On the Campaign Trail

I am sufficiently behind the scenes to know the worth of political life. I am quite an infidel about it, and shall never be converted.

Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*

*It has been a hard day on the campaign trail.* We began early to reach the remote, rural sugar cane village of Daku in north Vanua Levu at around 10am. The meandering road is a monstrosity, full of boulders and huge potholes as we bump along in a crowded jeep. Nothing much has changed in these parts since I left Labasa 30 years ago: the same sprawling cane fields now slowly creeping up the dry mountain slopes in the distance, rusting iron rooftops barely visible above the cane top, cows and goats grazing among overgrown grass by the roadside, men on cycles or horseback going about their business.

We arrive an hour later to find about a hundred men sitting on wooden benches on the school verandah, smoking, drinking yaqona, talking. These are simple rural folk, prematurely aged sons of the soil with furrowed, sunburnt faces and leathery skin cracked by excessive kava drinking. I grew up among them; I recognise some people in the crowd as my distant relatives whom I haven’t seen for decades. They approach me, introduce themselves, and shake my hand with both of
Mr Tuli's Store

their as a gesture of respect. We move inside. People stub their cigarettes, have one last bowl of yaqona, clear their throats and follow us, sitting at their children’s or grandchildren’s desks.

The meeting starts with the party prayer about unity and peace. Then the speeches begin. The points have been well rehearsed and presented with practised ease. The party’s strength and achievements are contrasted with the alleged weaknesses of the opponents. Subtlety and truth, I quickly realise, are among the first casualties of an election campaign. The crowd is attentive and respectful and in awe of some of the candidates with university degrees from the land of the sahibs in subjects they have never heard of. Such as economics. Supporters of the opposing camp are at the back of the room listening intently, noting points they will refute and rubbish in their own meetings. Some of the older men watch the speakers with a wry smile; they have heard many such speeches full of fire and promise before.

Things have gone well, the candidates say over grog later. The planted questions — such are the tricks of the campaign trade — are fielded with flair. We leave the school for lunch around 3pm at the home of the party’s local branch president. Key supporters have also been invited. We sit on a paal (mat of stitched rough sack covers) on the cold cement floor of the shop verandah. The candidates seek advice, plant ideas, and promise to return. Families of opponents are identified. They will be flooded with propaganda in the weeks ahead, cajoled and coerced into coming on board. Lunch, which we eat with our fingers in a dimly lit kitchen, is delicious piping hot fish and chicken curry. Women who have prepared the meal are behind the curtain in the adjacent room. Cultural protocol in rural areas even now demands that women maintain a discreet distance from strangers. A boy keeps piling our plates with food until we can eat no more. Such touching generosity, such loyalty to the party.

We leave for another meeting in town with full stomachs and fuller bladders. The thought of sitting through another set of thoroughly rehearsed speeches drains the spirit. The local candidate,
recently retired from the civil service and a political novice, promises a
good turnout. Only a dozen or so old men turn up. The speakers go
through the tired routine. A local doctor, defeated in one of the
previous elections, approaches me: he was my father's physician. Why
wasn't he standing? I ask him. The voters are treacherous bastards, he
says loudly. They will drink your yaqona, eat your pulau and vote for
someone else. The doctor is drunk, unsteady, embittered. Stand for
elections? I can't even get this to stand, he says grabbing his crotch
with both hands, a limp cigarette dangling from his lips. I move on to
mingle with others.

The meeting finishes around 10pm as we head for dinner at a
candidate's place in a small rented and still incomplete ground-floor
flat in a nearby suburb. Yaqona is served, but I have had enough.
Miraculously, a bottle of local gin appears. It is rough but effective, and
desperately needed. People review the day and prepare for the next
amidst much banter and relaxed talk. One candidate with poor English
looks worried. When pressed, he turns to me and says, 'Doc, please tell
us how to penetrate the womenfolk.' He was anxious about the
absence of women from the rallies; hardly any had turned up at
meetings that day. I gulp my drink and burst out laughing. Others join
in, even the speaker after he realises his faux pas. But he had a serious
point. Women in rural areas are house-bound, often unlettered and
versed in matters beyond the family and the village, and dominated
by men. Yet they will all vote — voting is compulsory — and each vote
counts. But politics here is a man's game.

