Part I. Quest for Equality:  
The Political Struggle

1: Address to the 1965 London Constitutional Conference, 26 July 1965

I thank you [Secretary of State Anthony Greenwood] and the United Kingdom Government for the kind invitation and welcome extended us to this historic conference which is called to smelt the existing system of government in the Colony of Fiji and to forge and mould a new constitution which, I hope, will lead our country to complete independence in the not too distant future.

Political liberty, equality and fraternity rank foremost among the good things of life, and mankind all over the world cherishes and holds these ideals close to its heart. The people of Fiji are no exception. Without political freedom, no country can be economically, socially or spiritually free.

We in Fiji, as in many undeveloped countries of the world, are faced with the three most formidable enemies of mankind, namely, Poverty, Ignorance, and Disease. We need political freedom to confront these enemies and free our minds, bodies and souls from their clutches.

Needless to say, when I refer to political freedom, I mean democracy under the rule of law, the sort of freedom which the British people and the people of United States enjoy. We need freedom which will politically, economically and socially integrate the various communities living in Fiji and make out of them one nation deeply conscious of the responsibilities and tasks which lie ahead.

I call this conference important and historic because it is the first conference of its kind in the history of Fiji and it may very well prove the beginning of the end of a form of government which stands universally condemned in the modern world.

I have come to this conference with faith and trust in British people and their government which has set peoples of other colonies free and has led them on the path of economic and cultural development. After all, Fiji’s problems are not as difficult or formidable as those which some of the colonies, which are now independent, have had to face and solve.

We, from our side, promise you full co-operation and serious consideration in the deliberations which lie ahead in this conference.
We have all got to guard ourselves against avoiding right decisions because they are unpleasant or run counter to our ingrained habits of preconditioned thought, or taking wrong decisions because they appear advantageous in the short run.

We must appreciate the fact that we owe great responsibility, not only to the people of the present generation but also of generations to come.

We have to resist the temptation of driving the boat on the shallow waters because of the fear that it will rock heavily if we steered it on the right course. Bearing all this in mind let us bend to the tasks before us.

In the end I pray to Almighty God who led the crown colonies like Australian and New Zealand to full independence, may He also lead us and our country to the same destination safely and in good heart.

Again, I most sincerely thank you, Sir, for your kind welcome.

2: Suva Town Hall Resolutions at a Public Meeting of Indians, 30 November, 1929

1. This public meeting of Indians loyally expresses its absolute concurrence with the just and timely Message No 18 of 1929 of His Excellency the Acting Governor and unreservedly upholds the action proposed and taken by him in respect of Indian Education.

2. This public meeting of Indians expresses its full confidence in His Excellency the Acting Governor and in his Government.

3. This public meeting of Indians regrets and wholly condemns the action taken and the attitude adopted by the European Elected Members against the small increase of provision proposed by His Excellency the Acting Governor on the Draft Estimates of the Colony for the year 1930 for long expected development of a primary education, which has been neglected, and for the urgent improvement of existing system of education for Indian boys and girls.

4. This public meeting of Indians is strongly of [the] opinion that the ground of objection raised by the European Elected Members that the programme of the Director of Education is far beyond the financial capacity of the Colony is absolutely misleading and inconsistent with the considered opinion of the said members embodied in the Message No 11 of 1929 advocating immediate abolition of Income Tax of about 40,000 pounds a year, and that it was used with [the] intention to single out items proposed for Indian Education.

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1 AW Seymour became the Acting Governor when Sir Eyre Hutson left Fiji in 1929. The Education Report was prepared by John Caughy, the first Director of Education in Fiji. He had held the same post in New Zealand.
5. This public meeting of Indians wholly disagrees with the misrepresentation made with the intent to prejudice the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the European Elected Members that it is ‘Not impossible in certain districts [that] Government schools intended for Indians of all creeds would meet boycott or non-co-operation’ and respectfully assures the Government that the Indians have not and had not even dreamt of so doing.

6. This public meeting of Indians is of [the] opinion that the existing system of franchise which tends towards friction between the different races bearing allegiance to His Majesty the King Emperor is the cause of the present political upheaval in this Crown Colony and as the only satisfactory solution respectfully [requests] His Majesty’s Government to consider the desirability of granting at an early date common franchise to all British subjects resident in Fiji.

7. This public meeting of Indians resolves that a copy of these resolutions be sent to His Excellency the Acting Governor with a request that he may be pleased to forward the same to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Signed: AD Patel, et.al

3: Common Roll Conference with Sir Murchison Fletcher, 27 December 1929

His Excellency explained that the conference was convened on account of his desire that the Indian representatives should co-operate in the Legislative Council. He explained the principles of a Crown Colony Government, and the way in which it differs from representative Self Government. He stated that the communal franchise had a special value when applied to a heterogeneous community in safeguarding the interests of the different groups, and it contained no suggestion of the inferiority of any group. It was, in fact, greatly desired in some places and His Excellency exemplified the instance of the Muslim community in Ceylon, who are strongly opposed to the common franchise. He expressed his disagreement with the action of the Indian ex-members in resigning from the Council when their motion on the franchise question was lost. He advised them that the proper procedure in this instance was to forward their protest by memorial through the Governor to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to co-operate in the Council, and to work in a constitutional manner for the achievement of their purpose.

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2 Was Governor of Fiji from 22 November 1929 to 28 November 1936. During his tenure, as the several documents following show, Fletcher tried to have nomination replace election as the mode of representation in the Legislative Council, but without success. He also briefly floated the idea of more Chinese immigration to counter the influence of Indians, a proposal vetoed by the Colonial Office.
Mr. AD Patel said that he did not represent any section of the community, but he was satisfied that the franchise on racial lines was unacceptable to the Indian community, and was likely to lead to ill-feeling upon racial lines. Acceptance of the present franchise was, in his opinion, impossible, and contrary to Indian interests and to those of the Colony. It was contrary, he said, to the principle of equal status for Indians with other races, both here and in other places, and the acceptance of the communal franchise in Fiji must damage the cause of Indians in other colonies. He asked the Governor to recognise the fact of non-co-operation in Council, but assured His Excellency of the loyal co-operation of Indian political bodies, which were prepared to advise the Government upon questions affecting the welfare of Indians until a common franchise was granted.

Mr. John Grant somewhat haltingly agreed with the views expressed by Mr. A.D. Patel. His Excellency interposed, disagreeing with an interpretation of the franchise which implied inequality, and expressed his inability to understand the boycott of the Council by the Indian members. He again explained the advantages of the communal franchise in dealing with a community composed of different races in their present stage of development, and the desirability of Indian members co-operating with the Government in the Legislative Council.

Mr. Sahodar Singh expressed the opinion that the communal franchise implied an inferiority of the Indian community. Mr. S.B. Patel confined his remarks to the question of the principle involved, which, he said, implied the inferiority of the Indian community. He referred to the question of the position of Indians abroad, and to the effect on this question of acceptance of a communal franchise by Indians in Fiji. Mr. Abdul Kasim, speaking through an interpreter, said that a common franchise was the ideal franchise, and that a communal franchise does not give the Indian community sufficient representation.

His Excellency then thanked those present for attending, and requested them to give serious consideration to the matter, and to convey their decision to the Acting Secretary for Indian Affairs at an early date.

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3 Patel, being a recent arrival, was ineligible to stand for the 1929 elections.
4 No doubt he had Kenya in mind where the battle for franchise was being actively fought. See Mary Varghese, ‘The East African Indian National Congress, 1914-1939: A Study of Indian Political Activity in Kenya,’ PhD thesis (Dalhousie University, 1975).
5 An Indian Christian who contested the 1929 election for the Southern Constituency and lost to Vishnu Deo (419) to 162. The first three elected Indian members in 1929 were Vishnu Deo, James Ramchandra Rao and Parmanand Singh.
6 Was a member of the Hindu Maha Sabha formed in 1926 and active in western Viti Levu.
4: Memorandum to Governor, 28 December 1929

We are grateful to Your Excellency for giving us an opportunity of airing our views on the franchise question. While deeply appreciating Your Excellency’s desire and anxiousness for co-operation of the Indian members in the Council, we respectfully submit that we cannot see our way to accede to Your Excellency’s wishes.

The claim for common franchise is a matter of principle to us and it is based upon a sincere and earnest desire of the Indian community to work in amity and harmony with other sister communities living in the Colony. We are of the opinion that the present franchise on communal basis is bad in principle and harmful in working and it tends to perpetuate the racial distinctions and bickering so much evident today in the Colony. Again, the present franchise denotes to our mind an inferiority of political status which is not consonant with the pledges and deliberations made on high and solemn authority regarding the equal political status, rights and privileges to Indian British subjects domiciled in various Crown colonies. We are thankful to Your Excellency for your desire for co-operation but we regret we could not bring ourselves to co-operation under the present franchise which we do not believe in. We feel that working under the franchise would be not only doing a disservice to our community but also blocking the progress of the Colony as a whole.

We submit for Your Excellency’s consideration that we do not ask for any manhood suffrage or any lower qualification for Indian voters, nor have we the slightest desire to look for Indian domination in the Council. We are prepared to accept the same qualification for voting as necessary for the electors of other communities. To us it is not a question of the number of our members in the Council. We only look for true recognition in practice of the principle of equal citizenship for Indians in the Colony.

We have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your Excellency’s obedient servants

7 This is a reference to the Salisbury’s Despatch of 1875 which in the end was not accepted by the Government of India but the promise of equality underpinned the broad principle of indentured emigration and reiterated subsequently.
8 The common roll demand was not pursued with any vigour after 1936 when CF Andrews visited Fiji and advised against it. Henry Polak wrote to Andrews on 30 April 1936: ‘I am sure that you will agree that at the present time it would be extremely unwise to press for the common franchise. The question at the moment is not the common franchise versus the separate franchise, but the separate franchise versus nomination. I do not think that there is any likelihood of getting the common franchise so long as the Fijians are inarticulate and I think that the Colonial Office are not unreasonable in laying down that the matter should not be re-opened for the present until that aspect can be adequately dealt with. Will you, therefore, throw your whole weight into seeing that the common franchise question is not allowed to arise at the present time?’
5: Governor to Secretary of State, 2 January 1930

My Lord,

I have the honour to refer to Mr. Seymour’s despatch No. 333 of the 13th November last, and to my telegram of the 2nd January, regarding the three Indian seats in the Legislative Council.

Writs in respect of the vacancies were only recently issued on the 25th November and the 16th December was appointed as the day for receiving nominations, but no candidates presented themselves. On the 27th December I summoned a conference, which was attended by seven leading members of the Indian community, Mr. [Alfred W] Seymour, Colonial Secretary, and Dr McGusty, Acting Secretary of Indian Affairs, being also present.

It was at once apparent that the Indians had come with their minds made up. They contented themselves with platitudes about brotherhood and equality, and they were not prepared to discuss the merits of their case. A common roll was the birthright of all Indians, and there was nothing more to be said. They countered with generalities the argument that in certain parts of the world the Muslim community was emphatic that a communal roll should be maintained. They stated, however, that it was not merely a question of local politics, and they hinted that they were acting under instructions from abroad. I am informed on good authority that these instructions come through Mr. HL Polak, resident in Dane’s Inn in London.

On the 28th December, Dr McGusty brought to call upon me an Indian named Dr Sagayam,9 who was formerly a member of the Indian Medical Service, and had three years’ war service. Dr Sagayam expressed himself with complete candour. He said that ninety-eight per centum of the Indian community knew nothing and cared nothing about the relative merits of a common and a communal roll, or about Indian or Kenyan politics. They had sincerely appreciated the recent concessions of elected members, and they wanted representation in the Legislative Council. The Colony however was unable to produce more than the merest handful of men who were qualified to stand as candidates, and not one of them had the courage to run counter to dictation from India. The community was prosperous and contented, and the present deadlock was none of its seeking.

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9 Dr A Deva Sagayam sought nomination to the Legislative Council in 1926 but missed out to the incumbent Badri Maharaj.
In the document dated the 28th December, six of the seven Indians who attended the conference have declared their inability to co-operate under the present franchise. Mr. Abdul Karim, representing the Muslim community, refused to append his signature.

I submit that no action is at present called for. If no candidates come forward, new writs will be issued, and in the meantime the better informed among the Indian community will, I think, be content to leave their interests in Government’s safe-keeping.

6: Memorandum to the Governor, 5 March 1935

When we read the announcement of Your Excellency’s short visit to England it made us naturally curious about the purpose of the visit. In view of the recent change in the constitution of the Municipal Councils of this Colony and in view of certain statements made by Your Excellency and the two Indian members in the Legislative Council, our minds rightly or wrongly associated Your Excellency's visit to England with the constitutional changes that Your Excellency suggested to the Secretary of State on your last visit home. If we are correct in our surmise, we would respectfully ask Your Excellency to bear patience with us if we place our point of view at some length and to convey it—if possible—verbatim to the Secretary of State for his full consideration.

We would like to take Your Excellency's mind back to the 28th of March 1934 when Sir Maynard Hedstrom brought a motion to change the constitution of municipalities in Fiji. Speaking on this motion Mr. Munswamy Mudaliar said: ‘Your Excellency, the Indian opinion on this matter is divided, but it is very difficult to form any unanimous opinions. However, there is a large section of the community in my Division which is prepared to accept any constitution having equality for all the three communities.’

We also refer Your Excellency to the budget debates of October 1934 when Mr. K. B. Singh stated: ‘A petition signed by 106 Indians was submitted through Your Excellency to the Secretary of State for the Colonies asking him to leave things as they are in connection with the municipal constitution. After a few days, another petition signed by 86 Indians was also submitted to the Secretary of State ...in favour of the motion introduced by the Senior elected member, that is in favour of Government control. [T]he petition, Sir, was endorsed by about 400 persons of the Northern and Western divisions. They further pointed out that they would advocate a system of nomination in the Legislative Council as well, if the Government would give an equal number of seats.

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10 Born in Fiji in 1872, head of Morris Hedstrom Ltd, and member of the Executive Council.
11 Member of Legislative Council, 1932-1937 from North West Indian constituency.
Upon being interrupted by Your Excellency: ‘Who advocated that? Who are ‘they’ who suggested nomination to the Legislative Council?’ Mr. K.B. Singh\(^ {12} \) said: ‘The petition was signed by about 400 persons of the Northern and Western Divisions, Sir. I might be wrong, but as far as I can remember—I think I am 90 per cent right—they supported the system of nomination in the Legislative Council as well.’ Then Your Excellency asked: ‘Does the honourable member suggest that 90 per cent of all Indians support nomination for the Legislative Council?’ To which Mr. K.B. Singh replied, ‘Two or three petitions were submitted to the Government—the first, signed by 106 Indians, is in favour of keeping things as they are. The second and third petitions, signed by 86 and 400 respectively, were in favour of the Government control in the municipality. The second petition was endorsed by about 400 Indians who supported the system of nomination in the Legislative Council. Under such circumstances, Sir, I think it would be advisable to bring in constitutional changes which would keep all sections of the community in one constitution and would remove such dissensions.’

In summing up the debate Your Excellency said: ‘I was interested to hear his (Mr. K.B. Singh’s) remarks on the common roll. If I understand him alright, he says on behalf of his constituents that they would wish, if a common roll is not now attainable, to have an equal number of seats for each race, those seats to be subject to nomination. Is that a correct interpretation?’ To this Mr. K. B. Singh replied: ‘There are some people who prefer the elective system, but there is a number of leading Indians who advocate the nominative system with an equal number of seats in the Legislative Council, provided the Government is prepared to take one of the Indians on the Executive Council.’

Your Excellency may be aware that long before these statements were made by the two Indian members, they have ceased to retain the confidence of their constituents. Their constituents have time and often denounced them and their policy. In making the statements referred to, they have not consulted their constituents and deliberately with a set purpose have elected to grossly misrepresent the views of their constituents in order to serve their own personal ends. The term of the present Legislature is now about to expire. It is a foregone conclusion that they will not be returned to the Council at the next election. The introduction of a system of nomination is their only hope of ensuring their seats in the Council.

From the statements above quoted, we gather the impression that Your Excellency is prone to entertain those views of the two Indian members seriously as the views of a large and leading section of the community. If it is so, we respectfully

\(^{12}\) Kunwar Bachint Singh arrived in Fiji as a teacher for the Arya Samaj in 1927, entering the Legislative Council in 1932; was nominated member from 1937 to 1947.
beg to submit that Your Excellency will be making a grave mistake in accepting those statements at their face value. We would remind Your Excellency of the report of the Secretary for Indian Affairs Council paper No. 11 laid on the table on the 14th day of July 1933 which states in reference of the two members that: ‘The two Indian members who were finally returned were not drawn from the class that has hitherto played a part in political leadership.13 To that we may confidently add that they are not drawn from the class that will play a part in political leadership in future under the system of franchise.

Prompted by a strong desire to ensure harmony and peace between different communities in this Colony and their welfare, we have undertaken this very important mission. We would be failing in our duty to our community and to this Colony if we did not point out the great patience, moderation and reasonableness which our community has shown in their demands. We do not grudge the other communities the privileges and rights that they have the good fortune of enjoying in this Colony. We do not desire that their rights and privileges should be curtailed in any way. What we desire and what we ask for is that we should be granted the same rights and privileges. That the rights and privileges of other communities are curtailed and encroached upon to place us all on a common level by depriving them of their franchise, is a sad thought which neither satisfies nor meets with our approval.

The right of having a voice in the Legislative and Executive affairs of the State is the most valued and highly cherished right of every citizen irrespective of whatever creed or race he belongs, and we may well be pardoned if we are not prepared to relinquish it in favour of a system of nomination which means a complete denial of that most valuable right.

The change suggested by Your Excellency in our opinion is not in the best interest of our community. It has been the sad experience of the community that the interest and welfare of Indians in this Colony has been the last concern of the Government of Fiji. Our experience and knowledge of the type of Indians nominated by the Government to fill the positions in different local bodies, and in the Legislative Council of this Colony in the past, give us strong reasons to believe that the people nominated by the Government will be on the whole the people who will be acquiescent to Legislative and Executive measures irrespective of whether they will be in the interest or against the interest of the community.

It must be remembered that the Indian community here is progressing rapidly in their way of life and is day by day taking keener and more intelligent interest in their own development and in the development of this Colony. We have reached

13 The two were KB Singh and Munswamy Mudaliar.
a stage in this Colony where the introduction of a system of nomination will be like filling new wine in old bottles. Such an anti-democratic and retrogressive step will have strong reaction from an overwhelming majority of the community which will result in our opinion in endangering peace and harmony that at present exist between different races and creeds in this Colony.

We must also emphasise the importance of the new constitution that India is about to receive and the effect it will have upon our people here. The new Indian Reform Bill is based upon fundamentally democratic principles. The innovation that Your Excellency suggests is antidemocratic and of such a nature that it must necessarily take away the most fundamental right of the taxpayer and place it absolutely and unreservedly in the hands of the Governor.

Let it not be misunderstood when we instance the new Indian Reform Bill that our community demands or even aspires to attain self government in Fiji. What we say and what we aspire to is that we shall have a right to criticize, a right to advise, a right to express our aspirations and our needs through the representatives elected by us in the governance of this Colony. If the present constitution has failed to bring about harmony and goodwill between different communities, it has done so because it is not liberal enough to bridge the gulf that exists at present between different races.

A further narrowing of the present constitution and taking it a few decades behind will not conduce to harmony and progress of the peoples of this Colony. If the Government thinks that a change in the constitution of the Legislative Council is absolutely imperative at this stage, it must be such as would be an advance on the present constitution and not a retrogression therefrom.

In conclusion, in view of the election that will shortly be held for the next Legislative Council we strongly urge that the question of any change to the present constitution be postponed until the new Legislative Council meets after the elections and that the existing constitution be continued for the present. The wishes of the community should be ascertained through the polls at the coming elections when our community has decided to make the question of franchise and nomination the main issue of the campaign. Knowing as we do the mind of our community, we have no doubt that an overwhelming majority of voters favour a system of franchise. Six months or a year more is but a moment in the history of any country. There is no urgency to effect any change in haste. ‘Haste is waste’ may be a common saying but it contains nuggets of wisdom which are not unworthy of being carefully considered.

(AD Patel, Vishnu Deo and others).

NB: The Indian Association, of which AD Patel was the President and Vishnu Deo the Secretary, sent a telegram to HLS Polak:
The majority of Europeans and Indians strongly oppose the motion adopted by Fiji Legislature advocating immediate change from elective to nominated representation without mandate from community. Two discredited Indian members and three Europeans for and three Europeans against motion telegraphed to Colonial Office by Acting Governor with request for instruction to extend life of Council expiring next month. Fijians neutral, Indian community beseech you take effective steps immediately to retain franchise.

7: A Delegation to the Governor, May 1935

Mr. [AD] Patel acted as leader of the deputation and Mr. Vishnu Deo as interpreter. Mr. Patel read a lengthy memorandum setting out the arguments against nomination.

His Excellency stated that he had listened with much interest to the memorandum. Before coming to the details, he desired to correct two erroneous suppositions, the one connecting his forthcoming visit to England with proposed changes in the constitution; the other attributing to himself or the Government the initiative in prompting the proposed alteration. His Excellency stated that his visit to England had no connection with the changes in the constitution; that neither he nor the Government would take the initiative in any proposed change, and that if an amendment is desired it would have to come as a result of some action in the Legislative Council by unofficial members and without any participation of the officials.

His Excellency analysed the political situation from the date of his first arrival as Governor of the Colony in November 1929, immediately after the three first Indian elected members led by Mr. Vishnu Deo had resigned from the Council on the defeat of their common roll motion. He understood that the desire of the Indian community was for equality, but in his opinion under a common roll the politically-minded Indians would swamp European interests by weight of numbers, and Fijian interests because Fijians are not politically-minded. A common roll could not be expected to secure racial political equality in the circumstances of Fiji, but would be likely, on the other hand, to perpetrate and accentuate racial differences. Nor, assuming the interests of the three races to be roughly equal, does the present form of the constitution provide equality of representation. Under the Crown Colony system of government, the official members were in the majority and under the special circumstances of Fiji there was no prospect of the introduction of a system of representative Government, although the unofficial members play an important part as leaders within and without the Legislative Council.
How then was equality to be attained? Unofficial representation of each of the races by four members would give a reasonable settlement of the Colony’s present political difficulties, and the question was to choose between election and nomination. Under most circumstances election was preferable, but it presupposed common aims and interests which even in the Indian community, as was instanced in the case of the Muslims and other minorities, did not exist. Again the natives, the largest single unit in the population, are strongly opposed to the elective principle. Therefore the acceptance by all races of the nominative principle appears to be the only means of securing lasting political peace for the present. His Excellency was unable to make any pronouncement as to the attitude of the European community which returned the greatest number in any of the three races of unofficial members under the present constitution, but he thought it not unlikely that the Europeans might be willing to make a sacrifice in the interests of the attainment of a lasting solution.

As regards the statement in the memorandum that common roll representation is successful elsewhere, His Excellency said that this was certainly the case where common interests, race homogeneity, and ability to exercise the franchise existed, and he instanced its advantages in a country such as Australia. On the other hand, the strong demand for separate representation from minority interests had forced the inclusion of the communal principle in the new Indian constitution, and the same thing applied in Fiji not only with respect to the essential differences between the three main races, but with respect also to the differences within the Indian community itself.

His Excellency then stated that as he was not clear about the exact wishes of the deputation he would put certain questions to be answered by Mr. Patel or any other member. The questions were as follows, the answers having been given by Mr. Patel:

Q. Is it the desire of those who have signed the memorandum that there should be a common electoral roll?

A: The common roll principle is adhered to but the suggestion is that the wish of the people be ascertained from their representatives after the next general election.

Q: Is it desired by the deputation that the common roll principle should be applied at once?

A: If a common roll is not attainable at present, the matter will not be pressed.
Q: On the assumption that the common roll principle at present is unattainable, would you regard the present distribution of seats as equitable?

A: No.

Q: How far do you subscribe to my contention that the principle of equality between the three races should be attained by an equal distribution of seats between the three races?

A: While common roll is unattainable, we would regard this as satisfactory.

Q: In view of the opposition to the elective principle of the Fijians and of Indian minorities, do you regard the elective or the nominative system as the better suited to the conditions in the Colony?

A: It is admitted that the Indian community is not homogenous, but we ask that the elective principle should be retained.

Q: At an election what likelihood is there of a Muslim candidate being returned?14

A: A Muslim candidate would have an equal chance with a candidate derived from any other Indian section or community. (Mr. Patel here made the very doubtful statement that Muslims and Hindus live together on peaceful terms in Fiji, and that the remedy was for Muslims to put forward a candidate and to complain if he was not returned).

Mr. Patel expressed the appreciation of the members of the deputation for the patient hearing which they had received from His Excellency, and referred to the fact that while several misunderstandings had been removed by His Excellency, he hoped that the discussion and the memorandum had been of assistance also to His Excellency and the Government.

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14 The Fiji Muslim League President Diljan and Secretary Hasan Raza wrote to the Governor on 4 March 1935 saying that the elective principle was ‘neither desirable nor practicable,’ and that under the existing arrangements, ‘no Muslim candidate has a chance of being returned to the Council.’ In a separate letter (dated 16 May 1935) one Walli who had signed the original election petition, retracted his support and advocated nomination.
8: Opposition to Nomination over Election, 19 May 1935

The humble petition of Indian voters and other Indian residents in the district of Nadi in the Colony of Fiji sheweth:

1. That your humble petitioners are greatly surprised to hear that petitions have been prepared and presented to the Government requesting constitutional changes from the present system of elective representation to that of nomination.

2. That your humble petitioners are aware that the Indian community has never authorized the preparation and presentation of any petition advocating or supporting the introduction of a system of nominated representation in the Legislative Council of Fiji, or in the Municipal Councils of Suva and Levuka.

3. That your humble petitioners are shocked to learn that Mr. K.B. Singh supported by Mr. Munswamy Mudaliar did on the 16th day of May 1935 introduce into the Legislative Council of Fiji a motion advocating that the European and Indian members be nominated and not elected and that the said motion was carried by 5 to 3 unofficial votes.

4. That your humble petitioners had not nor had the Indian community authorized either Mr. K.B Singh or Mr. Munswamy Mudaliar to introduce or to support such a motion.

5. That your humble petitioners strongly oppose the said motion and the introduction of a system of nomination in the Legislative Council of Fiji.

6. That your humble petitioners respectfully submit that the suggested reversion to the nominated system of representation is not in the best interest of the Colony and the various races resident therein and that it would be a direct negation of British democratic ideals.

7. That your humble petitioners are and have always been in favour of a system of franchise and respectfully urge that the present system of election be continued.

8. That your humble petitioners request that this petition be transmitted to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies for his kind consideration.

Your humble petitioners will ever pray.

(Sgd) A.D. Patel, K.N. Singh, K.K. Naiker & supporters & residents.

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15 A similar petition was sent from several districts.
16 Both members of the Legislative Council.
Editor’s Note: In the end, the government did not proceed with nomination, which was also opposed by the Government of India. The Letters Patent of 1937 provided that only two of the five Indian members of the Legislative Council would be nominated. The demand for common roll was also dropped after advice from CF Andrews who visited Fiji during the course of his visit to Australia and New Zealand.

9: Conundrums of Colonial Legislature, 21 December 1945

A letter from one of my constituents described the Legislative Council as an impotent legislature which only involved a waste of expenditure and was an unnecessary burden on the general revenue of the Colony. I would first like to analyse the position of this legislature and to examine how far that assertion is correct. We have here a legislature composed not only of an official majority but a majority which is under the direction of the Governor as far as voting is concerned, which means 16 members of Council are here just for the purpose of voting when the official Whip requires the votes, plus any explanations that the Government might have to make in regard to the questions that may be raised by the unofficial side. It is a very artificial and hollow position. It would also be very trying on those Official Members who are sitting in this Council who now and then have to just sink their personal views and express themselves as they are directed. What is more, it means only one thing, that they have to leave their official work, come to this Council to sit here day after day listening to perhaps boring and uninteresting dissertations from the unofficial side, knowing full well that the unofficial side cannot influence their minds in any way because they have no minds of their own to be influenced. There is only one mind in this Legislature, and that is the mind of the Governor. Perhaps a lot of time and expenditure could be saved if, in these circumstances, the Official Members as the heads of departments remained in their offices and attended to their official duties.

