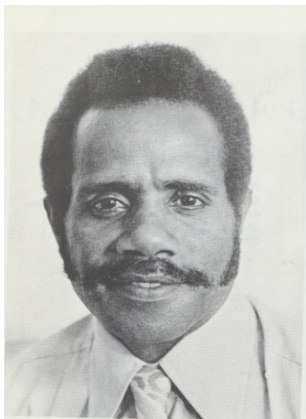
6.38. Alan Taki



6.39. John Talasasa



6.40. John Tapaika



6.41. Henry Tom



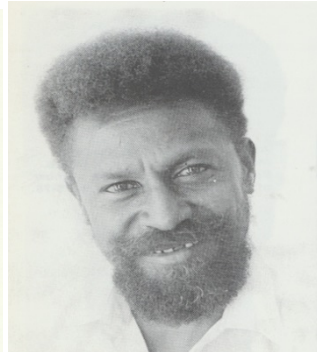
6.42. Paul Tovua



6.43. Ben Tumulima



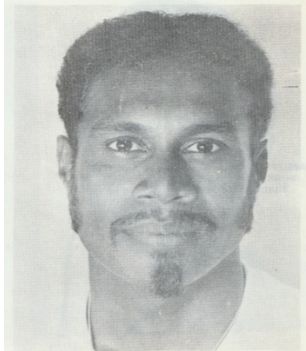
6.44. Bartholomew Ulufa'alu



6.45. David Valusa



6.46. Nathan Wate



6.47. Lawry Wickham



6.48. Dr Gideon Zoleveke

(All of the images of parliamentarians were provided by Solomon Islands Government.)



6.49. Speaker of the new National Parliament, Sir Lloyd M. Gina and Governor-General Sir Baddeley Devesi. (Solomon Islands Government)



6.50. In 1978, Sir Baddeley Devesi was the youngest head of state in the Commonwealth of Nations. He is shown here with his wife June, Lady Devesi, and one of their children. (Solomon Islands Government)