More meetings, more speeches, more irregular hours, more
greasy food from sooty kitchens, bladder-bursting marathon yaqona
sessions, and endless cups of sweet syrupy tea in the days and weeks
ahead. Each new audience will demand to hear the candidates, shake
their hands and test them out. No matter how exhausted, the
candidates will dig deep, fake seriousness and make points they have
made a thousand times before as if they were saying it for the first time.
It is a gruelling experience like none other. I marvel at the madness and
the majesty of democracy in action as I travel around the country. I feel strangely enthralled to see a new political culture emerging under a constitution based on the report of the Fiji Constitution Review Commission, of which I was a member. Fiji is back in the Commonwealth and once more receptive to the principles of representative democracy and international human rights conventions. It is so good to see the country moving in the right direction once again.

From coup to constitutionalism within a decade is not a journey many coup-scarred nations have managed to undertake successfully. Fiji’s political transformation is remarkable. So, too, is the transformation of its political leaders. Sitiveni Rabuka, the coup maker of 1987, is fighting the election alongside Jai Ram Reddy, the Indo-Fijian leader most feared and distrusted by the coup supporters, seen as the evil genius behind Dr Bavadra’s victory. Labour leader Mahendra Chaudhry’s coalition partners include the Fijian Association Party whose candidate he had refused to support for Prime Minister in 1992, lending his numbers instead to Rabuka, whom Reddy had opposed. A combination of fate, history and circumstance has produced this strange permutation unimaginable only a few years ago.

Preparations for the elections begin soon after the promulgation of the Constitution in July 1997. Twenty-one parties and nearly 300 candidates are vying for the 71 seats in Parliament. But the main contest is between two coalitions, one led by the Labour Party under Mahendra Chaudhry and the other led by Sitiveni Rabuka and Jai Ram Reddy. The others are minor parties, ephemeral, some with such improbable, entertaining names as Multiracial Dynamic Party, Coin Party, the Party of Truth, the Natural Law Party. Their presence frustrates the main players, but it is the way of the future. Democracy — once dubbed demon-crazy by nationalist Fijians — is alive and well in Fiji.

The campaign has a carnival atmosphere, free of the racial tensions and hostilities of the past. One candidate’s approach captures the mood. He has his campaign slogan written in bold letters on a white cloth wrapped around a dozen cows grazing in scorching sun
along the Queen's Highway. 'It's Time for a Change', the slogan says. 'No Bull'. Poor cows. All major leaders preach multiracialism, which has dampened extremist rhetoric. They have gone through a lot together in the constitution review, and the cross-cultural friendships are evident on the hustings. But inter-coalition rhetoric heats up as the campaign progresses.

Rabuka's record is ridiculed by his opponents who recite a long and dreary list of failed enterprises, scandals, abuse of office and arrogance of power. Labour has rehearsed its lines well: its message is sharp, focused and simple. Rabuka has to go, and with him his partner, Reddy. Fijians regard the SVT leader as a man who has overreached his culturally sanctioned authority and station: he is not duly deferential to his chiefs. Adding insult to chiefly injury, Rabuka, a commoner (albeit an uncommon one), claims he has achieved chiefly status for his accomplishments, as his forebears did in pre-colonial Melanesian Fiji. Moralising opponents point to the Prime Minister's rampant Bill Clinton-style philandering. A local newspaper carries the headline ‘I am not Kama Sutra, says Rabuka,’ reporting an escapade that allegedly took place at the local golf course. The publication is timed for maximum embarrassment: on Easter Friday. But Rabuka escapes serious electoral damage; bed-hopping is a common pastime in Suva these days. An envious Cabinet Minister says to me, only partly in jest, 'How come he gets all the luck!'

Criticism of Rabuka is relentless, unforgiving, hurtful. It is as if he is fair game. No other public figure in living memory has been ridiculed so severely. Some of the criticism is hypocritical. Christian Democratic Alliance leader, Poseci Bune, until recently a public servant and Fiji's permanent representative at the United Nations, accuses Rabuka of corruption, but he himself is the only permanent secretary so far to have been investigated for misuse of office. Other opponents, now self-styled champions of multiracialism, such as Viliame Gonelevu, Apisai Tora, are singled out by Rabuka as his coup-making associates, pricking their politically expedient multiracial
balloons. Some cannot forgive Rabuka for his past sins, for staging the coup which he insists he carried with others’ blessing, and for which he asks forgiveness. He was the fall guy who refused to fall, he tells a meeting at the Girmit Centre in Lautoka. Others condemn him for embracing multiculturalism and betraying the aims of Fijian nationalism.