The position is equally hollow on the unofficial side. There are in this Council the so-called six Elected Members. I say ‘so-called’ because how many people in this Colony do they represent? There are three Indian Elected Members here and the total roll of voters who elect them in this Colony hardly amounts to 5,000, about 2,500 in my constituency [Northwest Viti Levu], a little less than that from Mr. Vishnu Deo’s constituency [Southern], and merely 700 from Mr. [Badri Maharaj] Gyaneshwar’s constituency [Northern]. Those are the numbers of voters from a community which is as large as the Fijian community in Fiji and would come to more than 100,000 souls. The position is the same with
the European Elected Members. As far as the pure Europeans are concerned, probably most of them are voters, at least the male population, but as far as that section of the community which is frequently referred to as part-European is concerned, only a small percentage are voters and that is also again the male population.

As far as the Fijians are concerned, their own people, the common people, have no say whatever in their selection to this Council, so as far as the composition of the Council is concerned, whether it is the Official side or the Unofficial side, whether it is the elected members or the nominated members, the position is very, very hollow and artificial. If we are going to have a genuine Council where the public opinion can be genuinely and properly reflected, the first condition is the widening of the franchise. Every adult member of the population, whatever race he belongs to, must have a vote; it must be a question of universal suffrage. Doubts have been cast here about the fitness of the Fijian to elect his own representatives to this Council. I am personally quite convinced that the Fijian—the common Fijian—knows his mind just as well as we know ours. Perhaps some may be thinking of what I may call the pre-war Fijian mind. We must take one very important factor into consideration. The Fijian during the war came into contact with soldiers of other democratic countries like America and New Zealand. He [has] also got certain democratic ideas, political viewpoints, ambitions and aspirations as regards his political rights, and we cannot pour new wine into old bottles: we must make sufficient provision for them.

It has been said by some that it [the question of Fijian representation] should be left either to Government or to the Fijian Affairs Department. I would go a step further and suggest that it should be left to the Fijians themselves. A referendum can be taken and public opinion amongst the Fijians ascertained as regards their political aspirations. Someone mentioned that the Fijian is politically backward and the Indian is politically far in advance of him. The Indian belongs to one of the oldest civilizations in the world and consequently there is nothing surprising if his philosophical or political ideologies come to the same level as those of other civilized countries in the world. In comparison in terms of civilization our Fijian brethren in this Colony are in an adolescent stage. I do not see why it should be the responsibility only of the Fijian and the European that their interests should be safeguarded. I feel that it is the duty of the Indian as well.

In 1944 after the elections, when the unofficial side met, it decided that we would always try to stick together, take proper view of things and make a national stand on matters that affected us nationally. I would ask the Unofficial Members here in the Council to consider whether the Indian side of the Council has kept that pledge or not. We are not here to dominate over them, and I would like my European colleagues only to consider one thing, not only in the interests
of the Colony but in the interests of their own community and its future. Let us examine the situation. This is a Colony in which nearly 96 percent of the population consists of what we call ‘brown men’ and 4 percent white men or Europeans, as you may choose to call them, and out of this 4 percent probably 2 percent are part-Europeans. The European community here has got brains, wealth and influence. The Europeans have to consider whether they are going to exercise these advantages in the interests of this Colony and in trying to make themselves the leaders of the Colony, or whether they are going to keep themselves into a narrow circle, always thinking in the terms of their own small community and trying to look upon themselves as the opponents of other communities.

The Europeans now have a fine chance of leadership if they but take a wider view and outlook. They can easily become not only the leaders of the European community but, if they get all these unnecessary suspicions out of their minds, the leaders of the Indian and Fijian communities as well. I would not mind being represented in this Council by Mr. Aime Ragg, although I am an Indian. It is just a question of mutual trust and confidence. Are we going to do something ourselves to foster amongst all these various communities that trust and confidence or are we just going to raise these bugbears one against the other and keep this Colony eternally divided into racial compartments? I know that in this Colony there is a certain type of European mind—not in all cases because I know there are many who understand and appreciate it—to whom the very mention of this word ‘common roll’ or ‘common franchise’ is a bugbear. One thing they overlook—if it is a question of common roll or franchise, it will not be thrust upon any community, I assure you. I personally believe that it will be only by voluntary consent. There is no question of dominating or forcing one’s views on another, but I would seriously ask my European colleagues to consider this and consider it seriously.

Probably fifty years hence, as the population increases, Europeans will not be even one percent of the population, and one day there will come a time when other communities might raise the question as to how this came about, that one percent of the population has got the same number of representatives in the Council as, say, other communities who have about fifty percent of the total population of the Colony. Would it not be better then if there was a common roll and if right from the beginning, to allay suspicions and fears, the 18 allocated seats asked for in this Council were allocated to 18 constituencies and reserved on these lines, that certain constituencies were for the Europeans only and certain for the Fijians only and certain for Indians only; and in all the constituencies the voters, irrespective of whether they are European, Fijian or Indian, could only vote for the candidates in those reserved constituencies. Would not that give in the future the assurance and security to everyone in this Colony that even when
those six European members sit in this Council they are not going there as the sole representatives of a small microscopic minority but they re going there as the representatives of the people in their constituencies. Won’t there be a better guarantee of retaining the same position as they are enjoying now?

You might raise this bugbear of Indian domination temporarily but will it last forever? Should we not make allowance for the progress that these two communities, the Fijian and the Indian, will be making in the years to come, and in view of that ensure the European leadership for this Colony, and do not members see that that will be the best way to ensure it? The European community will then remain the leaders and the true leaders of the people of Fiji. There will be one further advantage—a common denominator of political outlook will be developed in this Colony. As it is we are all thinking in narrow terms, of our racial interests, but if we take that bold step forward, we would all be thinking in general terms, the interests of the people of this Colony. Would not that be an ideal worthwhile striving for?

I hold the view that the 18 Elected Members of this Council should be genuinely elected representatives and they can only be genuinely elected representatives of the people of this Colony if there is a wider franchise. I hope that better counsel will prevail. I hope that mutual suspicions will be done away with and we shall try to understand and accept one another’s bona fides and if not immediately then in the near future we will come to realize that, after all, the best representation in this legislature would be that which ensures harmony and a common political outlook for the Colony. That can only be done by having a common franchise. Let us hope that the time will come when the demand for a common franchise will be looked upon and characterized not as an Indian demand but will become truly and genuinely the demand of all races, the European as well as the Fijian.

10: Deed of Cession Debate, 16 July 1946

In this debate I am labouring under three disadvantages. First I have not got the genius of rushing in where angels fear to tread. Second, being a poor benighted heathen, I have not got the heart to hate any human being, whatever race they belong to, and thirdly, I cannot talk Irish. When I read this motion I thought that the words ‘non-Fijian inhabitants’ meant really ‘non-Fijian inhabitants’ and I thought that it was really a sportsmanlike act on the part of the mover of the

17 On the motion moved by AA Ragg ‘That in the opinion of this Council the time has arrived in view of the general increase in the non-Fijian inhabitants and its consequential political developments to emphasise the terms of the Deed of Cession to assure that the interests of the Fijian race are safeguarded and a guarantee given that Fiji is to be preserved and kept as a Fijian country for all time.’
motion (being one of the non-Fijian inhabitants of the Colony) to move this motion in the interests of the Fijians, but my eyes were opened when [AA Ragg] interpreted these words as meaning ‘Indians’ and levelling his whole quantum of criticism against that particular community.

This motion has, to my mind, three implications. One implication is that for some reason or another, the Government of this Colony has either forgotten or overlooked the terms of the Deed of Cession and there is an urgent need for a reminder. Another implication is that the time has come when we have got to look to the Deed of Cession in order to safeguard Fijian interests; and the third implication is that, on account of the natural increase of the non-Fijian inhabitants of this Colony, it has been found necessary to again reiterate and emphasize the terms of the Deed of Cession. I was wondering all the time when Members supporting the motion spoke on this point as to what particular terms of the Deed of Cession they wished to emphasize.

I have been sitting here all day, but I am sorry to say that I have not so far heard which one, or how many of them, they want to be emphasized. The preamble shows the intention as to why the leaders of the Fijian community ceded this Colony to the British. There was a desire on their part to secure the promotion of Civilization and Christianity, and of increasing trade and industry within these islands. The second desire was that there should be order and good Government established in this Colony. Prompted by these two desires the ancestors of my honourable Fijian colleagues placed the sovereignty of these islands into British hands, and this sovereignty was tendered, as the preamble says, unconditionally. We might go back into the history of over 70 years’ British rule in this Colony and examine whether these desires of the Fijian people have been fulfilled.

Nobody in this Council has alleged that Christianity was not promoted or is being in any way driven out of this Colony. Nobody says that the Government and the non-Fijian inhabitants of this Colony have tried to drive civilization out of this country and reduce the people of this Colony to an abject state of barbarity. Nor can anyone say that vigorous steps have not been taken right throughout and are not being taken now for the promotion of trade and industry. I am glad to say that nobody in this Council ever questioned that order and good government was not established in this Colony and is not prevailing even now. So as far as the desires of the people who ceded this country to the British are concerned those desires are scrupulously fulfilled.

Now going into the covenants of this Deed: As regards the first covenant, it merely hands over the sovereignty and possession of these islands to Queen Victoria, her heirs and successors. As regards the second covenant, it gives full and unlimited powers to the British Government or to Queen Victoria and her heirs and her successors—if I may follow the language of the Deed—that the
form and constitution of government, the means of the maintenance thereof and
the laws and regulations to be administered within the said islands, shall be
such as Her Majesty shall prescribe and determine. Nobody can so far say that
there has been any departure on the part of the Government or on the part of
the non-Fijian inhabitants from covenant two of this Deed.

Let us come to covenant three. That only provides for a temporary and provisional
government pending the establishment of the British Administration in Fiji. That
is a dead letter now; it has been already fulfilled and finished. Then we come
to the fourth covenant. That provides for the vesting of all the surplus lands
of the Colony into the British Crown. That has been already fulfilled. Those
lands that were not already alienated to Europeans and others in this Colony
and those lands which were not actually in possession or occupation of the
native owners or those lands which were not of any use to them were under the
covenant vested in the British Crown. Has there been any reason to complain
on that ground? Let us come to covenant five. That gives the Crown the power
to take and acquire, on payment of compensation, any land from the owners
if required for public purposes. Surely the natural increase of the population
has not affected that covenant in any way. I have not heard any complaints so
far either from the Fijian Members or from the mover or the seconder of this
motion, or from the Unofficial Members on this score.

I come to covenant six. That merely transfers the public buildings, stores, articles
and all that to the British Crown. That is already fulfilled and done. It is a matter
of the past. Covenant seven. Under this the Crown gives three promises. Promise
No.1: ‘The rights and interests of the said Tui Viti and other high Chiefs, the
Ceding parties hereto, shall be recognized so far as is consistent with British
sovereignty, and colonial form of government.’ It has not been suggested in
this Council that this promise has not been fulfilled. We come to the second
promise: ‘That all questions of financial liabilities and engagements shall be
scrutinised, and dealt with upon principles of justice and sound public policy.’
That is a matter of the past. It has not been alleged in this Council that this
promise has not been kept. The third promise: ‘That all claims to titles of land,
by whomsoever preferred, and all claims to pensions or allowances, whether on
the part of the said Tui Viti and other High Chiefs or of persons now holding
office under them or any of them, shall in due course be fully investigated and
equitably adjusted.’ They have already been fully investigated and equitably
adjusted; that promise has already been fulfilled.

So what in God’s name is left in this Deed of Cession that the mover of this
motion wants to be specially emphasized under this motion? He may throw
dust in the eyes of others but I refuse to be blinded by any emotion or feeling,
or allow my reason to be carried away by prejudice. That is the Deed of Cession
that has been the subject of all this mud-slinging and hot air in this Council.
I am glad to have received this opportunity of hearing what members of other communities think about us. It always does us good and discarding all those harsh and insulting remarks made for what they are worth, I am highly gratified that there was nothing seriously wrong with my people in this Colony. When the opponents have got to resort to such criticism that we are a bad lot because though we had a shortage of women we did not mix with the Fijians and assimilate with them, or that because we are paying high rents and more money to the Fijians, the Fijians in those areas have become more immoral, or that because we have increased in numbers and have been prolific we have become a menace to Fijian interests—if this is the worst that our adversaries can say about us, thank God we have acquitted ourselves well in this Colony.

I would remind the Members here that this Deed of Cession was executed in the year 1874. The promise\(^\text{18}\) was made to Indians soon after that Deed, that they will be treated as the citizens of this Colony, that they will be allowed an opportunity of settling here and becoming citizens and they will get the same rights as any other inhabitants of this Colony; and these promises were made, mark you, when all the signatories of the Deed were alive, and if anybody knew what they intended when they handed over this Colony to the British for government, certainly King Cakobau and his Chiefs who executed this Deed must have known; and can any Members here tell me or show me that any of these Chiefs or King Cakobau protested or alleged at the time when they were bringing Indians to this Colony that they were breaking the covenants of this Deed, or were committing a breach of faith with those who handed over this Colony into their hands?

Well, it was well understood and well appreciated then that we were coming here to play our part in turning this country into a paradise. Indians came here under that promise. They worked here for those people who gobbled up half a million acres of freehold land from the Fijian owners and we came and undertook to work under a system which, thank God, saved the Fijian race from the infamy of coming under—my community worked under that semi-servile state. As a matter of fact, if anything, the coming of my people to this country gave the Fijians their honour, their prestige, nay indeed their very soul. Otherwise I have no hesitation in saying that the Fijians of this Colony would have met with the same fate that some other indigenous races in parts of Africa met. I would ask my colleagues to consider that aspect of it before they condemn my people.

\(^\text{18}\) Patel is referring to the Salisbury’s Despatch of 1875 which read: ‘Above all things we must confidently expect, as an indispensable condition of the proposed arrangement, that the colonial laws and their administration will be such that the Indian settlers who have completed their terms of service to which they agreed, as the return for the expense of bringing them to the Colony, will be in all respects free men, with privileges no whit inferior to those of other class of Her Majesty’s subjects resident in the Colonies.’ The ‘proposed arrangements’ were declined by the Government of India but the spirit of fair and equitable treatment of the immigrants continued to underpin official policy.
They fear on the score that we are increasing in numbers. Well, they may think to themselves how was it that their numbers were depleted in this Colony: Indians certainly did not bring the measles and as Mr. Vishnu Deo pointed out, if the Fijians had looked upon the cow as their mother, as we do, and always thought of her milk more than her meat, the mortality rate in their community would not have been so high. Is that the fault of the Indians? Just consider one more point. In this Colony the Fijians are lucky enough to have child welfare activities going on amongst them for a number of years. There have been Fijian mid-wives and nurses already trained and working in their villages and doing splendid work; while we, on the other hand, have to expose our women folk in the settlements to the quackery of untrained mid-wives and nurses and place the lives of the mothers and children into their incompetent hands; and still because of our keen care of our children if we increase in numbers, can you lay the blame at our door?

I would ask the Fijian Members also to consider this: socially we have not lived in this country as if we were a garrison in an alien country. We have lived with you and mixed with you, hob-nobbed with you all the time. We have never looked upon the Fijians as our inferiors because they are Fijians. In the time of difficulty or stress they have always gone to an Indian and they always found assistance from him. I was highly gratified to hear in this Council that all sides at least concede one thing—that they all had Indian friends. Well, I only beg of my opponents that they reciprocate that friendship. Socially we have not done you any harm.

Now let us consider the economic aspect. We developed this Colony and as the Commissioner of Labour pointed out, our people are the very sinews of the economic life of the Colony. Not only have we been paying higher and higher rents into your own hands but we are producing the wealth of this Colony, and directly or indirectly all races share in it and benefit by it and the Fijians are no exception, and let me point out that the money that they make from the Indians is mostly spent in European or Chinese concerns. Can they blame us for that?

Let me go a step further, politically: We had penal labour laws in this Colony, we did not have any provision for trade union laws in this Colony, we did not have any laws regarding compensation to workmen; as far as the brown men of the Colony were concerned, life and limbs of the Indians and Fijians had no value at all. Who fought for them? Those of my colleagues who claim to be the trustees of the Fijian race, or we who have been made out, or an attempt has been made to make us out, to be the menace of the Fijian race? We have fought that common battle. Who has been fighting the obnoxious and odious racial discrimination that prevails in Government Service? Have my colleagues who have taken upon themselves the white man’s burden of being their trustees,
have they taken up the cudgels for the Fijians or is it the Indians? And who have been prominently fighting for the political rights not only of the Indians but the Fijians as well? I again say ‘The Indians.’

So even politically we have not been in any way your opponents or your adversaries. A promise was given to the Indians when they came to this Colony that land would be available to them and, as was pointed out by the Acting Secretary for Fijian Affairs went to India, persuaded Indians and brought a shipload of them to this Colony to settle down here.19 Have my Fijian colleagues ever heard in this Colony or outside that since we were promised land, we should be given freehold land?20 We have elected to be satisfied with occupying the position of the tenant of the Fijian in this Colony and all that we have been asking for is security of tenure. Indians have never stated that we must take away the lands from the Fijians. We ourselves have advocated the principle that the interests of the Fijians must always remain paramount in this Colony, that where those interests come into conflict with our interests, we readily agree to make our interests subservient to theirs.

Thank goodness our hands are clean, they are not stained with the blood of any race. Thank God our hearts are clean, we have worked hard and earned our bread by the sweat of the brow and from that bread we have always been ready and willing through our frugality to pass a portion to anyone else who cared to accept our hospitality or ask for our help. I would remind the Members of this Council that those who try to cry the Indians down may remember that in their hour of stress, although their own fellow compatriots were not prepared to help them, some Indian friend from some corner or another has readily and willingly come forward to help and has not accepted anything, not even thanks, into the bargain, and when such criticism comes one naturally feels like screaming out ‘Et tu, Brute!’

The European Member for the Eastern Division wanted some sort of declaration from us that could allay the fears and suspicions of the Fijian community. Well, the assurance I am prepared to give on behalf of my people to our Fijian neighbours in this Colony is that we have all these years lived in this country,

19 Here Patel is referring to a ‘mission’ delegation from Fiji which went to India on 30 December 1919 to try and re-open emigration to Fiji. The planters were hoping for five thousand migrants a year. The delegation comprised of RSD Rankin, Receiver-General and TC Twitchell, Bishop of Polynesia, who represented the Planters Association of Fiji. The delegation assured the Government of India that the government of Fiji undertook to ensure that the economic and political rights of the Indians resident in Fiji would ‘not be altered in any way to the detriment of Indians as compared with other residents.’

20 The delegation stated that the Land Settlement Ordinance of 1915 would be activated to enable the Fiji government to acquire land compulsorily, if necessary, for Indian settlement, with an initial sum of one hundred thousand pounds set aside for that purpose: ‘Land Settlement is one of the most important features of the Fiji Scheme, as the Government of Fiji is anxious not merely to introduce labourers who will remain for a comparatively short period, but to secure further permanent population, which is one of the greatest needs of the Colony.’
as sugar in milk, and we shall always live just the same as we have done in
the past. It has never been our desire to dominate over anybody, but let it be
remembered that we will not tolerate any domination from others as well. As
our previous Governor mentioned in this Council, ‘In God’s eyes all men are
equal.’ We sincerely believe in it: we shall live up to that maxim and we shall
make every endeavour to make others live up to it, too. It is the only assurance
that I can give, and I hope that you will accept it with the same sincerity with
which it is being given this evening.\footnote{21}

\section*{11: In Defense of Democracy, 2 September 1948}

Words are dangerous weapons if they are not used carefully. Fashionable phrases,
however high sounding, if divorced from realities or exaggerated, only succeed
in putting up the backs of those who are affected by them. This motion could
have been debated in a spirit of moderation and friendliness. Unfortunately the
mover of the motion got carried away with enthusiasm and overlooked the fact
that words sometimes hit harder than bullets, and on account of that I notice a
reaction in the extreme on the other side which I would not have expected in
ordinary circumstances.

One of the phrases that the Member used was ‘Palestine in Fiji’. Not only did that
phrase have mischievous implications but it was unfair, definitely unfair, to the
three great communities who have lived amicably side by side for over 70 years,
and it has been used in utter disregard of history. In Palestine, the Arabs were
the indigenous community and when the other community wanted to come in it
was not, right from the beginning, received with open arms. But let us examine
the history of Fiji. The Fijian community could not develop this country and,
in order to establish a good and stable government and to develop the industrial
and commercial potentialities of this territory and to promote Christian culture
amongst them, they unconditionally but voluntarily surrendered this country to
the British Crown, and one of the hopes expressed was that this country would
be economically developed. Economic development needed capital, industrial
and technical skill, coupled with man-power: England had capital, England had
the necessary skill and organizational ability, but England was not in a position
to fulfill the hope under which the surrender was made because England lacked
cheap man-power; and for that purpose, to give effect to the Deed of Cession,
with the consent of the Fijian people, the British Government approached India.

\footnote{21 The motion passed read: ‘That in the opinion of this Council, the Government and the non-Fijian
inhabitants of the Colony stand by the terms of the Deed of Cession and shall consider that document as the
Charter of the Fijian people.’ The Government of India representative to Ceylon, to whom Patel had sent a
copy of his speech, wrote on 10 December 1946: ‘The motion was only a cloak for a diatribe against the Indian
residents of Fiji. It was mainly due to the opposition so ably expressed by yourself and your other Indian
colleagues that the original motion was amended in such a way as to make it comparatively harmless.’}
They say it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good: grinding poverty has been the curse of India but that poverty provided Fiji with the cheap manpower that she was looking for. If the European community came here as a result of a voluntary contract contained in the Deed of Cession, my people also came here under a similar contract and a similar promise and that promise was given by the Imperial Government with the consent of the Fijian people, that those Indians who came here would have rights no whit inferior to those enjoyed by other subjects of His Majesty. Thus three races were thrown together by destiny and by the logic of history. It stands to the credit of all the three races that all of them so far have worked and co-operated and made this paradise of the Pacific that is Fiji. Why raise an unnecessary bogey that will suddenly make us start flying at each other's throats and turn these islands into an Armageddon?

I wish my European friends to realize that we are not intruders: we also have come and settled down here and played our important part in the destiny of this country. When the Deed of Cession is emphasized, please do not overlook the fact that we were also brought here under a similar contractual obligation. Even after the system of indenture was abolished, a high official and one of the heads of the Christian churches here was sent to India to persuade the Government and the people of India to send more people to come and settle in Fiji, telling them that they would get lands, that they would get the same privileges and the same treatment as other peoples resident here; the people who had fulfilled their contracts under the indenture were given similar promises and were encouraged to settle down here, and an overwhelming number of the present Indian community are the descendants of those people to whom those promises have been made.

The European Member for the Southern Division stated that the Government has violated the Deed of Cession because the people—referring to my community—that are brought into this Colony hold Asiatic religious concepts. When he used that phrase, he seemed to have forgotten geography: Christianity is also an Asiatic religious concept; Jesus Christ was born, lived and died on the soil of Asia, and never in his life visited Europe. Well, I happen to be one of those whose whole being is affected by an Asiatic religious concept. I believe in the principle of live and let live; I look upon envy and hate as evils which, if one cannot eradicate altogether from one's nature, one must at least learn to suppress. Is Christianity going to preach any ideal which is contrary to that? I believe, though I am a heathen, in the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind. Is Christianity going to preach anything other than that? My religious education has taught me one thing: tolerance towards one another. It emphasizes that as all rivers flow into the same ocean, all religions lead to the same truth. Has Christianity got to quarrel with that? Is there anything in our life here or in the way we socially and culturally mix with our neighbours belonging to the other
two great communities, is there anything in which you can say that we have done any harm to the Christian principles of life? Such irrational, unfounded allegations lead nowhere. We all realize that we are all here and we shall all be here always, and it will be in the mutual interest of all of us to live happily and harmoniously together.

Fear has been expressed in this Council that because the Indian community has made rapid progress and because the community rapidly increases in numbers, we have somehow become a menace to the interests of the other two communities. There may have been some sort of justification if we had ever attempted to try domination over the other two racial groups; such a fear would then have been well-founded but we realize and we have never made a secret of it that the Fijian interest in this Colony must always remain paramount. We also realize and we assume the responsibility with the other majority communities that the rights and privileges of the minorities ought not to be and must not be an iota less than the rights and privileges enjoyed by the majority. But at the same time, is it not incumbent on the minorities also to appreciate and realize the fact that they cannot expect or hope for privileges and rights in excess of those enjoyed by the majority? Harmonious relationship can only be brought about if we realize these factors. Let me make it plain again as I did previously in this Council, that the day we ask for a common franchise will be the day when we will be fortunate enough to win the confidence and trust of the other two communities, when they themselves will freely and voluntarily come and say, ‘The time has arrived when we are all one; we are not afraid of you because you are predominant in numbers and we can willingly come together under a common franchise.’ I hope and pray that all the three communities will live and work for such an ideal.

Opinion has been expressed in this Council that democracy is something that is horrible and terrible and that one should not touch it even with a barge pole. That only shows one thing: we are afraid of our own fellow beings. We have not got sufficient faith and trust in them; but the world is Marching on; however much we might like it to stop here, it is not going to stop or give us any consideration. There are many of us in this Council whose personal interests have been sacrificed, or may be sacrificed, in the near future at the altar of democracy, but that does not mean that democracy is an evil. We find in this Colony a new spirit: it is due to various factors, due to the impact of outside forces during the last war, due to Fiji being now on the map as a station on the international air routes. There are multiple causes that have created that spirit and it is for us to see that we provided new bottles for new wine. Of course, we should give consideration to the factors that may lead us, if we are not careful, to ultimate disaster.

From all the speeches that I have heard, there seems to be fear and mutual mistrust in all the four groups. The Europeans and the Fijians mistrust us and fear us
Part I: Quest for Equality: The Political Struggle

because we are increasing in numbers. We fear that the Europeans and Fijians might combine against us and might trample upon our legitimate interests. The Government fears that any two racial groups might combine together to the detriment of the remaining racial group; and some of the Members on the Unofficial side fear that the Official group may dominate not only with the assistance or support of any one of the three racial groups but in spite of the concerted opposition of the three groups. Your Excellency mentioned that such an eventuality has not happened. Quite right. It has not happened because, unfortunately, so far, (even though I sincerely wish and desire to see this being achieved in the near future) the Unofficial side has not been able to combine together and offer a united front. The test might come when such an eventuality arises, but whether right or wrong, whether there is any foundation for it or not, the fear does exist and we should take notice of it.

Even if we take all these factors into consideration and face the realities, is there not still scope for improvement and expansion of our present political rights? As far as the Fijian community is concerned, the present system has created an admirable type of cultured and level-headed leadership and produced a leader, a great leader, like the Secretary for Fijian Affairs, 22 who in any community anywhere would be an ornament. But would not my Fijian colleagues realize that the time has come when they should produce not only great chiefs but [also] great commoners. I have found that feeling amongst some of the Fijian commoners who have become politically conscious on account of the impact of outside influences that took place during war-time. Can their aspirations not be conveniently accommodated without prejudice to the interests of the high chiefs and the interests of the Fijian community as a whole? I feel that they can. Amongst my own community, I have heard complaints that the franchise is too narrow, that we, in fact, do not come to the Council returned by the Indian population as a whole but by the comparatively well-to-do literate classes. I have always conscientiously tried to reflect the views and opinions not only of the voters who have sent me to this Council but of the masses that I am supposed to serve; but still that feeling is there and the feeling is genuine. Cannot their aspirations be accommodated? It is just a question of enlarging the size of this Council so that there may be a larger number of seats and a wider franchise so that we will be in a position to get a wider cross-section of opinion from each community which would further the interests of the Colony as a whole. I feel that there is a similar feeling amongst the Europeans also. All this can be done advantageously without bringing any bitterness in our deliberations.

The First Indian Nominated Member expressed his fears that the Muslims as a minority were in need of protection and safeguarding. In this general atmosphere

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of mutual fear and mistrust I do not blame him or his community if they also are suffering from similar maladies. But when he tried to make out—quoting his predecessor in this Council, Mr. Said Hasan—that the Muslims tried twice previously as candidates for election but failed on account of their smallness of numbers, I would like to read the reply given by the then European Member for the Eastern Division because, as it happens, both these Muslims had at one time or another stood for election in that Division. This is what Mr. [Harold] Gibson had to say in reply to Mr. Hasan's complaint:

I am very sorry that this red herring of Muslims versus Hindus has been drawn across the track, and I hope it will not affect the ultimate result. There is no need for special protection of Muslims in Fiji, and indeed our friend the Senior Indian Nominated Member has told us that he is here to request the Muslim interests. We presume that most of the motions he has moved in this Council have been made in the interests of Muslims and, if we reflect, it is wonderful to see how the Hindus have almost always to a man supported him. Indeed one spectator said to me: 'Those Hindu Members always back up the Senior Hindu Member,' I said: 'He is not a Hindu: he is a Muslim.' But if you go back through the records you will see that the Indians always vote together. It was mentioned that Muslims had stood in Labasa on two occasions and had not got in. I told one of them myself that if he stood as an Indian and not as a Muslim he would have a better chance of getting in.

