

# PREFACE

**In the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon***, Marx remarks that history repeats itself, so to speak, twice: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. The events in Fiji of May–July 2000 would tend to exemplify this dictum. One coup is bad enough, but three in thirteen years staggers the imagination.

This collection is not an academic analysis of these events, their origins, processes and impacts. Rather, the contributors to this volume simply reflect, often in the heat of the moment, on what the coup meant to them. The contributors are Fijians of all stripes as well as others who take an interest in the country. They express themselves in statements, speeches, essays and laments.

Many overseas people familiar with Fiji are dismayed and disillusioned with the events in that country. Many contribute pieces to newspapers or the internet. The majority are critical, praying for an early resolution of the crisis. They are moving in their sincerity, eloquent and anguished in their tone. This volume of essays contains a sample, but only a small sample, of these responses. They were written when the Fiji crisis was in full swing. The hostages were still in the parliamentary complex, and George Speight was a regular sight on our television screens. Since then, academic analyses have appeared, focusing on the larger political and electoral issues that underpinned the crisis. More will assuredly come as the dust settles and people attempt to make sense of the madness that so dramatically engulfed their lives.

Editors inspect what they get, not get what they expect, a colleague reminded us as we grappled with the balance of perspective reflected in this collection. As it happens, the overwhelming bulk of the published commentary on the Fijian crisis was critical of the events. Our effort

to solicit contrary perspectives was not as fruitful as we would have liked. This is regrettable, but that is the way things are. There is enough here to give the reader a fair sense of the issues on all sides of the political divide.

The strength of this collection lies in its contemporaneity, catching unprocessed voices as the events were unfolding in Fiji. Many pieces are straight from the heart, expressing bewilderment, frustration, anger and anguish. They are partial, in both senses of the word. As they have to be. Nonetheless, they will form an indispensable building block of a future interpretative edifice. The collection is offered to the readers in that spirit.

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