But if not Rabuka for Prime Minister, then who, ask his supporters and the National Federation Party, which presents him to skeptical Indian audiences as the leader best equipped to take the country into the next millennium. By contrast, Fijian Association’s Adi Kuini Bavadra, the remarried widow of the founding Labour leader Timoci Bavadra is unwell, untested and erratic. Apisai Tora is a serial, record-holding party swapper, having belonged to virtually every party in a career spanning four decades; and Labour’s intellectualising Tupeni Baba is new to politics and considered a lightweight. Rabuka stands tall among them, his supporters argue: a transformed man, a true messiah of multiracialism.

Each party has prepared a manifesto which is carried over the air and in the local dailies. But they are not taken seriously. These are things parties have to have, formalities of a campaign. Manifestos are forgotten the moment voting begins, a veteran politician says to me. The real issues in rural areas are not about high principles but about roads, bridges, water supply, better hospitals, the price of bread, about how many times a politician has visited the area, attended funerals and marriages and donated to local charities. ‘You can’t eat a constitution,’ a man says to me. ‘Anyway, what has the constitution done for me?’ he asks a candidate preaching its virtues. I know how he will vote.

The campaigns have changed in character over the last three decades. In the 1960s, major speeches were given at a few strategic places in theatres, public parks and school compounds. They were grand affairs. Hired musicians sang specially composed songs extolling the party and its leaders. People travelled miles and waited for hours to listen to candidates. A rally was a major event in the local social
calendar. But grand rallies are increasingly becoming a thing of the past. Now, village pocket meetings and intense small group discussions with key individuals are the norm. What is said in these small gatherings, what propaganda and distortion go on, no one knows. Sometimes, major speeches are taped and distributed, which is a godsend to novices who repeat them parrot-fashion without fully understanding their content. Advertisements on air and on television have started, but the pocket meetings remain the prime site for campaigners.

Voters are demanding, and cynical about big promises by big names. They want people like themselves in Parliament, not high-fee lawyers and smooth-talking political salesmen. ‘Campaigning is a demeaning experience,’ one candidate says to me. Voters are easily swayed, he says, they care little about national issues, they are selfish and ungrateful, always seeking the path of least resistance. In Labasa, a rally demands food and drink. One of the dailies reports the people as saying: ‘If they cannot provide refreshment now like other parties are doing, then what will they give us when we vote them into Parliament.’ Voters can be deceptive as well. A Labour strategist tells his supporters to pluck coconuts (Labour symbol) by climbing the branches of the mango tree (Federation symbol). Translation: drink your opponents’ yaqona, eat their food, go through their sheds but vote for Labour. It is effective advice, as many candidates later discover to their cost. Demeaning it might be for candidates, but voters are smarter than most people think.

Campaigns are serious business, but they are also about theatre. People want information as well as entertainment. Politicians know this, and the good ones are good actors. In the Yasawas, a predominantly Fijian constituency, Ratu Eteuate Tavai describes the mercurial character of his opponent Apisai Tora by invoking the image of cooking roti — Indian leavened bread. First you flip the bread on one side, then the other. Flip flop, flip flop: that was Tora. The audience roars with laughter; there is no need after that to say more about Tora’s party. In
Nadi, a candidate talks animatedly about all the things his party would do for the people if he was elected. He would get schools and hospitals built, scholarships for school children arranged, roads repaired, bridges built. All this is too much for a man who has heard big promises before. 'Bhaiya [brother], what's the use of a bridge when we have no river here?' he asks. The candidate replies without missing a beat, 'Well, in that case, I will have a river dug as well.'

At a meeting in Ba, a candidate is grilled about his credentials to stand in the constituency. 'You are from Labasa, your family lives in Australia, you work in Suva, and you are standing from Ba?' he is asked. A fair point. The candidate, thinking quickly, points to a prayer pole flying a red pennant. He asks the questioner if he believed in God. 'Yes' came the reply. Have you ever seen Him? 'No.' But you believe that God hears your prayers and answers your needs? 'Certainly.' The candidate closes the trap. That is exactly right, he says. 'I am like that. You may not see me here but, like the invisible God, I will be looking after you where it really counts, in the corridors of Parliament.' Ripples of laughter sweep the audience, obscuring the larger point about representation and constituency accountability. In Lautoka, a candidate is attacking the leader of the opposing party for being too consistent and inflexible. Consistency, the man says, is not always a virtue. Politics is like fishing. If you fail to catch anything here, you pull up your anchor and move to some place else. You keep shifting your anchor until you get what you want. The audience is rapt until an old man at the back pipes up, 'How would you know, beta [son]. You don't have any anchor at all.'