One has also got to remember that one of these Muslim candidates opposed a Christian candidate, and it was the Christian candidate who defeated him. As it happened, the Christian candidate belonged to a still small minority even among the Christians: he was a Roman Catholic. In spite of that he defeated his Muslim rival, and with the votes of the majority of Indian constituents he entered this Council. It was not a case of a candidate belonging to the majority community, namely, the Hindus, defeating a member of the minority community. There is also another convincing example before us in the person of the Indian Member for the Eastern Division who, as he himself told us yesterday, belongs to the Christian minority. The candidate who stood against him at the last election was a member of the majority community, namely, a Hindu, who belonged to one of the most influential Indian families in the Colony; culturally and educationally, he was a member of the Middle Temple; and as far as experience goes, he had served his term of three years in this Council with credit and distinction. If a candidate belonging to a minority community can defeat a candidate with all those advantages and can be elected to this Council I do not see where the fears of my Muslim friends and colleagues come in. I would like to appeal to my Muslim friends that if they like, let the proper type of candidates come out from
their communities and work amongst the people, looking upon themselves as Indians first and Muslims afterwards, and then seek election. I feel certain that they will come to this Council without any difficulty.

Unfortunately, I notice a tendency amongst some of my European friends to encourage that type of separatist feeling amongst the Indians of this Colony. The mover of the motion accused the Government of following the ‘divide and rule’ policy, but I would like to ask some of my European colleagues that when they try to take up cudgels for our minorities, aren't they prompted by the same policy? If they are sincere and genuine and if they look upon Muslims as a community separate and apart from the Indians, it logically follows that we have got not three communities in Fiji but four, namely, Fijians, Europeans, Indians and Muslims. While the Indians, who are about the same in number as the Fijians, will be content to take the same number of seats as the Fijians themselves would ask for, the Europeans also should realize that if they get the same number of seats while they are 6,000 in numbers, they should allow a similar number of seats to the Muslim minority who are 16,000 in numbers. If my European colleagues are prepared to consider that suggestion and give the Muslim minority also the same representation as they themselves enjoy, as I say, the Indians will be content with what the Fijians ask and remain at parity with them; I have no objection, I would willingly support it.

But I would like to point out one thing before I finish this point. The very gentleman who expressed those fears in 1943 and who thought it fit that he should lodge a caveat, only seven days ago, on Thursday, September 16th, had his views expressed in a local paper. Said Mr. Said Hasan, President of the Fiji Muslim League: ‘Hindus and Muslims in Fiji have too much in common to let a war interfere with their relationship.’ He is further reported to have said that in the true sense of the term there are neither Hindus nor Muslims here and that Fiji Indians had much more in common than the two races in India. Well, I would recommend that the views expressed by this gentleman a week ago should be accepted in preference to the fears expressed by him in 1943, and the credit for the removal of such fears should be given to the majority Hindu community. I would like the Hon. Unofficial Members not to be carried away by the bitterness and heat that was brought into this debate but to consider the amendment dispassionately and in an objective manner. We have got to consider the possibilities of constitutional changes having due regard to all problems and difficulties that the presence of three racial groups in this Colony entails; we have got to face these problems and we have got to seek a solution, and a debate is hardly the way in which we can iron out our differences.
If anything, a debate actually accentuates them. The proper place to iron out such differences would be the conference table. If the Members vote for the [constitutional] amendment, it does not necessarily mean that at the conference table they are bound to vote for the change in the present constitution; but at least it will give us an opportunity to come together, to put our heads together and to try in all sincerity to find a solution of the present problems.

The Mover of the motion concluded his speech by quoting Mr. Winston Churchill. I should also like to conclude mine by quoting his famous words. ‘Let us all go forward together.’

12: On Separate Representation for Muslims, 9 December 1949

The Indian community in Fiji has now entered the third generation and, as the saying goes, it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good: the indenture system contributed at least one good thing to the Indian community and that was the social fusion and breaking down of the caste system among the Indians even to the extent of breaking down the religious barriers. Where in India marriages between castes—inter-caste marriages—would have been thought something inconceivable and for which reformers had to sacrifice their lives and yet could not achieve their object, the indenture system by one sweeping blow, shattered the caste system and [made] inter-caste marriages the rule of the day. Inter-marriage was not limited to the various castes of the orthodox Hindus as the word ‘Hindu’ may be used in the religious sense, but it became the rule of the day amongst all Indians in the Colony, whether Muslims, Hindus or Sikhs. I know many prominent Hindus who are the sons of Muslim mothers, and therefore I say that the question of dividing Hindu and Muslim as two separate communities does not arise in Fiji, because not only has there been social intercourse, but there has also been a free mingling of blood and the whole Indian community here has been welded into one racial unit. Socially, too, all these years that I have been in Fiji, I have noticed Hindus participating in Tazia festivals when they were in vogue in Fiji, and Muslims participating in Ramlila festivals. If the Tazia festivals were discontinued in Fiji, they were discontinued at the instance of the Muslims.23 To bring a parallel from thousands of miles away, from India, [which] has reached a critical and transitory stage in her historical development, is like the Roman Catholics and Protestants of this Colony going back into British history, back to the days of the Reformation, and saying that because the Roman Catholics burned the Protestants and the

23 Sunni Muslims as Tazia or Mohurram was a Shia festival commemorating the slaying of Hasan and Hussein, grandsons of Prophet Mohammed.
Protestants burned the Catholics, they are two separate units, and after all these years they should be classed as two separate communities, even in Fiji. We have got to be realistic. There may be certain sections and even among particular sections certain individuals who can only be regarded as fanatical. You find that in every religious group and in every social group. Because of the fanaticism of a few individuals the groups should not be permanently and perpetually segregated.

Complaint has been made about conversion of Muslims, which is called *Shuddhi*. I may say that I have been in this Colony for 20 years and the only instance of *Shuddhi* I came across was in Samabula where one Mohammedan was converted to Arya Samaj. The Hindu religion does not permit proselytizing. A man can only be born a Hindu; he cannot be made a Hindu. So there is no question of a Hindu trying to proselytize either a Christian or a Muslim or a follower of any other religion to Hinduism. And if one instance like that from the Muslim side, of conversion into the Arya Samajist group, makes the Muslim community feel bitter against the Hindu community, who are an innocent third party, then I must say that there is no justice in this world. In this very Colony I know so many Muslims who have been converted to the Christian faith, and yet I have not heard a murmur from the leaders of the Muslim community against the Christians. If the Muslims choose to beat the Hindu community with a big stick whether they are at fault or not, they may do so; but I must say that it does not contribute to the fellow-feeling and good neighbourliness that the mover referred to.

All these years, even now, not only socially and politically but even culturally, we have worked together. We have got the cultural organization here known as the Sangam in which all the people from the South [India] work together in furtherance of their common culture, and I am proud to say that in that organization the Muslims of Southern India work with as much sincerity and enthusiasm as the Hindus, and in that organization, I am proud to say, that my colleague and myself, I as a representative of the Hindus and he as a representative of the Muslims, have never seen any complaint on either side. Well, if we can carry on happily in one organization, why cannot we carry on like that in all organizations, including the political organization of the Colony, which is this Council? After all, every community and every little group have their own pet ideas and idiosyncrasies, but when we are looking at the national aspect, we have to forget them or subordinate them to the larger interests of the community as a whole.

All these years have proved that as far as economic and political interests of the Indian community in Fiji are concerned, there is no question of any conflicting interests between the Muslim and the non-Muslim. Economically we are all subjected to the same conditions, politically also we live under the same
conditions. We are subjected to the same conditions in every respect; we have fought together for progress, shoulder to shoulder, and it has in no way resulted in any disadvantage to the Muslim community. I have not so far heard a complaint either publicly or in private from any member of the Muslim League that the trust and confidence they reposed in their elected Member has been in any way betrayed. If we are going to adopt the principle of separate representation for separate religious groups we must consider the claims of Sikhs and Christians in this Council; and if we follow the reasoning of my friend, even amongst the Christians we will have to make separate provision for the Roman Catholics and the Protestants.

The Imperial Government as early as 1926 or 1927 defined their objective as to the nature of representation in the Colonies in a Paper that was laid on the Table in the House of Commons—that a common franchise and a common roll is an ideal to be desired, to be aimed at and to be achieved. In this Colony some of the racial groups considered that it was not practicable in the present circumstances, however nice, desirable and attractive the idea might be, and we agreed pro tem that the three major communities of Fiji should have separate representation on separate rolls until such time as mutual misunderstanding and mistrust was removed and all the communities agreed to come together. To create yet another group in this Council is straying further away from the ideal instead of coming nearer and, as I pointed out, without any particular reason to justify it.

Still, if it is the feeling of the House that the interests of the Colony can be best served by having four groups in this Council instead of three, and if the Muslims are to be looked upon as a group separate and apart from the Indians, which would consist of Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis and others, then I have only one thing to say. The non-Muslim Indians in Fiji are about the same in number as the Fijians. If they are to be treated as a separate group from the Muslims, they will be satisfied with the same number of Members is this Council as may be given to the Fijians. That is only fair and just. We cannot be expected to take anything less than that. We are not asking for anything more. If the Council thinks that the Muslims should be a separate group and a separate community from the non-Muslim Indians, then, as they are equal in numbers to the Europeans, they should be given the same number of seats as the Europeans. That is the position in short. I am personally convinced that the interests of the Muslims in this Colony have been safeguarded and protected by the Indian Members in this Council right throughout. History has proved that they have no reason for any fear, and yet, if this small community, supported by some of my European colleagues, feel that they should have separate representation, by all means treat them as a separate community. Give them the same number of seats in this Council as are given to the European Members and let the non-Muslim Members have the same [number of seats] as the Fijians. We will be quite satisfied.

In any democratic country, the general election is both a means for the political education of the public as well as a good test for the political progress attained by the general public. An opportunity is provided by the election for different parties to place before the general electorate their own plans for the progress of the country in the different spheres of activity. And in the election campaign the different points of view are brought home to the public. The wisdom of the choice made by the public in the actual election will be a test of the maturity of outlook and the extent of enlightenment which the people have attained.

But this healthy function of an election will be possible only if certain fundamental pre-requisites of the system itself are present. The first and foremost of these is a common electoral roll in which the name of all adults, irrespective of race, sex or religion, are entered. This has been the system obtaining not merely in the United Kingdom but also in all modern democracies. For, all citizens have the same stake, the same rights and privileges and the same duties and responsibilities by his State of which he is a citizen. His religion or colour of skin or the country from which his ancestors originally came, had no relevance whatever to the right discharge of the duties of citizenship.

A common electoral roll is the most effective means of fostering a common outlook of loyalty and citizenship in a country. And that is evidently the reason why that system has been introduced, as the Secretary of State for Colonies stated recently in the House of Commons, in twenty-two British colonies and territories. For territorial elections in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, European and Asian electors are registered in a common roll. And the Governor of Tanganyika has announced his Government’s intention to introduce direct elections on a common roll. So, too, is the case with Uganda and British Guiana. We find it hard to explain why the Common Electoral Roll has not yet been introduced here. And we feign hope that the Secretary of State will, before the next elections in Fiji, be able to include our Colony in the large group of colonies where a Common Roll is in force.

We need not mention here that means can be easily found for giving the representation that the present racial set-up provides for the Europeans, Fijians and Indians in the Legislative Council. But providing for the accommodation of more groups in the Council certainly cannot be in the interests of the Colony. Provision may and can easily be made for the reservation of five seats each in the Council for the Europeans, Fijians and Indians, so that the present distribution of membership in the Council is not disturbed as between the different races.
But the need for the candidates standing for election to approach all the citizens of the Colony will oblige them to consider the interests of the Colony as being more important than the petty interests of his community.

The Fijians would, according to this, have their rightful share in deciding not merely their own representatives in the Council but also the representatives of other races as well. In the early stages, it may be advisable to place before the electorate the panel of Fijian representatives which the Council of Chiefs is at present selecting for the final decision of the Governor. The chiefs will still retain their power in making up the panel. But the Fijian commoner will have some voice in the selection of his representatives. But only the members of the panel can stand as candidates in the general election.

Fiji, we submit to the attention of the British Government, deserves the Common Electoral Roll, at least for the next elections. What is good for Aden and twenty-one other colonies could certainly be useful, nay essential, for our Colony, which we claim to be as progressive and developed as any one of these twenty-two.

14: Last But Not Long!, 1 February 1960

The winds of political change are blowing all over the colonial territories and Fiji cannot hope to remain unaffected. People of Fiji hear about these radical changes on the radio, read about them in newspapers and discuss them in private conversation. People of Fiji compare their lot with that of the people of Hawaii and do not fail to observe the vast contrast. When Fiji is compared with Samoa, which stands on the threshold of independence, the contrast becomes still more glaring.

In the present age of fast world communications, it would be foolish to expect people of Fiji to become Rip Van Winkles and notice nothing. Some of the representatives of big vested interests in Fiji are carrying a concerted propaganda in Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand and in the Legislative Council of Fiji, that no real political change is wanted in Fiji; people only ask for more money; they don’t ask for more votes. Such a propaganda in the latter half of the 20th century, even in the eyes of diehard imperialists abroad, must appear too good to be true.

There are at least three political groups in Fiji at the present moment. The group which advocates no change in the present political set up is the smallest, but most closely knit, and racially, politically and economically the strongest. This group represents the big European interests. Another group consists of the trade unions under extremist leaders who advocate and ask for complete political independence—here and now. It should not be forgotten, that a few days before
the disturbances,24 there was a mammoth meeting at Albert Park under the very shadow of the Secretariat building in Suva, when the demand for independence was raised. One of the members of the Legislative Council was the convener of the meeting.25 It is true that the size of this group in the Colony is not very large at present, it should not be overlooked that it is larger than the diehard group of no-changers and with this important difference that while the number of no-changers remain the same, the number of the extremists is increasing from day to day.

In between this two opposing groups is the big mass of citizens from all races—Indians, Fijians and Europeans—who consider that political reforms are overdue that there should be substantial changes in the constitution of the Legislature providing for an unofficial majority, that the Executive should be made truly responsible to the Legislative Council and that local self-government should be introduced not only in the city of Suva and town of Lautoka but in all the townships and rural areas of Fiji. The constitutional changes should be such as would lead the country gradually and harmoniously to complete independence within a certain number of years. This large group at present is not so closely knit as the diehard group, nor is it so organized as the extremist group. Just now, numerically it is the largest group, represents all the races resident in the Colony, and is anxious to preserve racial harmony in the course of vast political changes which are inevitable. Unless this group organises itself and takes active steps, it will find itself gradually dwindling in numbers while the numbers of the extremists will keep on increasing until the time comes when there will be only two groups standing face to face—the diehards and the extremists.

Those who are in responsible positions should not bury their heads in sand ostrich-fashion, and pretend that people of Fiji want no political changes. It is often said that Fiji will be the last Colony to go out of Britain’s colonial empire. That may be so. But it may not be very long before she does.

15: An Astounding Statement, 3 March 1960

People are astonished at the statement reported to have been made by the Governor, Sir Kenneth Maddocks, in Auckland to the effect ‘that strife was largely between the two major racial groups, Fijians and Indians’. One wonders how a person holding such a high rank of responsibility can make an assertion so manifestly incorrect. It may not have occurred to His Excellency that such a tendentious statement is likely to cause lot of harm.

24 This refers to the strike in the oil industry in Suva in 1959.
25 BD Lakshman.
Luckily in this Colony, there is no strife between any races, and least of all between Fijians and Indians. Whenever occasions have arisen, these two great races have demonstrated their sense of solidarity and unity unmistakably. The strife in the Colony, if it can be so called, is really between the gigantic industrial and commercial concerns of the Colony and their underpaid workers who generally come from Fijian, Indian and other under-privileged races resident in the Colony. The struggle between them is going on since 1943 and as the workers get more united and better organized, the conflict is getting keener with the chances of success for the workers improving every day.

In 1943, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company’s workers demonstrated complete unity which led to the rise in wages, improvement in living quarters and increase in concessions. More than that, the 1943 strike made the Colonial Sugar Refining Company realize the value and necessity of good relations with its employees. The Public Works Department, which unfortunately goes hand in hand with these big concerns, was the next to realize the impact of workers' solidarity. The 1958 strike in the C.S.R’s mills made it abundantly clear that any attempt to divide workers on racial lines, caused resistance and resulted in welding them more solidly together. The Part- European workers joined Indians and Fijians and all of them made themselves stronger in the bargaining sphere. The 1959 strike in the oil trade further forged this unity into a strong unbreakable chain, and if there is any further industrial trouble, which we hope not, it is almost certain that workers of all races and ranks will join together with even greater unity than ever before to face such trouble.

The vested interests and the Government are trying to divert the attention of the people here and abroad from the real issues of low wages and poor living conditions of the working class by raising a bogey of Indian over-population calculated to bring about, if not actual hostility, at least apprehensiveness among other races and especially the Fijians. The propaganda may have some little effect in the beginning, but the way it is carried on persistently and ad nauseam in time and out of time, has flogged it into a dead horse, which now cannot be revived and made to serve their purpose. The rank and file of Fijians and Indians do and will always stick together in spite of any such propaganda to divide them. They will move forward together to attain their goal, but even in their March, they will extend their hands in friendship to other races in the Colony. Fijians and Indians realize that harmony and friendliness among all races is a sine qua non for a bright and happy future.
Constitutional reforms are long overdue in Fiji. While some of the territories, the peoples of which are not as advanced as those of Fiji, have already received self-government, Fiji’s Constitution still stands where it was 25 years ago. The European vested interests who oppose the change lay an over-emphasis on the multi-racial composition of the Colony’s population. Almost all the colonies which have attained self-government are multi-racial and it has not so proved a serious obstacle in their case. There is no reason why it should prove an insurmountable obstacle in the constitutional progress of Fiji. If Fiji is going to be a self-governing country in future, it is essential that a political consciousness of nationhood should be established and fostered among all races. This can be brought about only by bringing all people of the Colony politically together irrespective of their race or creed or sex.

A universal adult suffrage based on a common electoral roll is the *sine qua non* of any real constitutional change. A common electoral roll is opposed by the European community on the ground that the Indians and Fijians being in a majority, the Europeans will be swamped and will have no chance of being elected to the Legislative Council. To allay their fears a provision should be made for reservation of certain seats for Fijian, Indian and European members based on a common roll. The present constitution is highly biased in favour of the Europeans and against the Indians and Fijians. This should be immediately rectified by providing for six Fijian, six Indian and three European members. There should be no nominated members on the unofficial side and there should be an unofficial majority in the Council.

The Government proposal of inviting the unofficial members of the Executive Council to undertake supervisory duties over government departments on condition that they will have to accept the majority decision of the Executive Council in which the official members will be in a majority and will have to either support the government or resign from the Executive Council, in effect compels an unofficial member of the Executive Council to fall into line with the Colonial Government. Instead of being responsible to the people, the ‘members’ or ministers will be responsible to the colonial bureaucracy. As long as they support the colonial rule, they will be considered ‘responsible.’ As soon as they choose to stand by their own constituents and oppose colonial rule, they will be considered irresponsible and thrown out of the Executive Council. The use of the phrase ‘ministerial responsibility’ in the Government’s proposal is the greatest abuse of the phrase we have so far come across in the constitutional terminology. The heads of government departments or a colonial government have been trained in and are used to autocratic rule.
Colonial rule is the very antithesis of a responsible government and before claiming to teach ministerial responsibility to the elected representatives of the people, the heads of the departments have to learn to give up the authoritarian methods to which they have been used and to learn to respect and abide by the opinions and judgments of the people as reflected through their elected representatives in the legislature. It is sheer waste of time and money to adopt the government's proposal about training members in the Executive Council for the so-called ministerial responsibility. It presupposes that the members and ministers who have stuck to the government will become chosen ministers of the people when Fiji attains self-government, when it is quite obvious that they will become stooges of a colonial bureaucracy in the eyes of the people and as soon as the transfer of power takes place such stooges will most likely be swept out in the very first elections. This has happened in other colonies and it is sure to happen in Fiji.

There is no reason why the Fijians should not have equal political rights with the members of other races. The Government's proposal for Fijian representation partly by direct election and partly by election from the Council of Chiefs places the Fijian in an inferior political position. This should not be allowed. It will only create a political inferiority complex among the Fijians. The provision for allowing Fijian civil servants to stand for election can only result in there being in fact no real Fijian representative to look after Fijian interests. Being paid Government servants their first loyalty and complete obedience will be and ought to be to the government. Fijian interests can be best safeguarded by independent representatives. They should be placed on the same footing as Europeans and Indians in the election of their representatives. The Legislative Council under its present composition does not represent the people of Fiji. Even the unofficial side which consists of three Europeans and three Indians elected on a restricted electoral roll while the other nine unofficial members are either the nominees of the Governor or the Council of Chiefs, are far from being the real representatives or the people. The Government's proposals, in fact, deform the present Constitution instead of reforming it. Whatever the Legislative Council may say upon the subject when it comes before it, it is definite that it does not meet the approval of a large majority of the people of Fiji.

17: Welcome to Sir Derek Jakeway, 24 February 1964

Your Excellency

We the Indian people assembled here today on behalf of the Indian Community extend to you and Lady Jakeway a hearty welcome.
Fiji is indeed most fortunate to have a person of your ability, experience and understanding as our Governor at a time which is crucial, if not critical, in its political evolution towards a self-governing state. We feel confident that the important part which you must have played in the course of your service in other colonies in their political and economic development will prove to be of great help and benefit to the people of Fiji at this juncture. Though Fiji is a multi-racial and multi-religious country, we are proud to say that all the races and religions live side by side in harmony and peace to a degree which is rarely found in other parts of the world. In our humble opinion, this is a good asset to start with in the building of a nation, and in that most urgent and important task, we pledge you our full co-operation and support.

Under the present and past constitutions, the three important races of the Colony viz the Indians, the Fijians, and the Europeans, are kept politically separate and apart in their representation in the legislative and municipal councils. A vast majority of Indians live on their farms, Fijians mostly live in their villages and the Europeans are largely concentrated in urban and industrial centres. The social contact between the three races, therefore, is not as much as one would desire. Our community will co-operate and participate in any measures which may be devised to promote social and political integration and understanding between all races residing in the Colony.

Your Excellency’s arrival in the Colony coincides with the inauguration of the 1964–68 Development Plan in which the emphasis is rightly placed on the increase in the agricultural production. Our community is engaged mainly in agriculture and is well known for its thrift, industry, capacity for sustained effort and skill. If Indian farmers are provided with sufficient land and facilities for marketing the produce at economic price, they can play a very important role in the economic development and in raising the standard of living of the people of this Colony. We hope and trust that our people will be given adequate opportunities to undertake and fulfill their responsibilities in this all-important sector of economic progress.

All civilized countries of the world are at present engaged in eradicating poverty, ignorance and disease from their midst. Fiji is also trying to do it in a modest way. To win peace, prosperity and happiness for the people of Fiji, it is necessary to wage a war on these three great enemies of mankind. We hope and trust that measures will be taken and efforts will be intensified to eradicate them from our midst as far as possible. Fiji, like other countries, naturally has its own problems, but, we believe, they are capable of solution by mutual good will and understanding and by a spirit of give and take.
Though the duties which you may be called upon to perform during your Governorship may prove to be difficult and onerous, we feel sure that with the ability, experience and energy which you possess in an abundant measure will help you in discharging them for the benefit and welfare of the people of Fiji.

In the end we pray to Almighty God that your Excellency, Lady Jakeway and your children be pleased with good health, happiness, prosperity and long lives. May He make your and Lady Jakeway’s stay amongst us enjoyable and happy.

With this prayer, I again extend to you and Lady Jakeway a very hearty welcome.

On behalf of the Indian Community,
AD Patel
Churchill Park, Lautoka

18: Protest Letter to Sir Derek Jakeway,
24 January 1965

Your Excellency

We strongly protest against Your Excellency’s statement which you made about the Indian community of Fiji in Australia during your recent visit there. In particular, we take strong exception to two statements made by you, namely, ‘that it was inconceivable that Britain would ever permit the Fijian people to be placed politically under the heels of an immigrant community.’ So far as the placing the native communities under the heels of immigrant communities is concerned, British history has consistently followed this practice in many countries, the outstanding examples being South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Singapore. It is, therefore, historically conceivable as far as British policy is concerned. Even in the case of Fiji at present, both the Indian and the Fijian communities are placed under the heels of a very small immigrant community, namely the Europeans. Your statement therefore is historically incorrect. The Indians have always taken sincere interest in the progress, prosperity and welfare of the Fijians and have looked upon them as fellow countrymen. Never has the Indian community harboured any intention to place the Fijians under their heels. The statement is, therefore, mischievous and creates a totally false impression both abroad and in Fiji that the Indians are out to politically dominate the Fijians and the Colonial Office is trying to prevent it. The statement in this respect is grossly untrue and mischievous. Besides, it tends to create mistrust in the minds of the Fijians against the Indians at a time when it is absolutely necessary to establish mutual trust and confidence.
between the two races. As the Head of the Government of Fiji, in our humble opinion, the obligation to see that there is harmony and confidence between the two races rests on your shoulders.

As to the question of self-government, we have made it abundantly clear that Fiji should have full internal self-government immediately. It is therefore misleading to say that ‘Indians do not want self-government because they fear racial strife.’ This statement naturally worries the Indian community. Mr. Nigel Fisher26 when he visited Fiji in 1963 announced that the British Government will honour the Deed and the [Salisbury] Despatch equally and that Indians will also have the same right as others.

We do not know if the change of Government in Britain caused any change in that policy. We would therefore be very grateful if you will forward this letter to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies in order to find out whether there has been any change in the policy.

We regret to say that these statements have rudely shaken the confidence and trust the Indian community had in Your Excellency’s impartiality which is so essential at this critical stage in the history of this Colony. It has also caused suspicion in our minds as to the bon fides and sincerity of the British Government.

We believe that the preservation and promotion of harmony and confidence between Indians and Fijians are of utmost importance and the Government has an obligation to work positively towards that end. We from our side conscientiously and faithfully try to work towards that goal and refrain from saying anything which will give offence to the other side. Unfortunately some elements among the Europeans and the ‘Fiji Times’ are resorting to methods designed to ignite ill-feeling between the two races and to fan the fire. We are grieved to find that the Fiji Broadcasting Commission for whose activities the Government is responsible, is also joining forces with these reactionary elements to refer to the activities of the Federation Party, to which the Fijian Association had taken strong exception. This was evidently done to inflame the people of the Federation Party against the Fijian Association and thereby drive a wedge between these two most important political organizations in the country and at the same time pouring out his malice towards the Federation Party by using such an abusive and insulting language. What is more, when the Federation Party approached the management through its legal advisor, it admitted the use of this abusive and insulting word27 and tried to justify its use. We should like to know what steps the Government proposes to take in this matter and so to ensure that the radio is used to promote good will and understanding between the two races and not to pull them apart and be at loggerheads with each other.

26 Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonies (July 1962–October 1963).
27 The word was ‘Badmaash’, meaning ‘Hooligan’.
We deeply regret that we have to take up this matter with Your Excellency, highly unpleasant as it is, because we consider that harmonious race relations are vital in this country at all times and more especially at the moment.

19: Public Notice (Undated, 1965)

As the people of Fiji are aware, it is likely that a Conference to consider the new constitution for Fiji will be held in the near future.

The Indian members of the Legislative Council invite representations or suggestions on the question of future constitution for Fiji from Indian organizations, groups and individuals.

The subject matter of the representations or suggestions should cover, among other things, the following:

2. Whether there should be a link between the Crown and Fiji and if so, the nature of such relationship.
3. Composition of the legislature and method of election.
4. Composition of the Executive and its power.
5. Necessary safeguards for the rights of individuals and communities and how they should be preserved.

Such representations or suggestions may be sent to any Indian Member of the Legislative council or to the office of the Member for Social Services in Suva, at any time before the 9th January, 1965.

AD Patel
AIN Deoki
CA Shah
CP Singh
J Madhavan
SM Koya
May it please Your Excellency

With due respect, we very much regret to inform you that we strongly resent the remarks made by you in the Conference of the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council this morning to the effect that the selection of the Indian Delegates to the proposed London Constitutional Conference (which was based on a majority decision) was unreasonable and quite unacceptable to you.

We must place on record that at the December Conference we gathered the impression that each racial group would be entitled to select its delegates for the London Constitutional Conference to enable the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies to issue invitations. At no time we were told that such selection should be made by unanimous vote and we venture to say that such a suggestion, if made, would have been bitterly opposed by our side. In the proceedings of the Legislative Council and other matters connected therewith, the democratic form of taking decision by majority is followed without exception, and we fail to see why you should require an unanimous decision on the part of the Indian members on this matter.

We also resent the interference of any member of another racial group in the selection of the delegates from our group. This morning’s incident has given us a strong impression that this is being done to introduce discord and disunity on the Indian side at the London Constitutional Conference thereby placing the Indian Community at a disadvantage vis a vis the Fijians and Europeans. For the conference to succeed in its undertaking, it is imperative that the delegates of each racial group are able to speak with one voice and have the confidence, trust and the backing of the community they represent.

We would like to point out that the organization of the Federation Party is an attempt to introduce party system in the legislature but it does not mean that we only represent the people belonging to that party. As a matter of fact, we enjoy the confidence and trust of a vast majority of the Indians. There is no sectional or minority interest in the Indian Community represented by the Honourable C.P. Singh which is not represented by us and further we represent many such interests which neither of them do.

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28 The petition was signed by SM Koya, CA Shah and James Madhavan, when AD Patel was Member for Social Services.
Furthermore, during the 1963 election, one of the platforms of the three elected members (who are signatories to this letter), was that representations should be made to bring about constitutional changes to give Fiji internal self-government, and we claim that a specific mandate was given to us on this subject.

In order to obtain invitation to the London Constitutional Conference it appears that Messrs. Deoki and Singh got busy to magnify existing differences in the Indian community and tried to create artificial minority interests. This tends to create sheer mischief and further discord and disunity at a time when unity is most essential. In our view, it is important that the United Kingdom Government should know at the London Constitutional Conference what the Indians as a whole want and not the individuals or splinter groups.

In the circumstances, we would request that this letter be forwarded to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

21: Resolutions passed at the AGM of the Federation Party at Lautoka, 25 April 1965

Resolution No.1

THAT this Annual General Meeting of the Federation Party

DECLARERES

a) that certain vested interests and organizations in Fiji and in particular, the Fiji Times, the Public Relations Office and the Fiji Broadcasting Commission, have in the past, deliberately published distorted news concerning the proposed constitutional changes for Fiji, concerning inter-racial harmony in Fiji and concerning the political rights and views of the Indians in Fiji;

b) that they have transmitted such distorted news overseas with the sole object of creating animosity, misunderstanding and disharmony between the different racial communities living in Fiji; and

c) that they have created an atmosphere of mistrust and misunderstanding among the people of Fiji on matters aforementioned at a time when Fiji is going through its critical stage of political development, and

IT ASSERTS

That in the light of the facts stated above, it is inconceivable that any good purpose would be served by holding further discussions in Fiji between the Honourable Members of the Legislative Council on constitutional matters and,
IT DIRECTS

Its members, Messrs. A.D. Patel, S.M. Koya, C.A. Shah and J. Madhavan, not to hold any such discussions in Fiji with other Honourable Members of the Legislative Council but to present their views and opinions at the proposed Constitutional Conference to be held in London in the month of July, 1965.

Resolution No.2

That this Annual General Meeting of the Federation Party hereby expresses its fullest confidence in the four Honourable Members of the Legislative Council namely, Messrs. A.D. Patel, C.A. Shah, J. Madhavan and S.M. Koya in their respective ability and integrity to present the Indian Community’s case at the forthcoming Constitutional Conference to be held in London in the month of July, 1965 and it empowers them to make all such representations and submissions which they may think fit and proper in their absolute discretion on all matters to be discussed at the said Conference with a view to obtaining fair, just and equitable rights for the Indians in Fiji and with the view to making a nation out of the several communities who live in and belong to Fiji.

Resolution No.3

That this Annual General Meeting of the Federation Party requests the Government of Fiji, the Native Land Trust Board, the Legislative Council of Fiji and all parties concerned to take all appropriate steps as soon as practicable to bring about a satisfactory solution concerning the problems affecting the security of tenure of leased lands, renewability of leases and compensation in cases of termination of leases and recognises that these problems exercise the minds of tenants of all races and that a satisfactory solution to these problems is of vital importance to the economic life of the Colony.

Resolution No.4

That this Annual General Meeting of the Federation Party deplores the action of the staff of the Public Relations Office, Suva, when they intentionally and deliberately distorted and incorrectly translated the Jagriti version of the address given by the party’s President, the Honourable Mr. A.D. Patel, at a meeting of the Party held on Sunday the 4th April, 1965, at the Century Theatre, Suva, which said translation has been published in Fiji and abroad and it declares that it has no confidence in the staff of the said Office.
A Vision for Change: Speeches and Writings of AD Patel, 1929-1969

22: Letter to Sir Derek Jakeway, 30 April, 1965

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 27th April, 1965. In reply, I wish to draw your attention to the statement of the previous Governor in the Legislative Council in 1961 [Sir Kenneth Maddocks] on the proposed Membership System, in which he stated: ‘On appointment members would be required to give an undertaking to accept collective responsibility; that means that when policy matters are considered in Executive Council all members both official and unofficial would as at present be free to advise and express their views according to their conscience. Once a decision has been taken in Executive Council, however, then all would be bound by it whether it represents their personal view or not, or resign.’

This was the extent of collective responsibility when the Portfolio of Social Services was offered to me and I agreed and accepted it.

When you informed me by letter dated 29th June, 1964 that I shall be designated the Member for Social Services from 1st July, 1964 you sent me notes for the guidance of the members of the Executive Council under the membership system with the said letter:

Executive Council will continue to be advisory to His Excellency the Governor as at present and all important matters of policy will continue to be decided by the Governor-in-Council. There will be, however, one very important change in that there will in future be collective responsibility of members of the Executive Council in the formulation and implementation of Government Policy. If any member disagrees with any policy decided in Executive Council to the extent that he is not prepared to bear his share of collective responsibility for that decision then the proper course for him is to resign.

In paragraph 7 under the same heading reads as follows:

29 The letter was written to Patel after the annual general meeting of the Federation Party in April 1965 had criticized the Fiji Broadcasting Commission for broadcasting misleading and at times inaccurate news about the activities of the party, expressing ‘no confidence’ in the FBC. Jakeway wrote: ‘I must ask you to say, explicitly and immediately, whether you associate yourself with these statements in so far as they affect the Public Relations Office, which is a Government Department. You will realise that anything other than a public disassociation from these attacks on the Public Relations Office must bring into question your continued membership of the Executive Council.’

30 The Membership System was introduced on 1 July 1964. Ratu Kamisese Mara was Member for Natural Resources, JN Falvey Member for Communications and Works and AD Patel Member for Social Services. Patel’s portfolio included cultural activities, education, health, prisons, social welfare and ‘societies.’ Heads of Departments retained full internal control of their departments, and were directly responsible to the Colonial Secretary in all matters relating to the civil service, to the Member in all matters relating to functional operations, and to the Financial Secretary in matters of financial administration.
In view of the doctrine of collective responsibility all unofficial members of the Executive Council will be required fully to support and defend Government policy in Legislative Council and in public.

I have supported the decisions taken in the Executive Council and shared responsibility both in the Legislative Council and in public. When I accepted the office I accepted responsibility only to the extent mentioned in the notes and no further.

Considering that under the Membership System I am supposed to undertake collective responsibility as stated above without any power or authority whatsoever, I am not prepared to agree to the extension of the responsibility to defend the actions of civil servants or to defend them against public criticism.

I found it difficult to carry on as a Member when all that I can do is to persuade the Heads of Departments one the one hand and you on the other. Sometimes I have succeeded, at other times I have failed. But I have continued, in the face of difficulties, to give such a one-sided system a fair trial and you must admit that I have faithfully carried out responsibilities in the formulation and implementation of government policies.

Some time ago, Mr. SM Koya, Mr. J Madhavan, Mr. CA Shah and myself complained to you about the Fiji Broadcasting Commission calling the members of the Federation Party 'Badmash' in its Hindi broadcast, which term is grossly abusive, insulting and provocative. Your reply was that you did not know the meaning of the word and Government had no control over the Fiji Broadcasting Commission as it was a self-financing body. You can hardly expect me to say that the Fiji Broadcasting Commission was impartial in applying that epithet to me and my colleagues.

As regards the Public Relations Office, if it wants to translate what appears in the Hindi periodicals and disseminate translations in English within the Colony and abroad, it is the duty of the office to ensure that the translations are correct and accurate.

Any translation of a Hindi article into English must of necessity be a deliberate and intentional act on the part of the translator. How can it be said that the translation of the ‘Jagriti’ version of my speech by the Public Relations Office was not deliberate and intentional? I know Hindi and English languages very well and therefore I personally know that the translation is wrong, misleading and mischievous, while you and Mr. Hackett, neither of whom possess any knowledge of the Hindi language and who have therefore to depend upon hearsay opinions, wish me to uphold the action of the Public Relations Office on its translations!

31 The name of the Hindi weekly which was an organ of the Federation Party. The name means ‘New Age.’
32 EJF Hackett was Fiji’s Public Relations Officer.
I assert that my view of the translation is correct and I am entitled to ask you, what steps you have taken against the person who translated that article.

In the end, I wish to emphasise that I have joined the Government to serve my people—not to forsake them; and I am not prepared to sell my soul for a mess of potage.

I am prepared to resign if you or the Secretary of State so wish.

23: Sir Derek Jakeway to Patel, 6 May 1965

Dear Mr. Patel

Thank you for your letter of 30\textsuperscript{th} April.\textsuperscript{33} The Governor-in-Council is the supreme executive authority in this Colony. The Civil Service is its agent for the execution of policy. Members of the Executive Council, whether with or without portfolio, are by convention expected to refrain from public criticism of the organization which serves them. No one is called upon to ‘defend the wrong acts of Civil Servants or defend them from criticism.’

If members of Executive Council have cause to be dissatisfied with the actions of a Government department or officers thereof, the correct procedure is to report to the Colonial Secretary. In this particular instance, I am quite sure that the Colonial Secretary will carefully investigate any complaints made to him. If a prima facie case of negligence or misconduct is established, disciplinary proceedings as prescribed in Colonial Regulations will be instituted.

As regards the Fiji Broadcasting Commission, it is correct to say that I have no administrative control over the organization. Nevertheless, the Commission is by statute required to maintain a broadcasting service ‘as a means of information, education, and entertainment and to develop its service to the best advantage and interests of the Colony.’ By virtue of my power of appointment to the Commission, I have a responsibility for ensuring that the statutory duties of the Commission are faithfully carried out. The offensive reference which you quote in your letter was mentioned to me in the course of a discussion with you and other members of the Federation Party but I did not construe it to be in the nature of a complaint that I should take up. The correct procedure, if you wish

\textsuperscript{33} At first the Governor was inclined to take a hard-line against Patel but soon realized the folly of this course of action. He needed Patel in the Executive Council. Trafford Smith of the Colonial Office wrote to him on 17 May 1965: ‘I feel sure that your decision that the balance of advantage lies in giving Patel the opportunity of remaining in the Government is the wise and right one. Let us hope that he does so and that the whole incident has not so seriously undermined the confidence of the other communities in the Indians as to make progress between now and the conference impossible.’
to pursue this, or any other instance of bias on the part of the Fiji Broadcasting Commission, should be to make representations direct to the Fiji Broadcasting Commission or to the Colonial Secretary.

Membership of the Executive Council involves participation in the Government. It does not stifle criticism of the Government, its officers or statutory bodies but it does imply direction of such criticism through different channels. A member cannot enjoy the advantage of operating from the inside and retain all the freedom of being on the outside. He cannot have it both ways.

I value your membership of the Executive Council and believe it to be in the national interest that you should continue to be a member and to retain your portfolio. I realize that this from time to time presents you with a conflict of loyalties, and I have hitherto much admired the way in which you have reconciled that conflict. At this juncture, in particular, it would be setback to the ideal of national unity for which we are both striving if the leader of the majority Indian party withdrew from the Government. If you share this view I hope you will refrain from active association with words or deeds which make it impossible to reconcile your continuation in the Government with the principle of collective responsibility and the conventions which surround that principle.

Yours sincerely
Derek Jakeway.

24: Memorandum to Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council, April 1965

Gentlemen,

I beg to thank you all for responding to my invitation and attending this meeting.

You will remember that when the idea was first mooted that unofficial members of the Legislative Council should hold meetings in Fiji among and between themselves on the proposed constitutional changes, it was generally agreed that the sole purpose of such meetings would be to ascertain and determine the areas of agreement and disagreement on the subjects under discussion. We have had three (3) such meetings under the chairmanship of His Excellency the Governor and an additional meeting under the chairmanship of the Honourable Ratu Edward Cakobau. On a close analysis of the matters already discussed at these meetings and those which appear on the Paper circulated to the Honourable Members by His Excellency the Governor, it is abundantly clear that we have now reached the stage that nearly all the remaining subjects for discussion are controversial and on which it is very unlikely any agreement would be reached in Fiji.
Bearing these points in mind, I have, nonetheless, decided to give an outline of my views and those of my colleagues why we advocate Common Roll and oppose Communal Roll in Fiji. I appreciate that some of you gentlemen would not agree with the views I now express but I assure you that they are being put forward so that you may seriously consider them before going to London.

Our case for Common Roll as against Communal Roll is as follows:

a). It is only through making one nation out of Fiji that we can achieve the sort of future we want for everybody. This goal can only be achieved if we accept Common Roll system of election.

b). Common Roll has been successful in a plural society. Examples are the former East and West African Colonies.

c). Common Roll will encourage the citizens to organise political parties along national lines and in the long run compel everyone else to think in terms of his country rather than a particular race, community or religion.

d). Communal Roll stands for divided loyalties, it inhibits national consciousness among the people; it is generally identified with religious fanaticism or racial separatism or economic or social privilege.

e). Communal Roll can be a serious obstacle to the successful operation of parliamentary democracy. The elected representatives of a racial or religious sub-community cannot afford to subordinate the interests of their people to those of larger community. Whether elected as independents, members of a communal party, or even as members of a party professing to transcend communal lines, they will not accept party discipline in a way to offend the group upon whose support their political future depends. It will inhibit the formation of secular parties. Success in politics will depend upon reflecting exactly the communal interests and prejudices. Compromise will be rendered difficult and relative party strength may be frozen for long periods because a party can grow only with an increase in the size of the community upon which it is based. In such a case government formed by one, or a coalition of two or more of these communal parties may not be able to meet the challenge of urgent social problems and a breakdown of representative government may occur, because the legislators and executives are prevented by communal loyalties from attacking the problems in a common sense fashion.

f). Communal Roll tends to magnify communal differences and new communities discover themselves as further claims to separate representation are lodged.

g). Communal Roll, to the best of my knowledge, has been abandoned (with a few exceptions) by all the countries of the world.
I do take into account and appreciate the reasons why some of you gentlemen find it difficult to accept Common Roll at this stage. On the other hand, it is pleasing to note that generally speaking a number of us have accepted Common Roll in principle but they only wish to postpone its application till some future time.

I sincerely believe that our salvation lies in making one nation out of Fiji and for this and this reason alone, my colleagues and I commend our proposal for a Common Roll to you for your serious and earnest consideration.

AD Patel

25: Member of Social Services Office Notes, Pre-1965 constitutional conference

The Constitution should empower the local government to conclude trade agreements with other countries and provide for further delegations of authority to be made by British government.

1. Should there be independence with a special treaty vesting foreign affairs and defense in Britain as in case of Western Samoa?
2. Should there be only internal self-government?
3. What would be the extent of self-government?
4. Should the field of self-government be inviolable?
5. Would the British Government explicitly agree that it would be improper to encroach upon it?
6. Should the Crown retain full power of Constitutional amendment?
7. Should it retain unlimited legislative powers, exercisable by Governor-in-Council?
8. In whom should responsibility for external affairs be vested?
9. Should Fiji have power to conclude trade agreements with other countries?
10. Should Constitution provide for further delegation of authority in external affairs by the British Government?
11. Should responsibility for defense be with the British Government?
12. Should there be power vested in the Governor to stifle Bills and to refuse the royal assent to Bills excepting his responsibilities for defense and external affairs?
13. Should power be vested in the Crown to disallow Bills on similar grounds?
14. Should power of disallowance be limited only to acts prejudicially affecting the interests of the [illegible] of colonial government’s [illegible]
15. Governor should not summon, preside at, or attend cabinet meetings.
16. Ex-Officio members of the present Executive Council should be withdrawn.
17. Should cabinet meeting come under the full control of Prime Minister?
18. The Prime Minister must be under constitutional duty to keep the Governor fully informed on all relevant matters of government.
19. How should the Prime Minister be appointed?
20. How should other ministers be appointed?
21. If the Prime Minister vacates, should the offices of ministers automatically become vacant?
22. Ministers will be individually and collectively responsible to the legislative.
23. The Executive should follow Westminster model of responsible government.
24. If a new appointment to the office of Governor becomes necessary, it should be made after consultation with local government.
25. Should be one house legislature.
26. There should be no Ex-Officio members.
27. There should be no nominated members—official or unofficial.
28. There should be no communal members elected on communal rolls.
29. There should be no communal and non-communal members elected on separate, non-communal mathematically weighted rolls.
30. No communal and non-communal members elected by the Legislative Council [?] itself.
31. No specially elected and nationally elected members.
32. No multi-member constituencies.
33. Should there be proportional representation?
34. Should be one man, one vote, one value.
35. There should be universal suffrage.
36. There should be single member constituencies, and the first-past-the-post system.
37. The Legislative Assembly should be wholly elected.
38. The Speaker should be elected by the Assembly from among its own members.

39. In fixing dates of sessions and proceedings of the Legislative Council, the Governor will act on advice of the Cabinet.

40. The Governor will exercise powers of dissolution in accordance with rules similar to the conventions obtaining in the United Kingdom.

41. The royal power of disallowance will probably cover only acts prejudicial to the interests of colonial stock holding.

42. Delimitation of electoral constituencies should be kept to the independent Electoral Commission.

43. The government should have the right to hire and fire and control of all government servants.

44. There should be a Public Service Commission which will be merely an advisory board.

45. A Police Service Commission will also be an advisory board.

46. There should be Judicial Service Commission comprising a majority of judges among its members with the Chief Justice as its chairman.

47. There must be legislative authority for any public expenditure.

48. Provide for votes on estimates, the appropriation of supply, and unforeseen contingencies.

26: Opening Address to the 1965 Constitutional Conference, 26 July 1965

I thank you [Secretary of State] and the United Kingdom Government for the kind invitation and welcome extended us to this historic Conference which is called to smelt the existing system of government in the Colony of Fiji and to forge and mould a new Constitution which, I hope, will lead our country to complete independence in the not too distant future.

Political liberty, equality and fraternity rank foremost among the good things of life, and mankind all over the world cherishes and holds these ideals close to its heart. The people of Fiji are no exception. Without political freedom, no country can be economically, socially or spiritually free.

We in Fiji, as in many undeveloped countries of the world, are faced with the three most formidable enemies of mankind, namely, Poverty, Ignorance, and Disease. We need political freedom to confront these enemies and free our minds, bodies and souls from their clutches.
Needless to say, when I refer to political freedom I mean democracy under the rule of law, the sort of freedom which the British people and the people of United States enjoy. We need freedom which will politically, economically and socially integrate the various communities living in Fiji and make out of them one nation deeply conscious of the responsibilities and tasks which lie ahead.

I call this Conference important and historic because it is the first Conference of its kind in the history of Fiji and it may very well prove the beginning of the end of a form of government which stands universally condemned in the modern world.

I have come to this Conference with faith and trust in British people and their government which has set peoples of other colonies free and has led them on the path of economic and cultural development. After all, Fiji’s problems are not as difficult or formidable as those which some of the colonies, which are now independent, have had to face and solve.

We, from our side, promise you full co-operation and serious consideration in the deliberations which lie ahead in this Conference.

We have all got to guard ourselves against avoiding right decisions because they are unpleasant or run counter to our ingrained habits of preconditioned thought, or taking wrong decisions because they appear advantageous in the short run.

We must appreciate the fact that we owe great responsibility, not only to the people of the present generation but also of generations to come.

We have to resist the temptation of driving the boat on the shallow waters because of the fear that it will rock heavily if we steered it on the right course. Bearing all this in mind let us bend to the tasks before us.

In the end I pray to Almighty God who led the crown colonies like Australian and New Zealand to full independence, may He also lead us and our country to the same destination safely and in good heart.

Again, I most sincerely thank you, Sir, for your kind welcome.

27: Interview with Malcolm Billings, BBC, 31 July, 1965

Malcolm Billings asked AD Patel about the ‘consternation’ his opening address at the conference caused, and if he had expected this reaction.
Patel: No. As a matter of fact this consternation arose from some misconception about the words self-government and independence. We have right from the start advocated that Fiji should have full internal self-government. But at present we are not asking for complete independence. What I said in my speech was that we should be in a position to attain complete independence in the not too distant future on the same lines as Australia and New Zealand.

Billings: This seemed to suggest though that you were hoping that independence would be put on the agenda.

Patel, Uh, no, at this stage we are not going to discuss anything about what form complete independence should take.

Billings: When do you think Fiji will be ready for internal self-government?

Patel: I believe that Fiji is already ready for internal self-government. Comparing conditions in Fiji with, say, conditions in Western Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands—we are far ahead of them and I believe we can manage our own internal affairs as those countries.

Billings: Your critics say that if electoral changes are brought about, and internal self-government comes, there would be racial friction because of fears of racial domination by the Indians.

Patel: That is a mere fiction. As a matter of fact, to start with, Indians stand to lose. I would ask those people who are afraid of domination just to go through the figures of how many Indians are above the age of twenty who will be eligible for a vote. As a matter of fact, though we are in a majority, many of our people are more or less under 21.

Billings: But your majority is going to increase with the years because you are multiplying at a faster rate than the Fijians.

Patel: Even then we are spread out in such a way that our surplus votes are not going to get us surplus seats in the Council, as it happens in many countries, including Great Britain. Labour would be in a majority but their votes are concentrated in the industrial areas, so those votes are lost as far as the properties of winning seats are concerned. And I would not be surprised if there are more Fijians returned to the Legislative Council from the vote than Indians, in spite of our numerical superiority, because our votes will be wasted.

Billings: In the future could you ever see Fiji independence along the lines of Indian independence?

Patel: If by Indian independence you mean severing the connections with the Crown and establishing a republic, I say no.
Billings: When do you think Fiji could stand on its own two feet independent of any other nation?

Patel: I think it will take a long time before she can do that, but there is a good prospect of very interesting political developments arising out of Fiji’s position in the Pacific region. Time might come when all the various territories in the South Pacific might think of coming together in a sort of loose confederation.

28: The Indian Delegation’s Press Conference, 10 August 1965

Mr. AD Patel presided. With him were Messers Koya, Madhavan, Shah and Deoki. Mr. Singh did not attend. Seventeen reporters attended. Mr. Patel asked the reporters to publish the statement of the delegation in full and requested that they should not merely use ‘bits’ which might be misleading and misrepresent the statement.

Mr. Koya, who read the statement on behalf of the delegation, introduced it by saying that the Indian delegates present at the Press Conference had all been bitterly disappointed by the outcome of the Conference and had resolved not to say anything either collectively or individually until a prepared statement was available. The statement said:

The Indian delegation has been bitterly disappointed with the unwillingness of the United Kingdom delegation to persuade the Fijian and European delegations of the desirability of introducing an electoral procedure as a first step towards attaining a democratic form of self-government in Fiji by which at least some members of the legislature should be eligible for election regardless of race, under a common franchise.

The Indians are bitterly disappointed by the recommendations of the United Kingdom delegation for an electoral plan which is calculated not only to disturb the present parity between the Fijian and Indian communities but also to place the Indians in a special discriminatory and inferior position of further isolation from other communities.

34 Chandra Pal Singh was a nominated member of the Legislative Council, 1963–1966, and in the anti-Patel group. His political career ended with the 1966 elections.

35 Under the 1965 constitution, Fijians had 14 representatives in the Legislative Council, Indians 12 and Europeans 10. Chinese were placed on the European roll and Pacific Islanders on the Fijian roll, while no other ethnic group was put on the Indian roll. Until then, Fijians and Indians had ethnic parity in political representation.
The Indian delegation is bitterly disappointed by the recommendation by the United Kingdom delegation that a communal roll principle of election should be extended by the artificial equation of Chinese to Europeans and Rotumans and other Pacific Islanders to Fijians.

The Indian delegation is bitterly disappointed by the proposals made by the United Kingdom delegation which are calculated—intentionally or otherwise—to encourage the Europeans and Fijians to believe that the rejection by them of constitutional proposals put forward in a reasonable manner for the betterment of the Indian community, would be accepted by Great Britain without regard to the requirements of fair play and justice to all communities. It must be pointed out that the basis of the Indian delegation’s complaint is that their community were at all times led to believe that by becoming settlers and adopting Fiji as their permanent home, they would enjoy rights and privileges no whit inferior to those of other races residing in Fiji.36 The proposals relating to the composition of the legislature and the method of election are unjust, unfair, impracticable, and undemocratic. They will widen the existing racial divisions and make political integration of the different communities in Fiji, which is vital and necessary for the building of a homogenous democratic nation, extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Despite the fact that the Indian delegation asked for the immediate introduction of full internal self-government based on a common roll, they submitted an alternative proposal which would have catered for communal, cross-communal and common roll methods of election. The United Kingdom delegation made no serious effort to impress the Fijian and European delegations with the efficacy and practicability of this proposal nor of the need to reach a compromise which would have accommodated the views of all the delegations and thereby, in some measure, satisfy the demands of all races.

This should have been done in our opinion if the United Kingdom delegation was prepared to spend more time in the negotiations with the various groups both separately and collectively. The purpose of the Conference was to bring constitutional changes in Fiji as a step towards self-government. The proposals in the report have moved the Colony further away from that goal instead of taking a step towards it. The proposals are not, in our view, in keeping with the United Kingdom’s declared policy of leading her Colonies towards democracy and political independence.

36 This is a reference to the words of the Salisbury’s Despatch, 1875. The intention of equality was reiterated by the imperial government on several subsequent occasions.
A reporter: What will the Indian reaction be now?

Patel: I feel that all three delegations will have to go back to Fiji to consult their constituents and then each group will have to decide both their attitudes to these proposed changes and what steps they should take—either we accept them or reject them or accept them under protest but unless and until the groups have consulted their constituents at home they cannot make any final decisions.

A reporter: Do you think the Indian community might reject these proposals?

Mr. Patel: Certainly.

A reporter: What would then follow?

Mr. Deoki: It is better to jump the fence when we come to them. It is very difficult to say now.

A reporter: We understand that the Indian community are not entirely in support of your attitude on the common roll—that the Indians in Fiji are not unanimous on this.

Mr. Patel: If you mean by unanimous one hundred per cent, then of course it is not unanimous, but if you consider that eighty per cent or over eighty per cent is unanimous, then the Indian community is unanimous in their support of our policy. There are also quite considerable groups in the European and Fijian communities who are also of the same opinion as we are and who are in favour of a common roll, although they are a minority in their communities. If in any country you find eighty per cent of a community giving support to a policy, I think you can call that unanimous.

A reporter: How would common roll help the Indian community?

Mr. Patel: It would not help us but it would help to encourage in Fiji a national feeling. It has been said that we want common roll so that we can dominate the other races but that is not so. We believe that a common roll would eliminate the racial feeling which is doing so much harm. Every representative in the Legislative Council at present takes it that he is representing there the interests of his own racial group and all the time lays emphasis on his own racial group. We want to take out the racial element and introduce a national element.
A reporter: We are told that the possibility of two rolls could be considered—one part of the election on common roll and one on communal roll. Was that brought up at the Conference?

Mr. Patel: No. The United Kingdom delegation put forward its own proposals and these included cross-voting besides retaining communal voting. The United Kingdom delegation said that our compromise proposal was too late and instead of discussing it with the groups separately and then collectively, they stood aloof and left the three groups to talk about it alone. They knew full well that if they left the discussion on this compromise to the two groups, there was no prospect of any agreement at all. The United Kingdom delegation said that if the groups accepted it they would accept it but their attitude was one of indifference. They knew that no agreement could be reached if it was left to the three groups. They gave us the strong impression that because they were preoccupied with more important problems, we were not receiving as much attention as we should otherwise have received. I believe they would have been inclined to spend more time with us than they did if they had not been so preoccupied. I fear Aden put us in the background.37

A reporter: Is it possible that the system of cross-voting can be progressively intended to reduce the number of communal seats and increase the number of cross-voting seats? Would that not begin to meet your problem?