Humour is a great campaign weapon, but it has to be used judiciously. It should not be used to debase debate or detract from the credibility of the candidate. Voters expect their candidates to be serious, to use sharp language when the occasion demands it. Name calling, character assassination, taunts and jibes all provide spicy grist for the rhetorical mill on the hustings. Usually, religion and culture and ethnicity are not touched, but people have found ways around
them, especially in pocket meetings with like-minded people. ‘Why another when you have your own’ is a code word to vote for a candidate of your own cultural, religious or ethnic group. It is a repeat of the campaign strategies of the 1950s which the Fiji-born used to defeat A.D. Patel, a Gujarati immigrant and not a *girmiгиya*.

Fijian and Indo-Fijian campaign styles differ, sometimes causing friction and confusion in the open seats. Fijian campaigns are a formal affair. Meetings are usually planned for mid-morning. By then many a bowl of yaqona has been drunk. Chiefs and other prominent people sit apart, at the head of the gathering. The conversation is subdued, punctuated by occasional thigh-slapping laughter. There is a hush when the speakers arrive, a slight shuffle of feet. Formal ceremonies invoking ancestral spirits and establishing clan genealogies, welcome them to the occasion. Yaqona flows, hands are clapped, and speeches begin. The points are made in broad terms, the attacks on the opponents indirect and allusive so as not to offend their *vanua*. The voice is not raised: to speak loudly is unchiefly behaviour. So while not much may be said, much is conveyed and discussed over numerous tanoa of yaqona late into the evening.

Indo-Fijian campaigns, on the other hand, reflect the individualistic lifestyle of the community, and an ancient tradition of robust democratic debate. Meetings are full of personal attacks and aggressive verbal jousting. People expect rousing, fiery rhetoric. Couplets from the scriptures and snippets of folk wisdom are enlisted to underline points or close an argument. Much yaqona is drunk, but without ceremony or solemnity. Mixed Fijian–Indian meetings are restrained affairs, good diplomacy triumphing over good argument. Sensitive issues are avoided or raised indirectly. Indians are concerned about the imminent expiry of leases on which generations of their families have lived. Fijian speakers assure them that everything will be resolved through dialogue and discussion. Precisely how and when is left unstated. Indo-Fijians oppose the reversion of state land to native land. Fijians welcome the move for it was, after all, their land before
Europeans came. For Indo-Fijians, state land is state property, to be used for the benefit of all, especially to re-settle displaced tenants. The tension is there, but divisions are smoothed by feel-good talk of racial tolerance, mutual understanding and national unity.

Fijians have long used regional, provincial and confederacy ties for political purposes to mobilise support or raise funds during elections. Indeed, the Constitution provides for the election of 23 Fijians from within provincial boundaries. Provincial sentiments, loyalties and connections are thus effective campaign assets. Ties of blood and kinship matter. People of Lau say openly that they will vote only for the candidates loyal to the Tui Nayau household. That is why the otherwise liked and effective parliamentarian Viliame Cauwabati lost to novice Adi Koila Mara Nailatikau. Parties seek the blessings of leading chiefs in their provinces even though the latter’s actual electoral influence has been waning.

Among Indo-Fijians, cultural and social divisions are not institutionalised. Indenture destroyed caste as the principle of social relationships, replaced in time by other categories of differentiation and association, such as religion (Hindu, Muslim, Arya Samaj, Sanatan, Shia and Sunni) and the regional origins of the migrants (Gujarati, Panjabi, North Indian, South Indian). It was not good form to exploit these divisions in elections, though the selection of candidates often reflected the composition of Indo-Fijian society. In this election, however, culture and religion are exploited as never before. The NFP is a party of the South Indians, Labour rallies are told. It is time to have a North Indian leader of the community, which it is claimed, has always been led by outsiders: A.D. Patel, a Gujarati; Siddiq Koya, a Muslim; Reddy, a South Indian. And that leader is Mahendra Chaudhry. I have no doubt that other groups are using similar tactics among themselves, all at the expense of divisions that will take a generation to heal.

Parties pitch candidates from the same cultural community against each other wherever there is a large presence of a particular
group. You cut steel with steel, a party strategist tells me. Some have it both ways, like a North Indian candidate in Nadi who is married to a South Indian woman: a ‘bhaiya’ among North Indians and an ‘anna’ among the Southerners (brother in Hindi and Tamil respectively). In Tavua, a Muslim Labour candidate is popular in the electorate. A sitting parliamentarian, a good community worker, he will be hard to dislodge. He goes to funerals and attends Ramayan recitals, where he makes small donations, as is appropriate. Ten dollar notes are common. Some Hindus in the rival camp attempt to neutralise his appeal by concocting a totally false, malicious story. This Muslim candidate, they tell people, is laughing behind their backs, telling Muslims how cheap the Sanatanis were, selling their votes for just ten dollars. But justice prevailed; the Muslim candidate won by a landslide.

Rumour, innuendo, outright fabrication, unfounded assertions transformed into unassailable facts right before your eyes, deliberate deception, cutting corners and shading the truth, are all a feature of this campaign. Politics without principles is the sixth sin, Jai Ram Reddy says over and over again, quoting Mahatma Gandhi, frustrated at the manner in which his message is neutralised by the opposition. But many in his own party do not share his view. For them, politics is not about morality or principles, it is about winning. One candidate who studied the history of the Third Reich at university tells me of Goebbels’ philosophy about a lie repeated a thousand times acquiring an aura of truth. He is practising it in this campaign. It’s all politics, he tells me nonchalantly.

Voting has become compulsory in Fiji, which annoys some and confuses others. There is a $50 fine for not voting. A man turns up at a meeting brandishing a fresh $50 note from the bank, saying that he would rather pay the fine than vote for the party in government. ‘Why?’ the candidate asks, perplexed. ‘Because this government has not done anything for the people: the roads are bad, there is no piped water, no electricity,’ the man replies. The candidate says, ‘Why waste money, why not vote for another party?’ ‘Can I do that?’ he asks.
Another man asks his wife which party she would vote for. The one
whose symbol is the tree, she says. The man is pleased, thinking she
would vote for the sprouting coconut tree, symbol of the Labour
Party. But he wants to be absolutely sure, so he returns after a few
minutes and asks her which tree. 'The mango tree, of course,' she
replies, for the NFP. The man says he would rather pay the fine than
'allow' his wife to vote for the 'wrong party'.

Candidates have their own eyes and ears in the electorate, friends,
confidants, hangers-on. Their influence varies depending on their
proximity to the candidate. They make contacts, devise strategy, raise
funds, act as a sounding board. Some are prominent in the community,
either retired or of independent means, who accompany the candidates
and party leaders to meetings, lending prestige and authority to the
occasion. Many are genuine, but some are in it for public recognition
and social prestige. They have their own interests. If their party wins,
they will make their move, asking to be nominated to statutory bodies,
endorsed for municipal council elections, appointed to rural advisory
committees, selected as justices of the peace or, in a few ambitious cases,
appointed to the Senate. There are agendas within agendas, personal
ambitions carefully camouflaged behind party interests and platforms.