Mr. Patel: If the step we are taking is going to make the step to follow easier, then it is all right, but if the very first step is likely to make a further step more difficult, then it is wrong and that is what is going to happen with this. It is not the step but the manner in which they wish to make it. In effect, each voter will have four votes—one for his own race and the other three for each of the three communities. The idea uppermost in the voter’s mind when he considers the candidates of the other races is which one is likely to help his racial group most so that instead of erasing the racial outlook it will intensify it. Every race will be looking for the stooge or puppet from other communities who is likely to help their race. What we want is a constitution which will encourage the formation of political parties on national lines.

A reporter: Has the Indian in Fiji full rights or is he a second-class citizen?

37 After the loss of the Suez Canal in 1956, Aden became the main base in the region for the British. An insurgency erupted there insurgency against British forces, lasting from December 1963 to November 1967.
Mr. Patel: Up to now, we have had racial parity in Legislative Council, irrespective of our numbers, but as long ago as 1929, when we were in a minority numerically, we protested that we wanted a common roll and did not want to be divided on racial lines.

A reporter: Was there any discussion inside or outside the conference on the land question?

Mr. Patel: Never as a problem in itself.

A reporter: Was there any discussion about the relationship with the Council of Chiefs?

Mr. Patel: No, except in connection with the two seats on the Legislative Council which will go to Fijians on the vote of the Council of Chiefs.

Mr. Deoki interpolated: We opposed unanimously that the Fijians should not have two extra seats but we did agree that if the chiefs wanted two Council of Chiefs members as such, we would have no objection to it provided that the number of Fijian seats was not increased. We had parity of representation in Legislative Council since 1929 when there were three Fijians, three Indians and three Europeans. When the Legislative Council elected membership was increased, it was five, five, and five; and when it was increased again it was six, six and six. We wish that parity of representation had been retained.

A reporter: How do you find the working of the Legislature? How do members vote?

Mr. Deoki: Voting is not on racial lines as a rule but on fundamental matters Europeans and Fijians tend to combine.

A reporter: Is it proposed that the Legislature should work out the land question? Is that the main question?

Mr. Patel: It is the main stumbling block.

Mr. Deoki: It is matter for discussion. We have a Landlord and Tenant report which will no doubt be discussed by all communities and the Council of Chiefs. That pertains to the land matter.

Mr. Patel: The land problem is mainly a question of security of tenure and tenants. The ownership of land is not questioned at all. Over eighty per cent of the land area belongs to the Fijians.

Mr. Deoki: We are seeking the right to renewal of long term leases and for compensation for improvements planned. At present there is no right
of renewal of a lease and there is no compensation for improvements on land. The difficulty in Fiji is that some people have fears of what may happen if there are changes. Such fears should be catered for by way of safeguards provided in the constitution. We could give the safeguards and then we could move together along democratic lines.

29: Letter to Anthony Greenwood, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12 August 1965

We must point out that the basis of the Indian Delegation’s complaint is that their community were at all times led to believe that by becoming settlers and adopting Fiji as their permanent home, they would enjoy rights and privileges no whit inferior to those of other races residing in Fiji. In this connection, we beg to remind Her Majesty’s Government that such a guarantee and undertaking was given in Lord Salisbury’s Despatch in March 1875. The undertaking given in this Despatch has never been withdrawn or contradicted. Indeed it was accepted and confirmed by the Crewe Commission in 1910. This Despatch was a subject matter of public discussion in 1963 on the eve of the arrival in Fiji on Mr. Nigel Fisher, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. At the conclusion of Mr. Fisher’s tour and on the eve of his departure, he made a public statement in which he categorically said that Her Majesty’s Government considered that this Despatch was binding on her. He further said that the Indians rightly regarded that the Despatch conferred on them rights and privileges as the Fijians regarded the Deed of Cession in respect of their rights and privileges. In Mr. Fisher’s view, the Indians could not be regarded as second-class citizens and that he considered that their rights and privileges were equal to those of other communities in Fiji. May we say without hesitation that the proposal to give two extra seats to the Fijians constitutes, in our view, a clear breach of Lord Salisbury’s Despatch on the part of Her Majesty’s Government.

We sincerely believe that political integration of the different communities living in Fiji is vital and necessary to the building of a politically homogeneous democratic nation. We assume that Her Majesty’s Government accepts this view. However, the United Kingdom Delegation’s proposals relating to the composition of the Legislature and the method of election are so unjust, unfair, impracticable and undemocratic that they will harden the existing racial divisions and make political integration extremely difficult, if not impossible.

You will note that at the outset, the Indian Delegation asked for the immediate introduction of full internal self-government based on the Common Roll system of election at the Conference. Nonetheless, our Delegation, for the sake of peace and harmony and to avoid a deadlock, submitted an alternative proposal. The
The substance of this proposal was that there should be part-communal, part cross-communal and part common roll method of election. This proposal would have accommodated the views of the United Kingdom Delegation and that of the Fijian Delegation as a whole and thereby satisfying the demands of all races. Unfortunately, the United Kingdom Delegation made no serious effort to impress the Fijian and European Delegations of the efficacy, practicability and the need to reach a compromise. Such a compromise was, in our view, highly probable if only the United Kingdom Delegation had not committed themselves at the outset on its proposal for cross-communal system of voting and had cared to spend more time in the negotiation with various groups separately and collectively at the conference.

We are more than alarmed to note that along with the Bills concerning special subjects which would require more than two-thirds of the votes of the Legislative before they may be passed, it is in contemplation that the existing laws relating to Native Lands, namely, the Native Land Trust Board Ordinance, would be included in this category. We venture to say that in spite of the agreement reached between all the delegates in Fiji in April 1965, the United Kingdom Delegation indirectly brought the question of ownership of land and other allied matters for discussion before the Conference. The agreement was to the effect that the question of land should not form part of the agenda of the London Constitutional Conference, that the ownership of land, be it native or otherwise, would not be challenged, and that as the solution to the problems concerning the security of tenure, renewability of leases was vital from the viewpoint of the economic life of all the communities in Fiji, these matters should be discussed freely in Fiji and agreed upon.

The substance of this agreement was, in our opinion, brought to the notice of Her Majesty’s Government through His Excellency the Governor, and yet land was discussed at the Conference. We cannot, for one moment, accept the proposition that the existing Native Land Trust Board Ordinance ought not to be changed. On the question of Native land, we cannot help saying that neither the Government of Fiji nor the architects of the relevant Bill in 1940 have honoured their undertakings which were given to the Legislative Council. In addition, this Ordinance contains unjust and iniquitous provisions and its operation has not helped the country, let alone the Fijian owners and Indian tenants. If Her Majesty's Government proceeds with this aspect of the proposal as contained in the Final Report of the Conference, we can see nothing but ruination for Fiji. For this reason, we feel we must advise Her Majesty's Government that the question of the ownership of Native land may well have to be raised again.

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38 This proposal was put forward by Andrew Inder Narayan Deoki.
We note that the purpose of the Conference was to bring constitutional changes in Fiji towards internal self-government. These proposals, in our view, move the Colony away from that goal and they are not in keeping with the United Kingdom's declared policy of leading her Colonies towards democracy and political independence.

Since the conclusion of the Conference, we have given serious and anxious consideration to the proposals and after long deliberation we have come to the view that we must reject them.

It is our intention to oppose these proposals by peaceful and constitutional means. The implementation of these proposals, in our view, would create a grave racial disharmony leading to undesirable results. In this process an irreparable harm would be done to the country as a whole and we fear that goodwill, harmony and understanding, which has existed among all the races in Fiji over the last 90 years, would disappear for ever. The responsibility for any course of events arising out of the implementation of these proposals would rest, in our view, on Her Majesty's Government.

In the circumstances, we make this plea: that Her Majesty's Government take necessary steps to amend these proposals in consultation with the remainder of the Delegation and make an earnest effort so that a solution may be reached acceptable to all concerned.

30: Post-1965 Constitutional Conference:
Century Theatre, August 1965

Ladies and Gentlemen, before discussing what was discussed at the London Conference, let us look into the history of Fiji.

Before the advent of British colonial rule in Fiji, settlers from Australia and New Zealand came and settled here. The early planters did their best to persuade the Fijians to cede Fiji either to the United States or to the United Kingdom. Finally, they were successful in persuading Ratu Cakobau to cede Fiji to the United Kingdom. At first the offer was refused. But when missionaries raised questions about the evils of black-birding, Great Britain was compelled to take over Fiji to bring stable government here, to prevent Fijians from being exploited by the Europeans. This was done under the Deed of Cession, without any conditions attached. To save the Fijians from the European settlers, the first Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, brought Indian indentured labourers [to work on plantations here]. Gordon had been in Mauritius and he knew about the working of the indenture system, he knew how well the Indians worked and how they lived peacefully.
We Indians came to Fiji to save the Fijians from the clutches of the white settlers. We came here; we settled down here; and we were able to turn the virgin forest into agricultural land. And when you look back at the past ninety years of Fiji’s history, we are proud to say that for all this time, we have never quarreled with any other race. We lived happily among the other races—Fijians, Europeans, Chinese and others, like sugar in milk. We have always remained loyal to the British Crown. Look back at our history. Have we ever disrupted the peace of this Colony? We ourselves have suffered, but we have not allowed anyone else to suffer for us or through us. We have always thought of giving peace to other people.

And when we were brought to Fiji we were given certain promises. One promise was that if you become citizens of Fiji, you will have equal rights with other races, that your rights will not be one whit inferior to the rights enjoyed by other races. But I tell you, for the last ninety years, Britain has disregarded that undertaking. Even today they are trying to deceive us about the consequences of common roll, for example. Common roll cannot result in Indian domination, because we can’t send any more representatives to the Legislative Council than any other race. We are in greater numbers in the Western division and perhaps Labasa, but there are other areas where other races dominate. Therefore, I see no reason why anyone should think that Indians will dominate. This is not the first time that Indians have raised the issue of common roll. This question was first raised in 1929. At that time, Indians were a minority community in Fiji. We could not have dominated anyone.

I have been trying to make this point very clear. We are asking for common roll so that every citizen lives happily with one another in this Colony as one nation, one people, one country. But what happens? The European and Fijian members are not prepared even to discuss the issue. Therefore the Federation Party decided that there was no point in discussing this matter in Fiji [before going to the London conference in July 1965]. Some people said that we should socialize with the Europeans and Fijians which might lead to an amicable resolution of the issue. But I tell you that we had members like Mr. CP Singh and Mr. [Andrew] Deoki who have been socializing with them but were still unable to reach any satisfactory resolution. What can one do when people shut their minds, put a padlock on their minds, and refuse to listen. To a blind man you can explain things. You can tell him not to go along a certain road. But what do you do when people with perfect eyesight prefer to go in blind alleys?

Let me tell you what happened at the London conference. At the opening of the conference, the Secretary of State in his speech said that this conference had been called to determine the future path of self-governance in Fiji. Before we

reached London, before the Conference, newspapers published what was going to be decided in the Conference. I quickly realised that the United Kingdom had decided in advance what the outcome was going to be and that we were called to rubber stamp its decision. I was prepared to give them the benefit of the doubt. The Conference was to show to the world that the people of Fiji were contented with British rule and that they wanted to leave the matters as they were. The United Kingdom government would be content to make a few minor improvements in the existing arrangements.

The speeches made at the Conference made things very clear. Mr. Falvey said that we are very happy in Fiji and that there was no need for any changes yet. Ratu Mara said that since his ancestors had ceded Fiji to the United Kingdom, we do not want to sever our links to the Crown. They thought I might echo their sentiments. But, of course, I could not do this. I had to tell the truth, and I told the truth. I must call a spade a spade. Now, is there any person in the world who does not want freedom to live as free human beings, with dignity and human rights? Slaves can be slaves forever, but we want freedom and we want to obtain it peacefully.

People in the United Kingdom were not as worried about our demands as people in Australia were. People in Australia were more upset than people in England. Why was Australia so upset? Because from the political and economic point of view, while people from the United Kingdom may be in higher position in government departments, it is Australia which rules Fiji. I have said many times that the colonial government of Fiji is the daughter-in-law of Australia. We have here the CSR Company, the Emperor Gold Mines, the Bank of New South Wales, Carpenters and Burns Philp. If you take this into account, the economy of the Colony is in the hands of these people. Copra industry is in the hands of Carpenters. The sugar industry is in the hands of the SPSM [South Pacific Sugar Mills Limited] the true name of which is the CSR Company. The gold mines are in the hands of the Emperor Gold Mines. And, of course, the banking sector is controlled by Bank of New South Wales. Bank of New Zealand and Bank of Baroda are small banks and they came much later. Therefore, whatever I say goes to Australia very quickly. It has been said that we are against the Government of Australia, or we are working against the people of Australia. We are not working against them. We are working against people who make us weak. We do not hate any particular race. But we are against laws which do not allow us to make any progress.

In the Conference, there were many matters upon which we could easily agree. The main point of difference was the composition of the Legislative Council. We want equality, equal rights for everyone. No one disagreed with this view. People in England agreed. No one disagreed. In the Conference, when the question about the system of election was raised, we were divided into three
sections to meet with the UK delegation separately as Indians, Europeans and Fijians. When the UK delegates met the Indian representatives, we placed our case before them. Mrs Eirene White said in her own words that ‘We congratulate you for the very lucid and convincing manner in which you have placed your proposal before us.’ She said she agreed with everything we had raised; there was no point of disagreement. We told her that if she agreed with our proposal than she should communicate this to the other delegates. But that did not happen. The UK delegation began to meet separately with the Fijians and the Europeans. This went on for two days. At one stage the Fijian members said that they did not wish to be separated from the Europeans and that they preferred to discuss things together. But Mrs Eirene White did not agree to this.

Before the Conference started, we were asked to sit anywhere we wished to in the Conference Hall. Europeans and Fijians sat together and the five Indian members sat together. But after a while, one member began to sit apart from us just to show to the other side that he did not agree with the rest of us. This conveyed the impression that the Indian delegates were divided, and there might be the possibility of a break in their ranks at some point. It was decided to expand the three categories (Indians, Fijians, Europeans) to include other groups not represented at the Conference. It was decided that with the Fijians should go the Micronesians, the Melanesians, Tongans, Rotumans, Samoans, Banabans, and other Pacific island groups and should be classed as Fijians. What surprised me most was the inclusion in the Fijian category of Banabans who came here only yesterday, they had their own Council, their own way of managing their land, have nothing whatsoever to do with the Native Land Trust Board. These Banaban people who came here only yesterday could be grouped with Fijians, but not Indians who have lived here for ninety years! They could be politically integrated with the Fijians but not us.

And the Europeans and the Chinese were put together in the same group. Now you will agree that Europeans have become rich because of the Indians. Indians have been living together with the Europeans for the past ninety years, working for the Europeans, but they cannot be politically integrated with them. If a black comes here from South Africa, he will be put on the European roll. It is the same thing with a Maori from New Zealand, a Malayan from Malaya, a Chinese from Malaya, and a Singhalese from Ceylon. If some one comes from Aden, he will be classed as a European too. Only the Indians are being isolated [Tape ends].
31: Response from Anthony Greenwood, 9 September 1965

My dear Mr. Patel

Since I returned to the office I have given very careful consideration to the letter of the 12th August addressed to me by you and your colleagues about the proposals contained in the Final Report of the Fiji Constitutional Conference 1965.

I fully appreciate your disappointment at the failure of the conference to reach agreement on proposals which might quickly lead to the introduction of full internal self-government based on the common roll. It is not, however, possible for the British Government in all the circumstances to impose an apriori solution of this type. The political facts of the situation must be taken into account. In Fiji these must necessarily include the views not only of the Indians but also of the Fijians and to a lesser extent those of the Europeans and other minority communities. The British Government took considerable pains before and during the conference to ascertain the views of all groups and communities in Fiji and the proposals put forward by the British Government and eventually accepted by a majority of the delegates at the conference constituted an attempt to make progress towards the general objective in a way which took into account the interests of all concerned.

I find it difficult to accept some of the comments in your letter on the probable effect of the proposals and believe that, at this stage. In the political evolution of Fiji, these proposals form a basis for constructive advance.

I note that you and your colleagues reject the conclusions set out in the Final Report and intend to oppose them by all constitutional means. The decision whether to take such action must of course rest with you. I would, however, ask you to bear the consequences of outright opposition in mind. In my view, it is far more likely to increase the suspicions of the other communities, particularly the Fijians, than to win them over to support your point of view, which must surely be your objective. I believe that a much more fruitful course of action and one which would be far more likely to lead to the political integration and racial harmony which we all want to see achieved, would be to co-operate fully in the introduction of the new constitution and, by showing that the measure of inter-racial voting which it will introduce does not adversely affect the interests of any race, to pave the way to further constitutional progress.

With best regards
Yours sincerely
Anthony Greenwood
I rise to oppose the motion. The motion says,

That in the opinion of this Council, the views of delegates to the Fiji Constitutional Conference as adopted by Her Majesty’s Government in a White Paper published in October, 1965 form a satisfactory basis for future political progress in Fiji along constitutional lines.

I am of the opinion that some of the provisions do not form a satisfactory basis for future political progress in Fiji. The most important and outstanding one is the composition and method of election to the Legislature. The constitutional proposals propose that a certain number of seats will be on the basis of communal representation, a certain number of seats will be on the basis of cross-community voting, and two seats will be reserved for the Council of Chiefs. I and four of my colleagues are of the view that if this country is ever going to undertake the responsibility of self-government, it is important and urgent that all these communities in this country are integrated into one nation, and the only way I see of political integration is by having a system of voting which does not separate people on the grounds of race or birth. It should be based on universal suffrage on the principle of one man one vote. It has been suggested that cross-community voting is a step towards such common franchise. I personally do not agree with that view. In my opinion, it further accentuates division amongst races. We in this country have been working under communal franchise since 1929 and, perhaps, even before that. If voting on separate communal roll were to bring about political integration after the lapse of all these years, we would have been ready for such integration. If some of us argue that we are still not ready for such integration, that clearly shows that communal franchise, or another garbled form of such a franchise which is called cross-community voting, is certainly not going to integrate us. Cross-communal voting impedes the formation or extension of parties on national lines.

What is happening at present in this country is that some racial groups are coming together just for the purposes of elections without in any way being willing to give up their racial identity or their racial interest. There are only two political organizations in this country to my knowledge who do not profess to be on racial lines and whose membership is open to people of all races in Fiji: one is the Federation Party to which I belong. The aim and object of the Party is to integrate the people of this Colony in one nation. It believes in the principle of unity in diversity, which means that diversity of views and requirements due to diverse cultural, racial, religious and economic background, should be taken into consideration to form one synthetic, acceptable view which will meet
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the requirements of the people as a whole in this country. This is the largest political party existing in Fiji and it has been working as a properly organized and disciplined party within this House. The only other party which I know of which is non-racial is the Labour Party which has been formed recently and is small. Apart from these two parties, I do not know of any single party which is non-racial or national.\(^{40}\)

I thought, after the London Conference arriving at this conclusion, that cross-voting would lead people to political integration, that those who believed in such a course would dissolve racial organizations and begin to form political parties on non-racial national lines, but so far, I have not come across any evidence of that nature. His Excellency, in his address, mentioned the hope and the probability that there would be political alliances formed within various racial groups. Now, such alliances based on race and community in themselves perpetuate divisions on racial lines. They just come together to serve certain purposes and nothing more, and it comes in the way of forming political parties which would function in a self-governing country or in an independent country on what is called party lines. Permutations and combinations of various racial or religious groups can never forge the unity of a people; they are just loose units brought together to give the appearance of a united whole without, in fact, being a solid entity.

My other objection to cross-community voting is that it gives an equal number of seats to communities regardless of their size. On cross-community voting, Europeans have one seat, Fijians have one seat and Indians have one seat. Some members will probably say that Fijians are no longer Fijians in the sense that they include other Pacific Islanders. I know very well that Rotumans, Banabans and other Pacific Islanders are now included in the Fijian group but that is still predominantly a Fijian group. I know that the Chinese are included [in the European group] and it would also include Afghans, Malayans and Singhaless if they are here, or even the Negroes from Africa if they are here, but still that group which will be designated as ‘Others’ is predominantly European. The relative number of these groups is: Indians will be somewhere in the vicinity of 230,000, Fijians will be somewhere in the vicinity of 190,000 and this other group will be somewhere in the vicinity of 20,000 to 30,000. To have an equal number of seats for 30,000 or 190,000 or 230,000 does not really mean equality. It might appear to be equality as far as the seats are concerned, but is not equality as far as the value of the vote is concerned.

Another disagreeable feature of this cross-community voting is that a voter must vote for all the three candidates. Under a single member system, a voter is free

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40 The membership of the Alliance Party had to be through membership of the Fijian Association (for Fijians), Indian Alliance (Indians) and General Electors (Europeans and others). There was no direct membership.
to vote for any candidate he likes and, if he does not approve of any of the candidates to be fit to represent his interests in the Council, he can refrain from voting altogether. But, as far as cross-community voting is concerned, he must vote for all three or none. If a voter, for instance, likes one or two candidates amongst those who have stood in the cross-community constituency, but he does not like or approve of one candidate, he is faced with a choice not to vote for any of them at all, which means that though he wants to vote for two candidates out of the candidates who have stood, he has got to vote for all the three, knowing fully well that he does not want to vote for one candidate who may, as a matter of fact, stand against his own interest. That means that when these candidates are elected, they are not truly elected by the electorate voting voluntarily and out of free will. There is a certain amount of compulsion, that whether you like it or not, you must cast one vote for each of the candidates of each of the three groups and, therefore, it cannot be called free democratic voting.

Communal voting prolongs or perpetuates division of people on racial lines and prevents them from integration into one nation. If communal franchise, as I have previously said, was a suitable mode of voting to bring the races together, then by now we should have been free for common franchise and common roll, by now we should all be on one and the same roll, and racial representations would be completely unnecessary. On the other hand, if it is argued, after all these years of communal separatism, that we are still not ready for political integration, then I say that communal franchise has been the real impediment. We had common roll in the municipality of Suva in 1929. Voters of all races who were eligible for a vote were voting for European candidates and nobody that I know of had ever raised any complaint that other races did not receive any representation in the Council. As a matter of fact, in this very House, it was pointed out many times in 1929, and afterwards, that common franchise worked very well in the Suva Town Council. One would have expected that the system that had worked in the municipal council would have been extended and given a trial in the central legislature of the Colony. But the United Kingdom Government abolished the common franchise in the Town Council and a system of nomination was introduced. No trial was given in this Council to a system which had worked well in a municipal council.

Another reason why I am opposed to this communal form of voting as proposed in the White Paper is that it is unfair to all communities except the European and the Chiefs. The Council of Chiefs is a small body of men who, under the proposed constitution as they do now, get two seats. The ordinary Fijian people get nine seats as do Indians though they are the two largest communities. Europeans, even with a few thousand Chinese thrown in, will be the smallest political unit in Fiji and they get seven members which is beyond all proportion to their numerical strength in the country. When worked out in detail it would probably
Part I: Quest for Equality: The Political Struggle

amount to having 1,200 to 1,500 voters in the European constituency which will be called ‘Others,’ about 8,000 to 9,000 voters in the Fijian constituencies, about 10,000 to 12,000 voters in the Indian constituencies, which means that 1,200 to 1,500 voters will have a right to elect one member; about 8,000 to 9,000 Fijians will have the right to elect one member and 10,000 to 12,000 Indians will have the right to elect one member. This roughly means that the European vote is equivalent, as far as the representation in this House is concerned, to roughly about 8 or 9 Fijian votes to 10 Indian votes. What could be more unfair than that? How can anybody call that equality of status for all the racial groups in Fiji?

The system which is recommended in the new constitutional proposal swamps the majority community in Fiji in this Council. Indian community, if we are to count representation racially, comprises 50 percent to 51 percent of the population of the Colony and 50 percent to 51 percent of the Colony will have in this House 12 representatives. Fijians who comprise 43 percent of the population of this Colony will have 14 seats and Europeans and other who form about 6 to 7 percent of the population of this Colony will have 10 seats in the Council. Even the Fijian community with its fourteen seats in the Council cannot form a Government on their own; nor can the Indian community. The only community in this House which will hold the balance of power will be the European community. If they side with the Fijians, the Fijians can form the government. If they do not like the views of the Fijians or their actions are not considered in their best interests, they can change sides and side with the Indians and Indians will form the government. One cannot escape from the fact that the real centre of power under this Constitution is vested in the European group.

As I said before, the method of election by universal suffrage on the principle of one man one vote is the only right and proper democratic way of representation in this House. It is the only genuine method of democratic representation. It is the only way to bring about political integration and change a multi-racial society into one nation. It should precede and not follow racial integration. Some people say that we have not got integration in schools, that socially we have not integrated by marriage and intermingled our blood. I say that neither integration in schools nor racial miscegenation are necessary for political integration. Many countries have achieved it without any such steps. The United Kingdom itself is the hotch-potch of all races. There are many more races residing in the United Kingdom than there are in Fiji, yet their system of representation which is based on common franchise has worked well right throughout the ages and is working well even today. The Scots and the Welsh fight for home rule but I have never heard any Member of Parliament, whether from Scotland or from Wales, asking for separate racial representations.
There are Jews in England, there are Roman Catholics in England. They belong to different religions and, as far as the history of all these religions in England is concerned, it has not always been a peaceful one. The relations of Protestants and Roman Catholics, Jews and Christians, on many occasions, right throughout British history, have not always been cordial yet nobody has thought of separate representation there on religious grounds. Even under the proposed Constitution, one stroke of the pen brings about political integration between Rotumans, Banabans, Solomon Islanders, Polynesians and other Pacific Islanders. Rotumans and Fijians have all this time maintained separate racial and social identities. Banabans are living on their own in Rabi Island as a separate unit. The Polynesians and other Pacific Islanders are in no way socially or politically integrated with the Fijian race here, yet there was no difficulty. They are all put together on a common roll with a common franchise. Since the publication of the White Paper I have not heard a single protest coming either from the Fijians, Rotumans, Banabans or any other Pacific Islanders. As far as they are all concerned, common franchise and common roll is accepted.

Coming to the Europeans, the Chinese with their totally different social backgrounds, [have] no integration in schools, no racial miscegenation. There are still Chinese, Fijian, European and Indian schools, and I am trying my best to get their doors thrown open an to have all the schools integrated. But if that small amount of integration of a Chinese girl and my honourable friend’s daughter going to the same school can be sufficient to bring the Chinese and European communities together on the common roll, I do not see why Indians and Europeans do not also come on the same common roll because my daughters also attend the school [Suva Grammar] where other European girls are attending. What I say is that this evidently proves how hollow the argument is that we have not got integration in schools and we have not got any racial mixture of blood and that is why it is not proper that all the races should be brought together and integrated into one political unit. As a matter of fact, almost all countries in the world have got many races and many religions, and they all follow their own religions; they even follow their own cultures, customs and traditions and yet politically they are a united nation. The outstanding examples are our neighbouring dominions, New Zealand and Australia, and also the United States of America. If these countries can politically integrate with immigrants who come to their countries and if they can integrate as soon as they set foot in that country and can be accepted as Australians and New Zealanders, even when they do not know a word of English, I do not see any difficulties when three races who have lived together in this country for nearly 90 years being brought together politically.

I have been questioned about India and Pakistan. That division in itself is a warning to us. If, in 1909, Minto-Morley reforms of communal franchise and
representation had not been imposed upon the people of India against their wishes, there would not have been all the troubles and tribulations that the sub-continent is undergoing now. That is why of all the people, Indians are bitterly against communal representation because they have seen its painful results in course of time. It may not appear very serious now, but as time goes on, once people get used to the idea of a racial separation, racial attitudes harden and people start thinking in racial terms and racial interests which leads not to one nation but, in the course of political development, it leads to claims for several nations. That is what communal franchise did in India; that is what communal franchise is doing with Cyprus.

The demand for common roll or common franchise is neither unusual nor is it peculiar to the Indian community in Fiji, or to me, as has been sometimes attributed. Some people say that I originated the idea of the demand for common roll. As a matter of fact, in the polity of the world this has been one of the most ancient ideas. The British Parliament was probably the first. If any organization gets a credit for this system of representation, I think that should go to the Mother of Parliaments. That system of representation has now become more or less the universal mode of representation in democracy.

It is said that Indians want common franchise, but other races are opposed to it. I consider that a sweeping generalization. There are many men and women of all races who consider common roll in the best interests of the country. Even when my honourable colleague on my left had called a meeting in Suva before he went to London and where the predominant voice was the voice in favour of the communal roll, the supporters of common roll were not wanting. I am now reading from the Fiji Times. This issue is dated 2nd July 1965, and it is reported on page 7, under the heading ‘Disagreement’:

Dr D.J. Lancaster said he did not agree with all that had been said, ‘I think I speak for some others in this hall,’ he declared, adding, ‘We claim we are a democracy and I hope you will hear me.’ He said he could not understand why the Europeans could claim an equal vote simply because they were Europeans. They numbered 20,000 in the Colony; they were a minority group, and he classed himself a member of one. ‘How far are we going to go on this ethnic-racial demarcation and representation?’ he asked.

Some of the leaders of the Methodist Church, before our going to London, also expressed their view in favour of common franchise. I know many educated Fijians, both here and some whom I met in London, also agree with the view that political integration of all races in Fiji as soon as possible is the only salvation for this country. So it is not as if asking for common franchise is merely an Indian demand, though Indians of course are large in numbers and are in support of that
demand. But that has been right throughout because the Indians in this Colony, I am glad to say, have always fought against racialism and racial isolationism. The very first time they were given the opportunity of representation in this Council they opposed it on the grounds that it was dividing the races. Even when I am trying to bring about racial integration in schools, I have not met with any Indian committee opposing it. They have all been glad to throw their doors open to children of other races who, for all practical purposes in rural areas, are Fijian children. There has not been any opposition whatsoever. If I have come across any opposition, it is from some Fijian committees, some Fijian and some European schools. I am glad to say that the Indian community, though it was backward in education, took the sane, responsible and liberal view as far as racial issues were concerned. They have always made it a point to get on well with other races, to avoid friction, to avoid trouble as far as others were concerned. They felt honoured to invite people of other races to their homes; they considered it not only a sort of duty. As far as race relations in this Colony is concerned, this Colony has a proud record. Show me any other country in the world where three or more races have lived together over a period of about 90 years without any trouble [as we have here in this Colony].

We do not keep racial harmony by remaining separate and apart. We try to maintain harmony by drawing others closer to us. This racial separatism, as far as public institutions and this Council are concerned, was imposed upon Indians. The Indians accepted it, but not altogether willingly. They have to put up with it because of the conditions prevailing here; as they have been submerged in this Council all along; as it is designed that they should be submerged in the future Council under the new Constitution. Many Indians give up all hope, they lose heart and they bow to the inevitable, but in their heart of hearts, they have never been satisfied and they have never accepted this racial separation as being in the best interest either of the Indians, or the other races, or of the Colony. As a matter of fact, as far as the economic interest of this country is concerned, the employers and the employees cut across all racial barriers. There are employers belonging to all races in Fiji; there are European employers, Indian employers, Fijian and Chinese employers. There are workers belonging to all races; and as far as the interests of the employers and the employees are concerned, really they are non-racial. There are farmers belonging to all races, and as far as their interests are concerned they are non-racial. Transport—buses, boats and taxis—are owned by Europeans, Indians, Fijians and the passengers who travel on them also belong to all races. Professional men—there are Indians, Europeans, Fijians. Civil Servants—all of them belong to all races. So as far as economic relationship is concerned, there is in fact an economic solidarity between various groups which comprise this Colony. One would like to see politics developing in this country more on the lines of economic interests rather than racial denominations. So much for the mode of representation in the Council.
Some people argue that if there was common franchise Indians will dominate, and all the other races will be subjugated to their domination. It starts on a wrong premise that if there is common franchise, all will necessarily vote on racial lines. If that were so, then there would not be any meaning in forming alliances under the cross-voting system because you would expect every voter to vote with his racial interest in mind and not with common interest, so the result will be that the majority will rule, and majority should rule and majority must rule. That is the democratic form of government. It may be asked, ‘What happens to the minorities?’ Under a democratic form of government, the minority today may be the majority and a government after another election. Under a democratic form of representation, there are no permanent minorities and permanent majorities, they fluctuate. A party system of government is formed and one party goes in opposition, another in government, but not necessarily the party which is governing will always govern. As regards their cultural or religious rights, or rights of individual freedom and liberty are concerned, they are usually safeguarded in a Bill of Rights, and the Bill of Rights should provide adequate safeguards for minority rights, the smallest minority being the individual. If individual rights are adequately safeguarded, minority rights are automatically safeguarded because minorities are composed of individuals. Nobody can claim to be entitled to special privilege in a democracy by reason of race, colour, creed, birth or sex.

In the foreword to the White Paper in paragraph 3, it is stated that ‘on the 26th April, the Federation Party led by Mr. AD Patel decided to withdraw from these discussions,’ referring to the discussions which were held in Fiji between the unofficial members of the Legislative Council. I would like to explain why the Federation Party had to discontinue their discussions. When the Federation Party decided to discontinue discussions, only those issues which referred to the composition of the Legislative Council and the method of election were left. As far as the Federation Party, and I would say the Indian community was concerned, it has been well known in this Colony since 1929 that the Indian community stands for common franchise and common roll. The European representatives and the Fijian representatives, led by European members, were strongly opposed to the common franchise and they were insisting that they were not prepared to budge an inch and they stuck to communal roll... The position was that the discussions were supposed to be confidential but, unfortunately, confidences were not kept. They came out in garbled form in the press, and it appeared to the Federation Party and to me, that as far as the question of the method of representation was concerned, there was no probable chance of a compromise. By the way things were appearing in the press, I could see that the only aim behind such publications was to create racial tension in the Colony. My colleagues and I were anxious to avoid any tension. We were of
the opinion that perhaps this question which was so difficult to compromise on here may be solved in London through the kind offices of the United Kingdom delegation.

It is significant that after my colleagues and I discontinued discussions, there were still two Indian members who were ready and willing to carry on with the discussions and, in fact, they did join in those discussions. If there was any chance of a compromise, if there was any desire on the part of the Fijian and European members to reach a compromise on this important issue, they had a golden opportunity. I thought they would take that opportunity if for nothing else at least to discredit me and my Party and show to Fiji and to the outside world that there was a hope of compromise, that, in fact, they did reach a compromise and we were foolish in discontinuing the discussions. But no such thing happened. Even in London I and my colleagues had the feeling that the United Kingdom delegation did not try seriously to arrive at a compromise which would be acceptable to all parties.

Even when the Indian delegation put forward a compromise proposal by Mr. Andrew Deoki, and which proposal was agreed to by the Federation Party for the sake of compromise, it received a short shrift. The United Kingdom delegation, if I remember right, complained that the compromise proposal came too late. To this day, I do not understand ‘too late for what?’ In an important conference like that, if there is a serious and sincere desire to reach a solution which will be acceptable to all, it can never be too late. A few more days can be spent on it and an effort made to see if it is acceptable to all. I go further and say that even if that proposal was not acceptable to all, even then it was the duty of the United Kingdom Government to find some solution that would have been acceptable to all the three communities and not merely rest content with the proposals which were accepted by only two. I say that it is not too late even now. The United Kingdom Government can still make a serious effort to bring about a compromise which would be acceptable to all. The Indian community is, after all, the majority community in Fiji and it is as important to have its consensus to any proposals as it is to have of other communities. To ignore that fact is to be unfair to the majority community in Fiji. I said that even now it is not too late and the United Kingdom Government can still reconsider these proposals with a view to finding some solution which may be acceptable to all. If one conference has failed to arrive at a satisfactory compromise, conferences can be called again. It has happened with other countries; it can happen with Fiji. There is nothing extraordinary in that.

After the White Paper was published, I find that the racial attitudes in Fiji are hardening rather than softening. The latest evidence that I came across is the coat of arms placed on our Civic Centre, the picture of which is published in the Fiji Times in the issue dated Tuesday, the 14th December. In the Coat of Arms a
Fijian and a European are depicted holding a shield with an inscription at the bottom *Valataka Na Dina* which is translated by the *Fiji Times* as ‘Fight for the Right.’ I would like to know that in a city where 80 percent of the citizens are neither Fijian nor European, in a city of which 75 percent of the population is Indian, what is the reason behind choosing a coat of arms which depicts Fijians and Europeans with the words ‘Fight for the Right’? Fight against whom? Well, this sort of thing has been smoldering secretly in this Colony for a long time, I am aware, but it has come to light now. This Coat of Arms, to say the least, is a provocation and a challenge to people belonging to other races both in Suva and outside Suva. Is this the indication of an attempt to bring political integration of all races in this Colony?

As far as these [constitutional] proposals are concerned, I say that the chiefs are given a seat in the Pullman car in this constitutional train. The Europeans are given a seat in the first class, the Fijian people are given a seat in the second class and the Indians are given a seat in the third class. The Governor, in his speech at the opening of this Council, referred to the constitutional proposals and said, ‘No constitution is perfect and this is not the end of the road.’ Consoling words, I agree, but this constitution is not merely imperfect. This constitution, in my opinion, is unfair and a constitution, however, imperfect it may be, must aim at one most important thing and that is to be fair to all citizens in the country. Not only is this constitution not fair, it is taking a wrong direction and it makes the journey prolonged and difficult.

I, for one, believe that Fiji is fit for complete independence. When we compare Fiji with countries like Samoa, Cook Islands and other territories, no one can say that we are in any way backward to those countries. If they can shoulder their responsibilities well, I do not see any reason why Fiji should not. I and the other members of the Indian delegation agree, and are still of the opinion, that two things should be maintained: one, a permanent link with the British Crown; and, two, full internal self-government. These were the two issues on which there was unanimity of agreement but the constitutional proposals put forward run far short of the target of full internal self-government. Many people have either misunderstood me or misconstrued my words consciously to create mischief. Complete independence does not mean severance from the British Crown; it does not mean getting out of the British Commonwealth. I made it plain in my speech at the opening of the Conference in London that complete independence that I am advocating is the sort of independence that countries like New Zealand and Australia are enjoying at present. Those countries are completely independent, they both have a permanent link with the British Crown, the Queen is the Head of the Government in both countries and both are members of the British Commonwealth.
The proposals that we put forward on the method of representation at the London Conference are fair, just and right proposals for the constitutional development of this country. It is highly gratifying to find that the proposals put forward by the Indian delegation are considered the proper proposals and supported by an overwhelming majority of votes in the United Nations. Eighty percent of the members of the United Nations voted for and hold that the constitution should be based on an unqualified system of democratic representation based on the principle of one man one vote. That is what we have been asking for at the Conference. That is what we have been asking for in Fiji all these years since 1929. Of the three countries which opposed it, one acted as a judge in its own case; one had a pecuniary interest in the country, and one has colonies in this part of the world. So at least we get endorsement from world opinion.

The motion says that this constitution forms a satisfactory basis for future political progress. On the grounds I have already mentioned, I say that these proposals do not form a satisfactory basis for future political progress in Fiji on constitutional lines and I urge the United Kingdom Government to negotiate further and try sincerely and seriously to bring about constitutional changes which will establish an unqualified system of democratic representation based on the principle of one man one vote. It is not too late yet.

33: Federation Party Letter to A.D. Patel\(^41\), 6 August, 1966

Dear Sir

Today we are here in the Party’s Working Committee to consider the selection of candidates for the Legislative Council and recommend their names to the general meeting later in the evening. This is the time to take stock of the record of the Party's Legco members without fear or favour.

You, Mr. President, in spite of your age and diabetes, have fully acquitted yourself of your responsibilities as leader of the Party’s Legco wing and I as your colleague in the Party place on record my personal and also the Party’s

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\(^41\) Written by Madho Tikaram, President of the Suva branch of the Federation Party. In a secret memorandum that came my way as I was preparing this volume, an Australian official wrote: ‘It is known that in 1965 he was seriously considering leading a left-wing group out of the party. The group was to be much more militant than the Federation Party and Koya wanted to name it Subhas Party after Subhas Chandra Bose who led certain Indian forces against Britain during World war II.’ Koya was described as ‘a gangster-lawyer, dangerous, rabid and unstable. Certainly he has a strong personality and a political history of excitability and outspokenness.’ This assessment was by an Australian official, but similar views are expressed in official British documents at the Public Records Office, Kew Gardens.
appreciation of all the work that you have done for the Party and the people. Time is coming fast, if not already come, that your responsibilities should be shared by others and relieve you from overwork.

Mr. Madhavan deserves the Party’s appreciation and gratitude for the unflinching work and loyalty that he has given to the Party to the best of his ability. Mr. Chirag Ali’s is a special case. He arrived in the Party’s LegCo wing through Government nomination. Though not highly educated, he brought sound common sense in his work, and though he spoke very little, he spoke to the point whenever he spoke. His loyalty to the Party has been well proved by him and he also deserves the gratitude and appreciation.

How I wish I could have said similar things for Mr. Koya. Unfortunately his record as a responsible and leading member of the Party and LegCo Member is not untarnished. Even at the risk of incurring his displeasure, I think, I as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Party, owe it to the Party, its principles and the people of Fiji, that I should record his shortcomings, not in a spirit of destructive criticism but in a spirit of comradeship as between people engaged in a common task and I hope he will appreciate the same. Real friends and comrades must criticize each other’s faults with a view to remove such faults.

Mr. Koya has had a fairly good record in his performance in the Legco debates and to that extent he deserves the appreciation and gratitude of the Party. On the other hand, his interview and statement to the Daily Telegraph soon after the London Conference gave a very misleading picture of Indians in Fiji without consulting or even telling his colleagues, was a great embarrassment to his colleagues and the Party at large, and to the Indian community. His talks in Fiji with the Party members between his return from London and your return to the effect that we had lost all and that there should be left-wing and right-wing in the Party had a very demoralising effect on the Party workers and members. His rudeness to his colleagues and party workers and some others has by now become proverbial in the Party and his insulting behaviour to some good workers of the Party has had demoralising effect on the sincere workers of the Party. His tendency to get excited, to lend his ears to those who flatter him, ignore those in charge of actual facts and collecting facts from only those whom he considered his personal friends, has created a fear in the minds of some of the Party members that he is developing a tendency to indulge in clickwork [clique work], which if not checked now, may make it difficult to justify his name to the voters and create a danger of the Party falling in the hands of a click [clique]. His impulsive action in misleading the President that the work of registration of voters in Ba District had been very poor and asking the President to get extension of time has resulted in demoralising the Ba workers and cost the Indian community the loss of a lead of 10,000 voters over the Fijians.
Unless he assures the Working Committee that he accepts his mistakes and that in future he will show more respect and consideration for the feelings and views of the Party colleagues and workers and will work with more deliberation and consultation with his colleagues, I am of the opinion that he should not only be not selected as a candidate but should be asked to resign his post as Assistant Secretary and we should elect somebody with better temper and judgment to take his place, though he may continue on the working committee. If the Party aims at setting correct standards of public life in Fiji, as I believe it does, then we owe it to the Party’s good name, to set an example to the people that the Party workers are courteous, selfless and determined workers for a cause without fear or favour.

34: The Secretariat to AD Patel, 23 September 1966

Dear Sir

You called at my office on the 19th September, 1966, to discuss the organization and procedures at polling stations for the forthcoming elections. I undertook to examine the points which you raised, and I now write to let you know the position.

You suggested that an elector on arrival at the polling station, should not be handed all his ballot papers simultaneously, but should be allowed to take one at a time, mark it and put it in the ballot box, before taking a second paper, or a third. The purpose of this would be to avoid confusion in the mind of a less well-educated elector as to which ballot paper related to a particular constituency, and to prevent marked ballot papers being placed in the wrong ballot boxes.

Before dealing with the mechanics of this suggestion, may I draw attention to the fact that, as an aid to voters, the ballot papers for the various constituencies will be in different colours, e.g. the Indian communal ballot papers will be yellow, while the Indian cross-voting papers will be pink. Thus the easiest way for an elector to distinguish one constituency from another is to remember these colours. I do not think it would be any easier, and it might indeed be more difficult, for an elector to try to remember (say) that the first paper which he receives is the Indian communal one, while the second is the Fijian cross-voting one, etc. There thus appears to be little to be gained, from the point of view of informing the voter which paper relates to which constituency, from issuing the papers singly and in a fixed sequence. One should also bear in mind that the candidates or their agents who may of course be present in the polling stations,
will not be able to speak to electors therein, and will therefore not be able to give them any guidance on the question of which paper is which. Candidates or their agents will, however, have the opportunity before polling begins, and right up to the moment the elector enters the polling station, to impress upon him that the communal ballot paper (for example) is yellow and (if the voter is illiterate in English) that he should vote for (say) the second candidate on the yellow paper. Alternatively, if this is too much for the elector to remember, he has of course the option of asking the presiding officer to mark his papers for him.

Notwithstanding the aids to voting mentioned above, I have examined carefully the possibility of implementing your suggestion about the issue of ballot papers individually in succession. I regret, however, that it would not be practicable to implement it, because of the delay which it would inevitably impose on the processes of voting. For example, it would mean each voter having to address himself separately to three or four different clerks, and, more important, make three or four separate journeys into the polling booths and back, thus occupying a booth or booths for a length of time which, in the aggregate, would inevitably be greater than if he marked all his papers in one booth at one time.

It will, however, generally be possible for each elector to be handed his communal ballot paper separately from and shortly before he receives his cross-voting [ballot paper], although he will be required to take both types of paper (or such as he desires to use) before going into a polling booth to mark them. This will serve to re-emphasise the different nature of the types of paper.

Before leaving the question of ballot papers, I might add that arrangements have already been made for specimen ballot papers, in the appropriate colours, to be displayed in all polling stations. I am also arranging for posters to be issued, for display outside polling stations and elsewhere, showing the actual colours on which the various ballot papers are printed. Further publicity will also be given to this subject through the medium of the Fijian Broadcasting Commission.

You also asked whether I was satisfied that sufficient clerks etc. would be on hand at polling stations to deal with the number of voters expected. I have now made inquiries, and I can give you an assurance that this is so, always assuming that electors cooperate reasonably by not all leaving their voting until the last moment. At the bigger polling stations, two or more streams of voters will be dealt with simultaneously, by arranging for voters to be dealt with according to the initial letter of the name under which they are in one stream, and L to Z in another.
Regarding the question of voters who are in the queue at the time that voting closes, Regulation 40(2) of the Electoral Regulations, 1965, as amended by the discretion on presiding officers to extend the time of voting at any particular polling station, for a further period not exceeding two hours, if it is necessary to do so. This discretion will normally be exercised in favour of any voters who have reached the polling station by the appointed closing time, but not (save perhaps in exceptional circumstances) to permit voting by electors who fail to arrive until after the appointed closing time. It is therefore in the interests of all concerned for voters to arrive at polling stations as early as possible.

I trust that this explanation will have cleared up any remaining doubts which you may have had.

Yours sincerely
(sgd) Ian Thomson
(JS Thomson)

35: Launch of the 1966 Election campaign, Century Theatre, July 1966

I hope you will excuse me if I fail to make myself audible to you on this most momentous occasion. My voice has failed me today.

As you all know, the longest journey always begins with a single step. We are taking the longest journey in the history of Fiji. We are taking this journey to meet our destiny, and I hope and pray to God that that destiny is full of promise of good things of life, to this country and to the people of this country: we who are living now and those who will follow us hereafter.

Wordsworth was inspired to say about the French Revolution: ‘Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, But to be young was very heaven.’ In our history, I also feel and share the same sentiment. Mine is the fortune of being alive in this dawn. Mine is the misfortune that I won’t be able to share that very heaven. But that should not deter me, or deter you, from our path of duty.

As you very well know, the most overriding objective of the Federation Party is to weld all the peoples of this country into one nation. We are subjected to a form of government which stands universally condemned in this world today. That form of government separated brother from brother merely on the basis of the pigmentation of their skin.

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42 Recorded by Robert Norton during his fieldwork for his doctorate in Fiji. The doctoral thesis was eventually published as Race and Politics in Fiji (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977).
Christians went on preaching in the churches, Muslims went on preaching in their mosques, Hindus went on preaching in their temples, that we are all children of the same Father. And yet, we betrayed our Father and we betrayed ourselves. We left the preaching of our great teachers and sages within the walls of the churches, mosques and temples, and when we came out, we debased and lowered ourselves more than even animals.

You find white cows and you find black cows and you find brown and red cows. The black cow never hates the white cow, or the white cow doesn’t hate the red cow because of its skin colour. We claim to be the most intelligent creatures on the earth, but our intellect has not changed us or helped us, as it has helped the lower animal kingdom.

What mischief has been done over ninety years I know and you know cannot be undone in a day. It will take time. We will have to unlearn many things which we were taught—not for our own good but for the good of those who wanted to rule over us. We will have to unlearn that.

Ninety years of rule has entered our very vitals—our soul—and I can tell you that you can get rid of what comes from the outside easily, but it is difficult to get rid of what has become a part of your mental and spiritual makeup. All this while in Fiji I have felt proud that we live more harmoniously, more amicably, and in a more brotherly fashion, than people in many parts of the world—people who call themselves at the pinnacle of culture and civilisation: that is one thing which has always made me proud. And I was sorry to hear from the lips of a youngster in the Phoenix Theatre that there is racial disharmony in Fiji, and that we are all sitting on top of a volcano. A grosser lie cannot be uttered about Fiji, a grosser insult cannot be offered to the people of Fiji. And my heart grieved.

Anyhow, as I say, let us forget our past and let’s face the future bravely and courageously. And look straight into the eye of things that are to come. A poet has said, ‘The old order changeth, yielding place to new. And God fulfils himself in many ways.’ We of this generation in Fiji have got to become instruments in His hands. We mortals cannot judge who is in the right and who is in the wrong.

Our opponents have spared no time, effort and energy to misrepresent us as a party: that we create racial disharmony, that we create racial hatred. They don’t even stop to think that we are not so stupid as all that to think that we can build a nation, weld all the people together by hatred. Only the cement of love and understanding and sympathy can achieve that difficult task.

And we are conscious both of our responsibilities and our difficulties. We have many obstacles to surmount. Those who have don’t give up easily. Those who have not have to strive hard to get what is rightly theirs. And that is what we are
doing. When we criticise and expose racial discrimination in this Colony, they say that we are racists. But how can you eliminate an evil unless you lay your finger on that evil and try to eradicate it? You cannot remove that evil by just closing your eyes to it, and patiently suffering under it. It will only perpetuate the evil.

Let me tell you one thing. My whole spiritual and intellectual makeup has a culture and civilisation which is, in fact, the oldest, or at least one of the oldest cultures and civilisations in the world. Long before Jesus Christ came in this world and taught people that if anybody smites you on one cheek, offer the other, long before that, Lord Buddha taught the doctrine of non-violence, non-killing: don’t hurt any living creature, let alone man, don’t do anything that causes pain or suffering to others.

Our whole outlook in life and philosophy was summarized in one verse, and of that verse only one line: ‘That is virtue which makes others happy; that is sin which makes others unhappy.’ We have learned that. It has become the flesh of our flesh. You cannot get rid of it.

When I went to America last year, some prominent members of the Congress told me: ‘Do you know what is wrong with you Indians?’ I said ‘No, I would be glad to know it from you.’ They said, ‘You are not sufficiently aggressive for the world. The world belongs to those who are aggressive. You people, through your culture, are too mild to cope with the problems of the world.’ I told him that ‘you may be right, but God gave us a man the like of whom comes on this earth once in thousands of years, and that is Mahatma Gandhi. We have pinned our faith on him. He has reminded us of our culture. He has reminded us of our religion. He has reminded us of our code of behaviour. And in all sincerity, we try to follow him.’

One party in a pamphlet circulated amongst its members said that the Federation Party is a very efficient political organization and if people return that party in a majority, and if Federation forms the government of Fiji, there will be chaos and bloodshed. I can assure you one thing: Federation Party believes in non-violence, Federation Party believes in love, Federation Party believes in bringing all people together and welding them into one nation. So, if chaos is going to come, it can only come from the opponents of this party. If we are returned to the Legislative Council through the ballot box, and if we are returned with a large majority, it only expresses the true opinion and feeling of the people towards us, and if people send us in a majority, who is going to take up sword against us? Those who are defeated?

I have taken all this time and elaborated this point because I know that too much misunderstanding has been created and is being created against our party, and
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especially against me. Some people say that I am trying to be a dictator. Some people say that I am ambitious and that I want to be the Prime Minister of Fiji. Let me make it clear once and for all: I seek no power because I know that all power corrupts. All that I seek for myself and my comrades, and my party and my people and my country which I consider in my hearts of hearts to be my own, I only aspire for one thing: that I may be of some service to them all. I am seeking service, the opportunity to serve, not to rule, not to dominate. And the band of candidates who have been selected and whose names will be announced, will take an oath before you to serve your party and to serve this country.

Now, let me come to the question of what is our party. You know, all over the world, the pattern of colonialism is just the same. In every sphere of life, the ruling race dominates: in politics, in the field of commerce, in the field of industry, in social life, and if I may be permitted to say it without giving offence to anybody, even in the field of religion, in the spiritual field. The aim and object of this party is to change the power structure. We don’t want to usurp anything which rightly belongs to someone else. You know very well that our religion teaches us ‘Don’t covet what belongs to another. Whatever you want in this life, earn it yourself, and enjoy it after dedicating it to God.’

But it is quite natural. Those who hold power in this field are reluctant to share it with others. I feel they are fighting a rearguard action to hold on, to cling on to that power as long as they can. I can understand that too. If I was one of those ‘haves’ probably I might have done the same thing. I don’t know. But as political and economic ‘have-nots,’ it is our duty to assert ourselves and to get our rightful share in the power structure. We don’t want anything more. We won’t be satisfied with anything less.

Some people spread the rumour that I am anti-European, and that I want to drive the Europeans out of this country. It is a wicked lie. How can this country run without capital, without know-how? They have been luckier than us. God has given them both these advantages over us. All that I wish to seek is that their know-how, their ability, their knowledge, their education, is put to the service of everybody in this Colony.

The aim of the Federation Party is to see that even the poorest, even the weakest citizen of this Colony, feels proud that he is a Fijian, feels proud that he is a human being, and regains that dignity which is by right his, and through force of circumstance he has lost. I want, and the Federation Party wants, to re-instill that dignity, that self-respect, and that pride in all our people. These are the spiritual values for which the Party stands.
Now let me come to the political side. I believe, and all my comrades believe, and all the thousands of members of the Federation Party believe, in the equality of man, equality before the law. There should be no special privileges by reason of race, religion, birth or sex. We want to change that. We don’t want, and we are not seeking, that if a particular community is more in numbers, that community should dominate other communities. Nor can we tolerate the position that a minority should dominate a majority. We are in a majority, because we are kept apart, and we think on racial lines, which I hate. If Fiji becomes a nation, the majorities and minorities will not be permanent. They will change from time to time. Majorities and minorities will be decided by political exigencies and ideologies of the time. Who, for instance, in America can say that the Republicans are a permanent majority and the Democrats are a permanent minority? Who in Great Britain can say that Labour is a permanent majority, or the Tories are a permanent minority? Once we wipe out these racial barriers, there is no question of any race dominating another.

It has always been said that ‘Oh, Federation Party is only paying lip-service to this, but it has got some devilish scheme in its heart.’ How can we convince them of our *bona fides* until we are given an opportunity to prove our sincerity? How can we do it? Even our own small, tiny history, in its own way, proves what we are. I will give you the instance of Suva City Council. Go through its minutes, go through its records. You will always find one race voting in a block, especially when the time for election of the mayor and the deputy mayor comes. Indians as a race have never voted as a block. And some people say that that is because Indians are disunited. They don’t give us the credit that Indians are not racial-minded. That is as far as the political side is concerned.

Let me come to the most important side of our life, and that is the economic side. Man cannot live by bread alone. Bread is only a means of life, bread is not life. And so, what makes life ennobling, enlightened and worth living? Living in a way that a Christian believes that at the end of the life, they will get salvation, the Muslims believe that they would find paradise, while the Hindus believe that they will find their ultimate merging in the Absolute. That is the aim of life. You find that in the heart of a small child, you find that in the heart of the biggest criminal. It is secretly lurking there. I have defended many murderers. I won’t call them murderers, because most of them were acquitted. But I say that even in their hearts, there was that desire, that spiritual urge. For we are all living for that ultimate objective. That can be provided by three ways. [One is] continuous study. From the time you are born, you start learning. A baby starts learning without any teacher, without any school, without any equipment. In a human being’s life, that is the time when he or she learns independently through God’s blessing, without anybody’s aid. So education is a most important and vital thing for us. And that education should be the type of education which liberates us, liberates man politically, socially, economically and spiritually.
Some people argue that we must have compulsory education first, and unless and until every child in this country gets elementary education—how to read, write and calculate—it is idle to think of a university. Let me remind them of one thing. The oldest university in recorded history that I know of, was the University of Dakshila in India, which was flourishing in 600 BC—600 years before Christ was born. That university created great minds who wrote great books in the Sanskrit language. Those are the classics of Indian literature and today we all study them with pride. The most outstanding product of that university was the great genius in political science and in diplomacy and economics: Chanakya. If you have not read it, you must have heard of that classic on economics by Chanakya called Chanakya Niti.