At long last, the campaign is coming to an end. The candidates
are exhausted, hoarse. The early enthusiasm has given way to quiet
cynicism about people and politics, about the frustration of reducing
everything to the lowest common denominator, about having to
counteract mischievous lies propagated by their opponents. It is
always the other side, never one's own, that is trimming the truth,
spreading malicious rumours. Campaigning together under intense
pressure, and with so much at stake, has produced friction, criticism
and disenchantment among candidates, and it is beginning to show.
The newcomers have been sizing each other up, forging alliances,
assessing their future prospects and mapping out a route to the top.
But in a few rare instances, the campaign has also enhanced respect
and created friendships which will endure after the dust has settled.
The initial enthusiasm for the coalition arrangement has waned; campaign styles clash, tempers are frayed and disappointment aired to anyone who will listen. In Nadi, an Indo-Fijian open seat candidate complains bitterly about not being able to have direct access to the Fijian voters. She is anxious about how they view her. Her only contact is through a chiefly intermediary, a yaqona-crazed man, who assures her that all the votes are in the bag. He was wrong. ‘I wish we were not in coalition with these fellows,’ she says with resigned anger, but it is too late. Throughout Viti Levu, Indo-Fijian candidates and parties are complaining about how Fijians have approached the campaign. The NFP feels that the SVT is not pulling its weight behind the coalition, and Labour is bitter about Apisai Tora. ‘Everything is set,’ a Fijian campaigner tells a clearly worried Indian candidate, which makes him panic even more. There is urgency, anxiety and the desire to make a last-minute effort to reach the voters on the one side, and a relaxed, she-will-be-alright, we-will-get-there attitude on the other. There are reports of landlords threatening their tenants. In Sabeto, one threatens her Indo-Fijian tenants with eviction if they do not go through her shed and vote for her party. The tenants go through her shed alright, but vote Labour whose candidate defeats the party leader Tora. It is treachery, you might say, but it is sweet treachery: the revenge of the weak and helpless against the threats of the rich and powerful.

The last few days of the campaign are like the last stage of writing a thesis. All the ideas have been canvassed, research completed, points made. It is now about getting the niggly details right, the footnotes checked, the glossary prepared. It is the same with campaigns. In the last week, thought shifts from speeches to the practicality of getting voters to the booth. Sheds have to be erected, trusted people hired to staff the polling booths, scan the rolls and issue registration numbers to voters. Food has to be prepared for the campaign workers. Usually it is vegetable pulau and tomato chutney, neutral fare for both Hindus and Muslims. Vehicles have to be hired and reliable drivers secured.
When voting was made compulsory, party leaders had hoped that they would not have to transport people to the polling booths, but they were wrong. Voters will have it no other way. Nothing can be done about this: the voter owns the vote. Names of people who have already voted are crossed out, vehicles sent to new locations. Party workers look anxiously at each other's sheds to estimate the size of the crowd to see how well they are doing. Rough and ready estimates abound. 'It is 50-50 around here,' people say, it is touch and go. That spells desperation.

Voting is spread over a long and exhausting week full of confusion, anxiety, doubt and fluctuating fortunes. Candidates watch and wait — and await the people's verdict. It is quite a sight to see a politician, helpless, lost for words, waiting. Some glow with optimism, some know they are gone, most are on auto-pilot. Long queues form outside the polling booths, people waiting for hours in the scorching sun as counting officials deal with administrative cockups. It will be over soon. In a few hours the candidates will know whether they will go to Parliament or rue their loss and await another turn five years away, or leave politics altogether.

I carry with me a collage of images, a cacophony of speeches and a blur of faces as I leave the campaign trail. As I write this in my wintry Canberra office, I recall the sight and smell of simple food cooked in huge aluminum pots on open fires. I remember a candidate offering me sumptuous pulao and apologising for the lack of chairs and tables, saying 'Doc, please don't mind. Eat like a scavenger. After all we live like scavengers.' His own prosperity was protruding prominently. I remember a jovial roly-poly chief in Nadroga welcoming me in Hindi, asking one of the men to serve me yaqona. 'Chalao sale ke,' serve the bugger (the drink, not me!), 'talo mada.' 'Ham hiyan ke raja baitho,' he says to mirthful applause, 'I am the king of this place.' I remember a toothless, almost blind, Fijian man in Nabila welcoming Jai Ram Reddy with old farcical songs in Hindi and Tamil, accompanied by an Indian man making 'dhammak dhammak'
drumming music with his mouth. I have never seen Jai Ram laugh so heartily as he did that day. I remember a man in Tau approaching him crouching in mock respect, saying playfully ‘Prabhu ki Jai,’ ‘Hail to the Lord!’ I remember a young Fijian man with Rastafarian gait and matted hair wearing a T-shirt proclaiming a handwritten slogan ‘1999 General Erection’. I remember a candidate praising Sitiveni Rabuka as a well-trained draught ‘undoo’ (uncastrated, virile) bull who did not need to be broken, unlike his ‘badhiya’ (limp, useless) opponents. I remember...

I rejoice at the triumph of democracy in Fiji, despite all the tensions and frustrations and misunderstandings and miscommunications. I celebrate the majesty and the madness, the mayhem and the method, of democracy at work. I leave Fiji elated and grateful to be present at a decisive moment in its history.