Now, if India had waited for compulsory education before making a start for higher education and establishing a university, India could not have even one university now because there is so much illiteracy [in the country]. If that criterion was to be followed, there would be no university even now in the whole of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Let me remind you that when Oxford and Cambridge came into existence, hardly five percent of the population of England was literate. Those were the days when even kings and queens couldn’t read and write, and signed their names with difficulty on official documents.

Remember this: our store of knowledge comes from the university. If we are all to limit ourselves to compulsory education, how poorer could we all be, how poorer the world would be, if we only knew how to read, write and calculate? It is the university which intellectually, morally and spiritually raises us from the level of animals. We need a university in Fiji even if we can’t have compulsory education immediately. It is not the job of the university only to teach. The job of the university is to think, to discover, to invent and to impart the results of that thought, the discoveries and the inventions to the world. That is the aim and object of the Federation Party in the field of education.

Education, as I mentioned, needs study, but study alone is not enough. Education needs thinking. And may I take the liberty of telling you that, though there is so much of illiteracy in India, you will be surprised at the power of thinking that many of these illiterate in India possess. An illiterate labourer when he thinks and talks about philosophy, a professor of philosophy from the western world would be astounded. So thinking is also very important, and that also comes from university training. That is why we want university in Fiji urgently. There are difficulties in the way, I know, but with God’s blessing I expect that we will be able to make a start in two or three years time.

We all talk of social services. We all talk of natural resources. We consider economics as something separate and apart from health and education. Here in Fiji, amongst certain circles, there is an impression that education and medical
facilities are luxuries that we can do without and we can curtail. And they think that the only thing that matters is production, only thing that matters is pounds, shillings and pence. I know we need to raise and increase our production. But to increase production, we need education and health. This is not social service. It is not a luxury. It’s a part of the economic development of the Colony. And the Federation Party does not wish to make that distinction and divide these two important essentials of development.

There is a tendency to think and a habit to say that we cannot do without outside capital. We should be guarded in our speech so that foreign investors may not be frightened off. It has become a fashion to say that capital is very, very shy and you have always got to be careful not to offend it. Federation Party believes in one thing: capital after all is a result of the sweat of men. They worked for it. We may be poor in Fiji: we are poor in Fiji. But if we made a determination that out of every pound we earn, at the most we will spend nineteen shillings, but one shilling will be saved. That one shilling is the capital. And those who have saved and who have become capitalists of the world, most of them were not born with a silver spoon in their mouths. They created capital with their sweat. We have got to do the same thing in Fiji. Self-help is the best help. Let us start it from our homes and our country.

Foreign capital, when it comes into the country, only invests in what we call expatriate industries. They will go in for mining, they will go in for logging, they will go in for copra and sugar. It is all taken out as a natural resource and taken abroad. Not one comes here with a manufacturing enterprise, to make things which can be made in this country, to make things which can save our natural resources and use those resources carefully and parsimoniously for ourselves and for our generations to come. For those manufacturing industries, we will have to depend on our own capital which we will have to create ourselves. And Federation Party believes in it, so that every encouragement will be given to people to save and form capital to establish manufacturing industries which will be helping them and helping the country. And the government will be taking an active part in trying to finance them, [providing] a certain portion of the finance; if they don’t have the know-how, help them in providing the know-how; if they have no managerial ability, to help them with some sort of managerial ability, until their private enterprise can stand on its own feet.

A poor country has got to solve the problem of increase in the population, and providing employment for that population. In such a country, you can do it by establishing mills, you can use machinery, you can use many things. Even automation doesn’t disturb that employment problem. But as far as we are concerned, we have got to see that the machine doesn’t take the place of man. We have got to see that the machine doesn’t deprive a man and his family of
his livelihood. If we can employ ten men without the aid of machines, and if we employ a machine and take ten men out of jobs, Federation Party will give preference to those ten men's livelihoods before the employment of machines.

That does not mean we are against the employment of machinery. Machinery should be employed, then man's tasks can become easier, more comfortable, less strenuous, and can provide him with more leisure, which he can profitably enjoy what we call life in abundance: family life, home life, life with his children and his wife, life with friends, life with his fellow men, life on the sports field, life in the club, life in the cultural centres, and life in places of worship. This is the real, proper use of machines. If the machine can't do that, then machine is not a blessing; machine is a curse, at least to a country and people like us, at this stage of our development.

Socially, as I have already said, we should all be one: equal, nobody great and nobody small. I am trying always to see that in my life I can mix and talk with the humblest of citizens in Fiji on equal terms. I am doing it. So far, I am successful. Many people criticise me just because of that. I have heard people say that a Member for Social Services should not go into the market to buy vegetables. I go into the market not to buy vegetables—buying vegetables is merely an excuse. My servant can go and buy it and bring it home, but it gives me the opportunity of mixing with my own people on equal terms, easily. They only remember me as a fellow human being, which they can't if they come into that office in Government Buildings. I mix with people in my home and outside in the same way. And I can tell you that you can get more satisfaction in life through keeping your ego down and allowing the natural springs of love which are in your heart. I want all my comrades, I want all the members of the Federation Party, I want all the sympathisers and supporters of the Federation Party to take that: you should have self-respect within you and confidence enough to sit with and enjoy the company on equal terms with the greatest of the world as well as with the humblest.

I have taken a lot of your time, more time than I should have taken because unfortunately due to my ill-health, at this critical time, I was not able to prepare a speech. I only decided that I will tell you what came to my mind, and I have told you.

In the end, I wish to tell you one thing, one precept, from a holy book. ‘Where there are stronger, take the side of the weaker, and by taking the side of the weaker, you will always be in the right.’ That is my motto in life. I hope that will be the motto of the Federation Party. With love towards all and malice towards none, we will keep on working with courage and determination. And I want you to realise one thing: History demands sacrifice. We have made an appointment with our destiny, and we have got to keep that appointment. May God give us all the strength to fulfill that appointment. Thank You.
I have been hearing that people are being misled about the Federation Party. I wish to tell you about the Federation Party today, its objectives and what it is trying to do. Federation stands for ‘union,’ ‘unity in diversity’. Flowers have different colours. They look different, they smell different. But if they are put together in a garland, they give a unique fragrance, as they grace the neck of humans or the feet of gods. The aim of the Federation Party is the same: to see that everyone unites and sticks together like flowers in a garland. I have been advocating that all Indians should unite. We are fifty one percent of the total population. It is important that we unite and show others what unity is. I am pleased to state that there are members of various races in the Federation Party. There are thousands of Fijians in the Party, along with some Chinese and some educated Europeans. These people fully understand the objectives of the Party.

In the 19th century, there was great stress on imperialism. England claimed that upon the entire realm of Great Britain the sun never set. That has changed today. After the Second World War, people of the world began to think about independence, that all countries should be free and that governments of free countries should be formed by the people themselves. The people of Fiji were also thinking along similar lines. People in the United Nations, too, have been saying that independence should be given to Fiji as soon as possible. Those people spreading rumours about the Federation Party asking for independence do not understand fully the objectives of the Federation Party. They do not understand what will happen in the future, and they are trying to forget the past. Those who have the power and the money do not want to part with their privileges. Such is the case throughout the world.

People of Britain have been ruling Fiji for a very long time. These people have been drawing big salaries. They have been getting inducement and other allowances. We do get employment but we are accused of not working properly, of being incapable and therefore not getting higher pay. The time has come for us to look after our own affairs. We have to therefore take the reins of government into our own hands and look after the people ourselves. We are a very proud species. We know that among the animals that God has created, we are the best. We have attributes not found in other animals.

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43 The speech in Hindi recorded by Robert Norton and translated by Mr Pathik of the Nasinu Teachers’ Training College.
But I wish to tell you one thing. There are black cows and red cows and brown cows. Have you ever found them quarrelling among themselves? Quarrelling and saying that since you are black or since you are brown, I am not going to graze with you? But what of humans, who claim a high degree of civilization for themselves? They are the ones who have created distinctions based on colour. This colour distinction among human beings does not allow people to have cross-cultural friendships. Where humans should understand each other’s heart, they look at each other’s face, look at each other’s colour.

What does religion teach us? It teaches us that since we are all children of God, we should not discriminate against one another. If we are His children, why should we quarrel, what is the struggle for? Why should we then say to one another that you are a Fijian, or an Indian, or a European? Why can’t we say that we all belong to one nation: the nation of Fiji? Some people say if independence came to Fiji, Indians will swamp the Fijians. And some people say that if independence comes to Fiji that Fijians will swamp the Indians. Both conclusions are wrong. We can get independence in Fiji only if we get together and make Fiji a nation.

The objective of colonialism is well known throughout the world: the policy of divide and rule. Why have they divided us, put Fijians in their villages and Indians in the fields [settlements]. Why have the Europeans built their bungalows on hills or have lived in towns? Who is responsible for this? Who made these [segregation] laws? Who made the law that requires a Fijian to seek the permission of the turaga ni koro [village headman] to leave his village? Fijians were forced to live in their villages like prisoners. These laws were made by the Fijian Affairs Board.

Everyone in the world wants to be free, to live wherever he likes; provided he abides by the laws he can live freely and do his own business and live peacefully. When I first came to Fiji, there was curfew in Suva, and I wondered why one was not allowed to go out of his dwelling after ten o’clock. No one was allowed even to go to a hotel after ten o’clock. I saw the Commissioner of Police and put to him that this was a strange law, that if one visits his friend and is delayed and happens to return to his hotel after ten, he can be apprehended by the police and put in a cell overnight. The Commissioner of Police laughed and explained ‘Mr. Patel, this law was not intended to be enforced on you; you can go wherever you like, even after ten; the police will not arrest you.’ Although I was not arrested, many Indians and Fijians were arrested and put in the cell. There was only one race [Europeans] who could move about freely, even after curfew hours.
When I went to Ba, I found a very good stream. I was very pleased at this. I went to my place, put on my bathing costume, brought a towel and dived in. No sooner was I in the water than a few Europeans arrived and when they saw me bathing in the water, they went away. The following day, being a Sunday, I had Mr. SB Patel, Mr. MT Khan and a few other visitors from Lautoka. I told them about the stream near the race course and how we could have a swim in it. We went to the stream and began to bathe.

As soon as we began to bathe, the Europeans who were there before us got into their cars and left. I could not understand this, the Europeans leaving just because we were bathing in the stream. The following day, Mr. Ragg arrived at my office and said that we were not allowed to bathe in the stream. I told Mr. Ragg that according to the law, the pool does not belong to you, but if I find out that it belongs to the public I will try and gather as many Indians and Fijians as I can and take them to the pool to bathe in it. The next day, I went to see the plan at the District Officer’s office. The District Officer was Mr. Judd. When Mr. Judd saw that I was looking at the plan, he came to me and said that I could come to his residence which had a private pool and that I could come there at any time I liked, have tea at his place and swim in the pool. I said to Mr. Judd that I was very thankful for his offer, but I would still prefer to see the location of the pool and to see who owns it…There was a time in Fiji when there were separate public bathing places for Indians and Fijians and Europeans. The Fijians were able to understand fully that they and the Indians were looked down upon by the Europeans.

But it is quite different now. I am telling you that Indians and Fijians together make up ninety four per cent of the Colony’s population. If the two groups are united, we could have heaven on earth here. The Fiji Visitor’s Bureau advertises that ‘Fiji is Paradise.’ But is there not unhappiness here? Isn’t there poverty and illiteracy? If there is, then this is not a paradise. As Member for Social Services, I have seen Indian and Fijian schools, and I have seen children at school and the syllabuses taught there. What is the state of facilities in the schools? How many government secondary schools are there? And yet they call this paradise?

When I was in India in 1962, I met Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. I spoke to him about the possibility of having a university in Fiji. He fully supported my views and said the Government of India would fully support this scheme. When this was published in the newspapers, the Fiji Times said this was Patel’s political stunt. When I returned to Fiji, everyone mocked me. This was in 1962. It was only two years later that the same AD Patel became Member for Social Services, and the portfolio for building a university in Fiji came into his hands. It was his good fortune that no sooner had he suggested this idea of a university in Fiji, the Government of Fiji hastily wrote to the Government of Great Britain to have a university in Fiji before Government of India got involved. The Government
of Great Britain appointed a Commission chaired by Sir Charles Morris, and at the same time the Government of New Zealand announced that they would be leaving Fiji, their buildings and facilities becoming vacant. I have every confidence that by 1968, a university will be opened in Fiji. So it will be possible for those Indian and Fijian students who for financial reasons are not able to go overseas for further education will be able to become university graduates in Fiji.

It is being said to the Fijians that if the Federation Party comes to power, they will suppress the Fijians. When I speak, I speak from my heart and not from my lips only. I have lived in Fiji for the last thirty eight years, and during this time, if a Fijian has brought a case to me, I have fought his case without any fee. I will give an example of this issue. During the war years, when American soldiers were stationed in Nadi, an American soldier went to a village and probably asked for a girl. The Fijians got very annoyed and chased him from the village. They followed him and just near the Nadi Theatre, they gave him so much hiding that the poor chap bled. The American soldiers got very annoyed and they threatened to shoot the villagers and burn Fijian villages in the Nadi area. The same night, the Fijians came to my house at Nadi and they brought a Tabua with them. The Fijians then presented the Tabua to me. I said to them that I would give them all the help they needed and that they were to go back to the village and stay there without any fear.

I immediately wrote to the commandant of the army and asked him for an explanation of the matter. He said that the villagers need not be afraid of anything, and that it was a matter for the Fiji Government to investigate. Seven Fijians were arrested. At that time [1943] there was a strike and I was under house arrest. I wrote a letter to the Governor of Fiji and requested that I be allowed to represent the seven Fijians in the Lautoka Supreme Court. At that time, I was a prisoner of the Government of Fiji. I was allowed to travel to Lautoka, and for three weeks I fought this case. All were set free except one who was imprisoned for seven years. Now who can say that I am not a friend of the Fijians, or that I am their enemy? Those Europeans who advocate equality will only allow Fijians to enter their houses through the back door. But if a Fijian comes to my house, he enters through the front door and he sits side by side with me on the same sofa. When a Fijian visits the office of the Member for Natural Resources [Ratu Mara], he bends down on his knee and goes to his office. But when he visits my office as the Member for Social Services and when he tries to bend down, I hold him up by the arm and say to him: ‘You sit beside me and talk to me face-to-face, and if you have any complaints, I will listen to it very carefully and I will try my best to help you.’
I will give you one or two examples of this. Two Fijians from Lau who were imprisoned in Suva were about to return to their villages in Lau at the finish of their term. But the Superintendent of Prisons said that they were to travel as deck passengers as soon as deck passage was available. These people wondered how they would fend for themselves during this time; they had no money. Someone suggested they should see the Member for Social Services, Mr. AD Patel. These two Fijians came to me and told me that they were unable to get passage to their village, and that it was not possible for them to live in Suva for a month because they had no money. I immediately asked my secretary to ring the shipping company and find out if any deck passages were available. The reply was in the negative. I asked him to ring again to see if there was any saloon passage available. He told me that one or two saloon passages were available. I at once asked him to send the two men by saloon passage. If any one from Lau had ever travelled from Suva to Lau in saloon passage, it was these two prisoners.

When I look at our schools, I find that all children are alike whether they are Indian, Fijian, European or Chinese. To me everyone is alike. We must work together for the good of the Colony. The Federation Party is thinking of the same, and working along these lines and will work along these lines in the future. There are people who always write against me in the papers. According to a Hindi saying, if I say mangoes, they will say tamarind. And people who read this in overseas newspapers express surprise when they finally meet me. ‘Mr. Patel, we were thinking you might be some sort of a monster, but when we meet you, we find you are not that at all. You are not saying anything that should not be said.’ The same thing happened at the London conference. The United Kingdom delegation said the same thing to us. Mrs Irene White said to me; ‘Mr. Patel you have put your case very lucidly and convincingly before us, and there is not a single word in it with which I disagree.’

We know that if we have to bring peace in this country and that we have to be independent, and all that, we have to live peacefully together. We cannot fight and still live together. We have to cooperate and live together. We have to bring everyone together and the only way to do that is by means of common roll. We can no longer think along the lines that we are Fijians, we are Indians, we are Europeans or Chinese. We must think of ourselves as citizens of Fiji, that we are nationals of Fiji. We have to have a government in place which will bring peace and prosperity and deal with the three enemies of mankind: poverty, illiteracy and sickness. The Federation Party thinks that we are all alike in the eyes of God. We want equal rights and we dislike those people who create discrimination amongst us. We do not threaten anyone, nor would we tolerate threats from anyone.
I advocate that in our schools in Fiji, our three principal languages should all be taught, English, Fijian and Hindustani. It is not difficult to learn the three languages. My son, who is in England, learns five languages, including Spanish, French and Latin. If he can learn five languages (besides studying mathematics and political science), it should not be difficult for a child to learn only three languages. In England, every child has to learn three languages: French, Latin and English, which is his mother tongue. Now if he has to learn three languages, there is no reason why in our schools in Fiji, a child cannot learn three languages. When we learn each other’s languages, we will be able to understand each other well, we learn about each other’s culture and therefore living together will not be so difficult. When I called a conference in Suva to tell people that all schools should accept children of all races, Fijian managers, incited by others, refused to accept children of other races into their schools. They knew full well that standards in European schools were better than in their schools, that Indian schools came second and that Fijian schools were the weakest. But they refused to accept this offer. Now they want all schools to accept children of different races. Now the Suva Grammar School accepts children from all races. But this was not possible before. This is a time to think, and if we do not unite together, the consequence especially for the poor people will be bad. The decision is in our hands. We can decide. If we can unite, we can achieve this aim.

You, men and women who are voters, know that according to the new constitution, twelve Indian votes are equal to one European vote. Do you think this is justice? Can we have peace through this injustice? Can there be any peace if we know that this injustice is being done to us? The greatest enemy of human beings is fear. If a person lives in fear, he lives in slavery throughout his life, and when he dies, he dies a dog’s death. On the other hand, those people who do not fear, or the person who does not fear, lives like a king because he has no one to fear except God. When people with no fear die, they die as brave people and people have respect for them. Take the example of Bapuji. Mahatma Gandhi worked for his country all his life. When independence came, there were communal riots, and he went from village to village, and wherever he went, peace came to the minds of the people. When he passed away, he passed away as a brave man. They said bad things about him when he was alive, but they worship him now. Take Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ had only twelve disciples in the beginning. But after his death, the world worshipped him. People did not realise who he truly was.

I have great pleasure in telling you that the membership of the Federation Party now stands at seven thousand. This number has never been equalled by any union or Sangh in the history of Fiji. I may tell you one more thing, that in the Fijian Association, the membership is open only to Fijians. Similarly, in the General Voters Union, they can take membership of other people, but say if the
Member for Natural Resources wishes to become a member, his membership will be refused. I do not wish to say much about the Alliance because the Alliance says it ‘Stands for All.’ But I say if the Alliance is for all, then why do you oppose common roll? If you say you stand for all, then why do you have separate Indian, Fijian and European memberships? Why don’t you unite and then you will be able to say that Alliance stands for all. Alliance also follows the policy of divide and rule. Federation Party is a political party. Alliance is not a political party but only a group of people. They themselves say that the Alliance was formed to oppose and defeat the Federation Party. What will happen after the election campaign when they have defeated the Federation Party? I don’t know what will happen to the Indian members of the party if they disagree with the party leaders? They will be booted out of the Alliance or they will have to work as slaves for them.44 And who will benefit in this? Only Mr. John Falvey, and of course he is the brains behind the Alliance.

It is my misfortune that after filing my nomination, I became the victim of pneumonia and I had to lie in bed for about a month. It therefore became impossible for me to come and see you. You must have heard that the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Fred Lee, was in Fiji and I toured with him to places in Suva. I went to the [Derrick] Technical Institute, Laucala Bay, the [Colonial War Memorial] Hospital and the Fiji School of Medicine Building. And when I was going down the steps, I suddenly collapsed. Dr [Charles] Gurd who was accompanying me and who knew I was very ill, got hold of me and guided me down the steps like a child, counting each step for me. I asked Mr. Fred Lee if he was tired. He said to me, ‘To be very frank with you Mr. Patel, I say I am really tired.’ I suggested he take a rest. When he was returning, he learnt that I was down with pneumonia. He wrote a personal note to me from the Nadi Airport saying that he was praying for my speedy recovery because ‘Fiji needs you.’ Now, we are fighting Great Britain. We are fighting Mr. Fred Lee. And yet it is Fred Lee who says that ‘Fiji needs you Mr. Patel.’ But I hear that people here don’t want me, when I am not fighting with anyone in Fiji. Everyone in Fiji—Fijians, Indians, Europeans—are all alike to me.

If we want to bring peace, we have to bring prosperity and we have to be united and go forward together. We are one of the world’s ancient people. Our civilization is the oldest in the world. Our religion is Sanatan [eternal]. It teaches us to speak the truth irrespective of the consequences. Our religion also teaches non-violence. We do not issue threats to anyone. You have the free right to vote. You think hard before you cast your vote. No one is supposed to demand your vote by personal threat or by showing violence or by bribery. I hear that it is

44 By the late 1970s, nearly all the founding members of the Indian Alliance had left the party and joined the National Federation Party, including Sir Vijay R Singh and James Shankar Singh, former Alliance cabinet ministers and presidents of the Indian Alliance.
being threatened that those who do not vote for the Alliance will be pushed out of their land by Mr. MacFarlane. This is not true. I know this is not true. If Mr. MacFarlane is trying to give this threat, I am prepared to take up a case against him. But I know he will not do this because he is a lawyer and he knows the regulations full well. No one has to fear about land because unless there are two renewals of ten years' each, no one can be pushed out. The Fijian people are being incited that if the Federation Party comes to power, they will snatch their lands from them. I am trying to tell people that they should not have fear of anyone. The common Fijian people are being incited against me because the chiefs think that if they get common roll, they will lose their special privileges. I'd like to see the day when common roll comes to Fiji so that everyone works together for the good of Fiji irrespective of their race.

I have taken a lot of your time, and I thank you for listening to me patiently. I know that I have come to you very late. There are two reasons for this. I have already told you about my illness and then, since I am the leader of the Federation Party, I had to attend various meetings throughout Fiji to campaign for our candidates. I have come very late to my own constituency because I know that people understand that I am trying to work for the good of everyone, for the good of Fiji.

37: Call for a new Constitutional Conference, 1 September 1967

I beg to move:

Undemocratic, iniquitous and unjust provisions characterize the existing Constitution and electoral laws of Fiji and their operation have caused alarm in the minds of right thinking people and have hampered the political advancement of Fiji along democratic lines and this House therefore is of the opinion that Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom should call a Constitutional Conference immediately to ensure that a new Constitution is worked out based on true democratic principles without any bias or distinction on the grounds of colour, race, religion or place of origin or vested interest either political, economic, social or other so that Fiji may attain self-government and become a nation with honour, dignity and responsibility as soon as possible.

The House is well aware, and it is also a matter of public knowledge, that the present Constitution was imposed upon the Indian community against the

45 DM MacFarlane was the Legal Advisor to the Native Land Trust Board.
expressed wishes of its elected representatives at the Conference. There was only one Indian delegate [CP Singh], who happened to be the Governor’s nominee, who sided with the European and the Fijian delegations and showed his consent partly to the proposed Constitution. The Indian community opposed this Constitution and still opposes it because it is undemocratic, because it is iniquitous and because it is unjust. It is a serious obstacle in welding various communities residing in this country into a nation. It seriously hampers the political progress of this Colony towards independence by bringing into existence a reactionary Government. As is evident from the racial composition of the members sitting here, the Indian community, though it is the majority community in Fiji, has only twelve of us in this House. The European community, though it is a very small minority consisting of about 20,000 people including the Chinese, has 14 members sitting in this House. The Fijians, who are the second biggest community in Fiji, have only 14 Fijian members sitting in this House, which means that a small minority of 20,000 has gained representation in this House which enables 14 Europeans to sit in this Council and take part in its deliberations.46 This is obviously undemocratic as can be seen from the nature of the composition of this House. Under a colonial form of government, the population can be divided into two classes or two categories: one, those who benefit from colonialism and the other, those who suffer from colonialism.

If one analyses the composition of this House one can evidently see that the Government benches consist of those who have done well from a colonial form of government and still are doing well. The Opposition represents the voice of those who are the victims of colonialism and who happen to be the largest percentage of the total population of this Colony. Those who benefit from a colonial form of government are a small number of Europeans who enjoy political, economic and social supremacy in this country and amongst the Fijians, those who belong to the chiefly order.

You might find a few people in every section of the community who will gain benefit from colonialism through the governments they pick at the official table. Apart from that, the rest are under the stultifying influence of a system of government which stands universally condemned in the present world. When we expressed our opposition to this Constitution, the then the Secretary of State, Mr. Arthur Greenwood, called the members of the Indian delegation and told them that he understood our feelings but he wanted us to consider that, after all, this was not the last Constitutional Conference; there would be many more in the future. And even if the Indian members considered that this is a very undesirable form of Constitution which they would not like to accept, he would like us to consider, provided goodwill is brought to bear, even a bad

46 Patel here means the ten European members plus four Official Members.
Constitution could be made to work to mutual advantage and he requested us to give this Constitution a try, which we did. We accepted this Constitution under protest, we stood for election and we have worked in this Council in the spirit and hope of making a bad Constitution work to the benefit of the masses of the people, not [only] the privileged classes who enjoy the benefits of a colonial system of government. I do not know, probably the official side may complain that we in this Council did not sincerely make an attempt, as so many members from the opposite side have the habit, now and then, of insinuating that whenever we have expressed any opinion on any point straight away our sincerity is challenged. So I say, if you still feel that we have not sincerely given a trial to this Constitution which we should have, then I must say that this is the limit of our sincerity. We cannot go any further.

As is well known, even the electoral laws were not satisfactory even though they provided that there should be a secret ballot, the arrangement which was made for the method of casting votes by illiterate voters was far from voting by secret ballot. The largest numbers of illiterate voters amounting to several thousand were Indian voters. As far as literacy qualifications are concerned the Fijian and the European communities are in a very fortunate position. They enjoy almost universal literacy. When we proposed that some method should be adopted so that even an illiterate voter could identify the candidate for whom he wanted to vote by printing a picture, or a symbol on the ballot paper, the Colonial Secretary who was in charge of the election, did not agree even though the returning officer gave the opinion that it was quite practicable and was being done in other countries in the Commonwealth. The Government Printer also gave his opinion that it was practicable as far as the printing of the ballot papers was concerned as it would not create any complications or difficulties. What is more, we were told that to enable Indian illiterate voters to vote English numerical numbers would be put against the names of the candidates which would also be printed in the English language. If a man was illiterate how was he expected to be able to read even letters or numbers in a foreign language?

Our representations were summarily dismissed by informing us that of course even an illiterate person could read numbers in the English language, which is not true. Then to soothe us, an arrangement was made that those voters who could not understand how to vote would have the help and assistance of the polling officers. A voter had to give the name of the candidate for whom he or she wanted to vote and the polling officer would tick the ballot paper on his or her behalf. These polling officers were in the main Government men and most of them had votes as every voter in this Colony had and in their heart of hearts they had sides to take. When it was pointed out as to how anyone could find out, especially an illiterate voter, whether the polling officer had carried out his instructions faithfully and voted for the right candidate or not, we were
told that nothing else could be done but that the Government suggested that we should send some detectives, that is literate voters, who would pretend to be illiterate, and ask the polling officer to vote for them so that such polling officers could be caught and they would be immediately removed. In fact several polling officers were caught and were immediately removed and I thank two Government officers—one Mr. Thomson, who was the Acting Colonial Secretary then, and the other, Mr. Strick, who was the District Commissioner Southern. I do not know what happened in other parts of this Colony, but I do know what happened in the Southern Division and the Western Division. Of course, we do not know what happened in the case of those who were not caught.

Another difficulty experienced by the voter in the elections was the choice of colours of various ballot papers. Instead of having contrasting colours, the colours were more or less harmonising and within the polling station I myself experienced difficulty of distinguishing between yellow and buff and I pointed it out to the polling officer and he agreed that he was also confused, so one can just understand how much these colours confuse illiterate voters. Even when a voter had to give one vote he would find difficulty in these circumstances but each voter had four votes to cast and when it was suggested that each voter should receive one ballot paper at a time, fill it out, cast it and then return for another it was pointed out that this would take a lot of time, so in order to save time each voter was given four ballot papers at a time, which confused him still further. I heard remarks from educated European voters outside the polling stations when they came out how complicated that system was and they themselves were confused. The simple Indian and Fijian voters who did not have much experience in casting votes were subjected to this with the result that we have got the form of government which consists of the beneficiaries of colonialism—a reactionary government which says on behalf of all the people of this country that they are in favour of status quo that the people of this country do not want freedom and that the people of this country would like to go on under the present form of Government and they openly praise the colonial form of government.

Time has come when in the interests of democratic freedom we have called for a halt. If this continues any longer attitudes will harden, difficulties will be created, the real aspirations and wishes of the overwhelming number of people in this country will be misrepresented abroad and, as is happening now, everybody who comes from outside will be told that we in Fiji like colonialism, we do not want freedom, nobody wants freedom. Racial attitudes will stiffen, the divisions will become still more rigid and defined and when the real time comes, people of this Colony will find it almost impossible to break all these rigid barriers in order to unite the various communities of this country lead them to nationhood. We have therefore decided to put forward this motion before the Council, and
though I very well know that this motion, of course, will not be acceptable to the Government benches, in the name of the people of this country and in the name of democratic freedom I commend this motion to the House.

38: Federation Party Convention, Ba, 28-29 June, 1968

Much water has flowed under the bridge and many developments have taken place since we met in May last year in Suva.

At the conclusion of the Constitutional Conference in London, Mr. Anthony Greenwood called Indian delegates at Marlborough House and told them that he understood how keenly disappointed they were; he sympathised with them and admitted that the proposed Constitution was by no means satisfactory, that he appealed to the Indian leaders to give it a trial and promised that there will be another Constitutional Conference in two years. Putting trust in his words the Federation Party decided to give the Constitution a trial under protest.

Our first disillusionment came in the General Election which was rigged. The complicated system of voting was devised to confuse voters. The colours selected for the ballot papers were hard to distinguish in the polling booths. The provision for a secret ballot was turned into a mockery by postal ballot and appointing officers at the polling booths who were themselves voters and many of them openly hostile to our Party to tick the ballot papers and put them into relevant boxes for those who were ignorant or who did not know how to vote. The electoral regulations provide legal sanctions against candidates and voters who violated the regulations, but no legal sanctions are provided against any malpractice on the part of returning or polling officers or their assistants. Thus they were left to vote for any candidate they pleased with impunity in contravention to the requests of the voter. The government refused to provide pictorial symbols on ballot paper to enable illiterate voters to identify candidates by asserting that even illiterate voters ought to know English numerals. To cap it all polling booths in a large number of places were established on privately owned properties controlled by the owners and in many cases in Fijian villages, in homes of the chiefs. Most of the Alliance Fijian candidates occupied positions of power and influence in government service and were allowed to contest election while exercising their official powers and functions.

No wonder that such an election threw up a big majority consisting of diehard colonialist supremacists, Fijian civil servants, and their Indian hangers-on who are openly hated by the Indian community for the white colonialists-dominated Alliance Party. Though it was agreed at the constitutional conference that the
existing convention will be followed in the setting up of the Executive Council, the Governor in violation of the agreement invited the Alliance to nominate un-official members to the Executive Council and to distribute un-official portfolios amongst its own members.\footnote{See \textit{Report of the Fijian Constitution Conference}, Command Paper 2783, House of Commons. Ratu Mara regretted not taking up the power-sharing offer made in the report. ‘I regret to this day that I did not do that,’ he told a writer. AD Patel was an intelligent man. He would have worked along.’ See Kathleen Hancock, \textit{Men of Mana: Portraits of three Pacific leaders: Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, Afioga Va’ai Kolone, Sir Robert Rex} (Wellington: Steele Roberts, 2003), 34.}

As you all know, I was acknowledged as the Leader of the Opposition, and the Federation Party in the Legislative Council was declared to be the official opposition. We appealed to the Secretary of State against the action of the Governor which was in violation of the agreement reached at the Constitutional Conference. But the Secretary of State paid no heed to our protest and supported the Governor.

For 300 days we worked in the Legislative Council discharging faithfully our responsibilities as the guardians of the rights and interests of the people against the encroachments of those rights and interests by a government of despotic and greedy colonialists. Afraid to face us squarely in the debate, the Colonial Alliance Government made a practice of hastily using the guillotine.

The Government thus deprived us of the basic and most important privilege of a legislator, namely, the right of free and unfettered speech. Intoxicated with the power derived from a docile brute majority of yes men in the Legislative Council, the government did not even bother to consult the Opposition on any important issue of bipartisan national interest. The Governor, who enjoys ultimate absolute power under the Constitution, ignored the Opposition completely even in such important matters as the introduction of the ministerial system. Without consulting or even mentioning to the Opposition, the Governor decided to set up a Council of Ministers on the 1st of September, 1967 which consisted of seven Europeans, two Fijians chiefs and one Indian in a colony where Fijians and Indians form 94\% of the population and Europeans barely 6\% and the majority of whom are temporarily resident in the Colony in course of their employment in the colonial government and foreign European concerns.

Our cup of disillusionment was filled to the brim. The design of the British to establish a European colonialist-dominated government in Fiji was unmasked. We realized that the British through devices concealed in a cunningly devised constitution and by resorting to devious methods were imposing the rule of the colonial vested interests on the people of Fiji. To achieve independence and establish a truly democratic government of the people by the people for the people, it is imperative that the constitution be immediately revised and changed.
The Opposition, therefore, decided to introduce a motion asking for a new democratic constitution based on one man one vote one constituency, and upon rejection of that motion to walk out from the Legislative Council, and to remain absent from the Council and vacate the seats in order to force a by-election if the British Government did not meanwhile make a favourable response.

We have now vacated our seats and are waiting for the by-election. The Governor whose duty is to issue a Writ of Election and hold by-elections upon the seats becoming vacant, has not even after a lapse of three months, issued the Writ of Election, providing yet another example of British Government’s insincerity. The true nature of the present government has become apparent to the people through its legislative and administrative measures. People are already convinced that it rules for the benefit of one particular section to the detriment of workers, growers and small traders. Its favouritism and extravagance have become notorious and need no exposition.

I now state what our Party stands for and what tasks face us to avert the impending calamity. As I stated before, Fijians and Indians together form 94% of the total population. They are permanent residents of this country. Over 90% of Indians are born in Fiji and most of them represent third, fourth and even fifth generation of Indians in Fiji. Even those who are born in India have become permanent residents and citizens of Fiji. During ninety years of its rule in Fiji, the British have kept Fijians, Indians and other races apart by legislative measures and executive policy.

In spite of this division and segregation, the Indian and Fijian communities socially and economically are closer to each other than to any other community. They have lived together in friendliness, harmony and peace for about 90 years and have provided a good example of harmonious race relations to the world. Indians and Fijians are easily approachable to each other, and in the hour of need the Fijians turn to Indians for help. The third community, namely the Europeans, remain unapproachable and aloof from the two major communities.

As communities of workers, cultivators and subordinates Fijians and Indians have common interest economically, socially and politically. Both communities are under the heel of the third community. In their common interests, Fijians and Indians should see that they don’t allow the third party to drive a wedge between them. It should be appreciated by everyone that Indian and Fijian solidarity is vital for the happiness, peace and prosperity of all the inhabitants of this Colony. Anyone who tries to break that solidarity is not only an enemy of Fijians and Indians, he is equally an enemy of his own people whoever they may be. The Federation Party looks upon the preservation and promotions of Fijian and Indian solidarity and unity as one of its most important tasks.
I am glad to inform you that our Fijian brethren understand and appreciate us and are supporting and joining our Party in large numbers. Two scions of Fijian aristocracy have resigned from high positions in the government and joined our Party. They have set an example of patriotism and sacrifice before our young men and women. They are Ratu Julian Toganivalu and Ro Mosese Veresikete. Ratu Julian Toganivalu has undertaken the difficult work of the Organising Secretary of our Party and Ratu Mosese Veresikete has accepted the responsible position of the editor of Pacific Review. I hope many more will follow their example and join us in bending to the all-important task of nation building.

For the information of our friends who have not yet become members of our Party, I wish to point out that the membership of our Party is open to any citizen of Fiji above the age of 18 years, irrespective of race, religion, origin or sex who accepts the aims, objectives, policy, programme and discipline of the Party and pays an annual fee of two shillings.

The Party aims to create a national consciousness among the citizens of Fiji irrespective of race, religion, origin or sex and to make Fiji a democratic nation in which all citizens will be equal in the eyes of law, in which all citizens will enjoy equal political rights, in which all citizens will have equal opportunities to advance according to their abilities. To accomplish this end, while actively working to unite the people, we must vigilantly guard against being duped by the notorious colonial policy of divide and rule. We shall also have to resort to necessary action for the removal of all constitutional and legal barriers which divide the races and keep them separate and apart and have a new constitution which will bring all citizens together in one man, one vote, one value constituencies.

This Party’s aim is to work for immediate independence and to set up a democratic republic with a parliamentary government within the British Commonwealth. In order to maintain a link with the past, a person who is ethnically a Fijian will be elected as the Head of the State by a plebiscite based on adult suffrage at five yearly intervals. To preserve connection with Great Britain, independent Fiji will seek membership of the British Commonwealth.

Our Party will follow the ideal of ‘Unity of Diversity’ by respecting cultures, customs and traditions of all races and though a secular state it will foster equal respect for all great religions of the world represented in Fiji as we firmly believe that all religions have various ways to reach the same God. In this context I wish

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48 Ratu Julian’s other brothers, William, David and Josua, were the leading lights of the Alliance Party. According to Harish Sharma, Ratu Julian joined the Federation Party after listening to Patel’s speech in the Legislative Council rejecting the electoral recommendations of the 1965 Constitutional Conference (Document 32). Ratu Mosese was a Master of Arts in Economics from Hull University and half-brother to Ratu Mara’s wife, Ro Lala, who later became the head of the Burebasaga Confederacy.
to make it clear here and now that this Party is not anti-European as it is often misrepresented by its enemies, but it is most emphatically against colonialism and supremacy of any racial group. The Federation Party assures all people born in Fiji or who have continuously lived for seven years and made Fiji their home of full citizenship rights. Fundamental human rights will be safeguarded by a Bill of Rights entrenched in the Constitution which shall be enforceable by the Courts of Law so that no individual or minority may be oppressed by a majority.

In the economic sector our major task will be to raise the standard of living of the masses by development of our natural resources, by improvement and increase in agricultural production, by encouraging manufacture of local goods and by import substitution to the extent it is practicable and economically beneficial. We cannot raise the standard of living of our masses only by increasing production. It must be accompanied by a just and equitable distribution of the economic fruits of production among those engaged in the industry.

Our government, industries and commercial concerns are saddled with top heavy staff mostly recruited from Australia, New Zealand and Great Britain at salaries which compare favourably with those prevailing in those highly developed and affluent countries and far in excess of what our local economy can stand and thereby depressing the wages of local workers to a level far below what our economy can pay if it was not saddled with such over expensive staff. It will be the policy of our Party to see that the locals are given preference in employment and even where it is necessary to employ people from outside because of the unavailability of persons of required skill and experience locally, such people will be recruited from countries with the scale of remuneration which is comparable with ours.

Under the existing economic set up, local people have to sell their services and produce cheap and are made to buy commodities and services dear, largely from Australia and New Zealand. Our trade policy with other countries will be on the basis of ‘we buy from those who buy from us.’ As far as the production of food is concerned the objective of our Party is to make this country self-sufficient and those items which have to be imported, will be imported from the countries which offer them cheapest. This Party strongly condemns the measure adopted by the present government to debar people from buying butter from Holland at a price which is far below New Zealand’s.

The Party appreciates the importance of capital in the economic development in Fiji and will encourage the formation and investment of local capital to the maximum and will also create favourable conditions to attract foreign capital for undertakings which require large capital. Though it is in favour of a fair and reasonable return to the investors it will not allow unfettered exploitation by monopolies and cartels. Wherever it is possible the Party will take steps to
introduce and encourage competition to loosen the hold of such monopolies, as for instance, our Party will help and encourage and assist farmers to establish and operate co-operative sugar and oil mills in sugar and copra industries. We shall also prescribe a minimum basic living wage for the workers and minimum fair prices for agricultural produce such as sugar cane and coconuts to protect the farmers. The farmers of this Colony are by and large thrifty and careful in their expenditure. Their poverty and indebtedness is largely due to having to sell their produce like sugar cane on credit and at an uneconomic low price. This Party will introduce measures to ensure prompt payment of fair and economic price.

With a view to alienating the Fijians from the Indians, the colonialist diehards carry on a mischievous propaganda of lies to the effect that if the Federation Party comes into power it will take away lands from the Fijians. I appeal to our Fijian brethren not to allow themselves to be taken in by such a propaganda of lies. Even before going to the constitutional conference, the leaders of Federation Party had assured Fijian leaders that right of ownership of Fijian lands were not in question. The ownership of their lands is acknowledged and will be respected. Let me declare publicly that the Federation Party is against nationalization of land. It respects Fijian rights of ownership. As a matter of fact, under present law Fijian owners don’t enjoy the same rights in respect of their lands, as the owners belonging to other races do in respect of their freeholds. Our Party will be prepared to confer the same rights on them if they so wish.

The agriculturists of this Colony are mostly tenants and it is the declared policy of our Party to provide them with security of tenure on fair rents and in the event of the termination of a lease payment of compensation for the unexhausted improvements effected by the tenant on the land. This is now an established practice in all enlightened and progressive countries. We cannot protect and promote agriculture which is so vital to the prosperity of all, if we do not create a sense of security and fair dealing in the minds of the tenant farmers.

The existing fiscal structure is heavily in favour of rich individuals and companies and the burden of taxation falls oppressively on the poor. The basic tax which is unfairly deducted at the source from the earning of workers and farmers without giving them anything in return, is an outstanding example of oppression and injustice. The Federation Party will abolish basic tax, and remove duties on necessaries of life. We shall revise and radically change the whole system applying the principle that the ‘wealthier a tax payer the more he pays in taxes.’ This principle will be applied to companies as well as individuals. In devising a new system, the requirements of capital formation and incentives for economic development shall be also borne in mind.
Lot of public money is wasted in the name of economic development. The most glaring example of this extravagant waste is the Lomaivuna project which is carried on to satisfy the fad of the Chief Minister. Membership of the Natural Resources Council largely consists of the representatives of the vested colonialist interests and it in fact discourages, impedes or slows down any projects of development which are likely to compete with or conflict with the interests of their companies. The Department of Agriculture which spends so much of the taxpayers money has so far shown very disappointing results. It is therefore necessary to effect a complete over-haul of the Council and the Department of Agriculture. The existing set back in land development projects is largely due to the restrictions and rigid control imposed upon practical and experienced farmers by raw and inexperienced government servants who are mostly based in theory.

Our Party is of the view that the success of such projects depends on the willing co-operation and initiative of the farmers engaged in them. Our Party also attaches great importance to the manufacture of consumer goods locally in the private sector and will do whatever it can for its speedy promotion. Sugar, being Fiji's largest and most important industry which plays a vital role in the economic life of this Colony, deserves special and particular mention. The Party is firmly convinced that the Eve Commission's Report, the Ordinance and the machinery set up under it viz the Sugar Board and the Sugar Advisory Council have all proved to be of one-sided benefit to the C.S.R. Co. Ltd which now operates under the name of South Pacific Sugar Mills Limited to the entire detriment of farmers and workers, reducing them to the status of serfs and slaves.

This party would scrap the Ordinance and all that goes with it and devise a system by which the miller will be bound to produce only so much of sugar as may be sold at an economic price so that the farmer can be assured of a fair and economic price for his cane and utilize the remaining land for other produce which will augment his income and diversify agriculture in cane growing areas.

Gold Mining is another industry which will receive special attention of our Party. Gold is a commodity which plays a very important role in international trade. Gold and other minerals belong to the state, and mining is a wasting asset. It is silly to allow a foreign private enterprise to dig out and take away gold from this country and for the government to subsidize such operation. Gold belongs to the state and it should be mined and used by the state for the benefit of the people of Fiji. Our Party therefore stands for the immediate nationalization of Gold Mines.

The basic ideal of the Party is to make Fiji a Welfare State in which no citizen, however poor or incapable, would have to go without food, clothing, shelter and medical care. Medical services shall be provided free to the patients. The Party
also aims to introduce old age pensions and unemployment benefit schemes. Education will be free and compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 16. The Party will completely overhaul the existing educational system, which is geared to the requirements of a colonial set up, to make it suit the political, economic, social, cultural and spiritual needs of a free people.

The farmers are the economic backbone of this country and it is the duty of the government to see that the backbone is healthy and strong. The main causes of his poverty are low and uneconomic prices of agricultural produce and their late payment. The Party will adopt such measures as are found necessary to improve the economic condition of farmers.

This Party believes in the dignity of labour and in securing a rightful place for it in the community. Our Party would grant them protection against exploitation by prescribing a minimum basic living wage. The trade unions are at a serious disadvantage in bargaining with large and powerful employers because the workers receive wages which are barely sufficient for a hand-to-mouth living and they have no funds to provide even minimum necessities of life to the worker and his dependents during a strike. It is further weakened by the division of workers on racial lines into racial unions in the same industry. In these circumstances the trade unions are at a serious disadvantage in bargaining with the employers. Our Party will take necessary steps to strengthen the unions and devise ways and means to reduce or eliminate present handicaps.

The policy of the colonial government not to compete with private enterprise will be drastically revised and competition will be introduced by establishing undertakings owned and run by the state on its own or in partnership with private share-holders if it is deemed necessary in the public interest.

The Party believes in introducing local self-government in cities, towns, townships and rural areas, securing autonomy in local affairs. The Councils and Boards shall consist wholly of representatives elected by the residents of the area under a common roll. Every member in such Councils or Boards will be free to speak in any one of the three languages, namely Fijian, Hindi and English.

Now I come to the tasks which immediately face us. As you very well know the bi-elections will take place in the near future and we should organise our campaigns and leave no stones unturned to win in all constituencies and send our candidates to the Legislative Council with thumping majorities. Our Fijian brethren are gradually understanding and appreciating us and since Ratu Julian Toganivalu and Ratu Mosese Veresikete joined our Party Fijians are rallying to our standard in large numbers. Our Indian brethren have also woken up and risen to a man to support us and our Party. Both Indians and Fijians realise that unless both these communities joined together in this hour of crisis, they will be lost forever.
This is also a crucial year for our economic future. Whatever our race, religion, sex or station of life, we all—including the government—depend upon the income from sugar cane. If the farmers are prosperous we all can prosper. But if they are ruined economically, all of us will have to face ruin. It was the cane farmers who gave birth to the Federation Party and our Party, as it is in duty bound, pledges its full and whole-hearted support and help in securing a fair and favourable contract which would bring prosperity to the farmers and to the people and government of this colony for at least ten years to come. We all know what a hard and unscrupulous bargainer the Company is, and how all the colonial vested interests and the Alliance Government support it. It is therefore absolutely necessary that all farmers stand together and offer a determined front to achieve their goal.

All these entail heavy expenditure and require large funds. This is the time for all to donate liberally so that we can meet the crisis squarely and gain victory which rightfully is ours. My fellow members, I thank you for your patient hearing. May Almighty God guide our deliberations and strengthen our resolve to work courageously together for the political, social, economic and spiritual uplift and unity of our people and liberate our country from political and economic bondage.

Resolution on Independence, NFP Convention, 28-29 June 1968, Ba

This convention is firmly of the view that this Colony is fit and ready for Political Independence and requests the United Kingdom Government to convene a Constitutional Conference as soon as possible to prepare a Democratic Constitution based on one man, one vote constituencies and transferring power to the representative elected under such a franchise. This Convention emphasises the urgent need for immediate independence in order to remove all Political, Social and Economic impediments which obstruct the development of the country and thereby come seriously in the way of raising the standard of living of its inhabitants.
39: Political Statement by A. D. Patel, 30 August 1968

‘You have experienced the work and achievement of the Alliance Party in the last two years. We all know now that Alliance is a block of white imperialists and those who serve them. These imperialists have kept the Indians and Taukeis, the people of Fiji, in the chain of slavery for the last 90 years and are now trying to keep them under bondage. Do you want this?’ said Mr. A D Patel in his Radio Broadcast on Wednesday last.

He continued: ‘Federation is a party of people who are hungry, poor, under slavery and down-trodden. It is a party of Indians and Taukeis who have been denied equal rights. It is the party of the people of Fiji. It was created by the farmers of this country. Federation has been serving the farmers, the workers, the little businessmen in the fields of politics, economics and social aspects without any prejudice or discrimination. Federation has been fighting for the people within and outside the Legislative Council.

Imperialist Alliance talks a lot about unity on the one hand but on the other hand keeps the Taukeis and the Indians divided and governs in a one-sided way for the benefit of the Whites. It makes rich all the richer and poor all the poorer. When Federation tries to bring national unity by having the Taukeis, the Indians, the Part-Europeans and the Europeans together, then the Alliance accuses it of creating disunity. When Federation tries to throw some light on the imperialist Alliance’s dictatorship, colour bar favouritism and warns the people, then they clamour that the Federation Party is creating disharmony. When we ask for full self-government and democracy, then the Alliance people say that there are many races and unless they all get together this country will not be ready for independence. But when we want to bring everyone together under common roll then they oppose it. They do not tell us that most of the countries of the world are multi-racial and yet independent, like the United States, New Zealand, Australia, India, Trinidad, Jamaica, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, etc., are all multi-racial but yet independent. In New Zealand there are more Whites than Maoris, in Australia there are more Whites than the natives, and in Singapore there are more Chinese than Malays. But all these countries are independent.

The Taukeis and the Indians have lived together for 90 years as brothers in peace and love. They participate in [each other’s] happiness and despair. The example of peace, love and brotherhood created by the Taukeis and the Indians in Fiji cannot be found in any other place but the Alliance tells the world that there is harmony between the Taukeis and the Indians [because they are apart] and have created disunity amongst Indians and as a result have ruled both of them.
The Indians are awake now, the Fijians are awakening. Everyday the Taukeis are co-operating with the Federation in increasing numbers. They are joining the Federation Party. The Alliance now is shivering. The Taukeis know that Indians are their true friends. The Indians and the Taukeis know very well who their enemy is.

According to Ratu Mara, we cannot create one nation without one language. This is completely untrue. There are many languages in India, Singapore, Malaya and Switzerland. All these nations are independent and developed. It is not necessary to have blood and bullets for the creation of a nation as it is important to have unity of the hearts. [If] the unity between the Taukeis and Indians is good, we can create a beautiful and developed nation. The policy of the Federation party is to make Fiji a democratic nation and its president an elected Taukei. This is our policy. The Federation claims that Fiji become independent immediately and a Taukei should become its president. Will this policy bring unity or disharmony? You can think for yourself! The policy of Alliance is to distort and misinform [people] about whatever I say. It is the policy of the Alliance to bring disunity amongst Indians. Our Indian community now understands Alliance very well. That is why even after a lot of effort, Indian community will not intricate itself into the Alliance’s web. Ratu Mara visits every home, shakes hand, has pictures taken. He spends the tax payers’ money. Even after this the Indian people will not side with the Alliance. The candidates of the Federation Party have full faith in the people and the Indian community has full faith in the Federation candidates.

You all know the cries and the false preaching of the Alliance ministers and candidates. This is why even after all their efforts they are unable to succeed. Economic, social and spiritual developments depend on independence. This is why it is essential to have democratic independence in Fiji. Two things are dearer than the life itself to human beings—self-respect and freedom. Respect is in equality and freedom. This is why Indian community wants independence on a common roll for the Indians and the Taukeis. It is clear from the present constitution that the White imperialists while dividing the Taukeis and Indians have the reign of government in its hands. If independence is given to Fiji on this kind of constitution which divides people on racial basis, then it will bring destruction to the Taukeis and the Indians. By putting Fijians and Indians against each other, the Whites will rule and Fiji will become another Rhodesia.

Independence can come to the Taukeis as a boon when it gets equal rights under common roll: one man, one vote, one value. It does not matter whether he is a European or Fijian or Indian. Indians and Fijians make 94 per cent of the population of Fiji. Fijians and Indians comprise the country. They make the nation. If the Alliance people want independence and equal rights and accept these values, then it becomes their duty that they co-operate with the Federation.
for this good cause. Independence and equal rights is the cry of the awakened people of Fiji and Federation is a Party of the awakened people. Therefore, those who oppose Federation oppose the people. The effect of non-co-operation of the Federation Party has been considerable on the British Government. This is why the Alliance people now say that we shall have another constitutional conference and then we shall have common roll. If you look at history, you will find that people of many countries have shed blood, have lost everything to achieve freedom. Even the little courageous Vietnam fights one of the most powerful nations for this freedom. This it is doing by the sacrifice of its people and its children. The poor Negroes of America are sacrificing for equal rights. Federation worships peace and non-violence. Federation loves everyone. Federation hates injustice, not the people. This is why the Federation has entered the fight for equality and freedom for the down-trodden people. It has taken non-co-operation and non-violence as its aims.

Some of you voters have sent Mr. Vijay Singh, Mr. KS Reddy and Mr. Abdul Lateef to the Council.49 What have they done for you? This is for you to judge for yourselves. If they have not done anything then is it possible for these amateurs to do anything? Can a tail wag the dog?

The times in Fiji are going to change. New Fiji is being created. This is why we have to reject the elements of disunity and imperialism and create a new nation. Ladies, and Gentlemen, rise, awake, vote Federation candidates and take steps to make your children, your community and your country free and march forward.

40: Final Letter from Sir Derek Jakeway, 7 November 1968

Dear Mr. Patel

I write, first of all, to say how sorry I was to hear that illness had struck you once again, and again at a most inopportune time. I was nevertheless glad that you were able to meet and talk with Mr. Hathi and Mr. Manjit Singh.50

I expect they impressed you, as they did me, not only by their sincerity, courtesy and friendliness but by their evident desire to be of disinterested assistance in closing the divisions which have so unfortunately appeared in the body politics of Fiji over the past 12 months, and which can become progressively more damaging to the national interest if they continue.

49 All members of the Indian Alliance.
50 Sukhlal Hathi was an Indian Government Minister and Manjit Singh was a senior official from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs.
Mr. Hathi felt that his talks with you and the Chief Minister and with other leaders in the Alliance and Federation Party had made some headway in this direction. If so we all have reason to be immensely grateful to our visitors. At our last meeting Mr. Hathi urged that I should carry on the good work where he had left off. Nothing would please me more, for if there is one thing of which I am certain it is that the ruination of this country could be strife carried to the point at which it destroyed racial harmony. Recent events have proved that there remains a serious risk of its doing so, by showing how easily emotions can be aroused and angry reactions produced. But, as you know, I leave Fiji in a few days and you are not yet fully restored to health.

All I can do now is to urge on you the importance of resuming your dialogue with Ratu Mara (which began promisingly early this year). Opportunities for this can easily be found—for instance whilst you are in Suva for the forthcoming meeting of Legislative Council. With goodwill on both sides it should not be impossible for agreement to be reached on changes to the constitution which remove the elements distasteful to your party and at the same time preserve safeguards which the Alliance regard as essential.

I know that my successor will be anxious to offer whatever help he can in this matter, and very much hope nothing will be done or said before his arrival to complicate the task facing him.

I have expressed similar sentiments to Ratu Mara and I know that he is prepared to resume discussions.

Yours Sincerely
Derek Jakeway

41: Pre-Independence Talks, Suva, 12 August 1969

AD Patel

I think the views of the Federation Party on the constitution are very well known. As regards success or failure of this constitution, you have given the opinion of your Party and the opinion of our Party is that it is a failure, so there is no agreement on that issue. As to whether the constitution has worked or not, we consider that it has not. Had it worked we would not have had by-elections. Still, if you wish to know what our views are, my Party considers that this country, just the same as other countries in the British Empire, has got to be independent at some time or another. There is no getting away from that fact: it is just a question of time as to when it should, or when it would, be independent.

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51 Opening excerpts from a full volume of confidential verbatim reports in my possession.
In our opinion, this country has reached the stage where it could immediately be independent. In comparison, many countries in the Empire are far more backward than Fiji, economically as well as educationally, and they are all independent. So, if fitness is the test for independence, then we hold that we are fit enough; we show responsibility.

Now, as regards the constitution, we have all along, all these years, made it quite plain that an independent country can only enjoy its independence and attendant prosperity through national consciousness amongst its citizens. But we have seen, unfortunately, in this country [people] kept on the racial hook too long and the responsibility for it rests on the shoulders of the Colonial Office. But because the British Government kept us on the racial hook it does not mean that we should also be an instrument or a party in either continuing or perpetuating it, and therefore, in our constitution the basis for elective representation in parliament should be on a national basis, not on racial or inter-racial basis because inter-racial in itself preserves a racial-political outlook. Therefore, we have always advocated the system of one man, one vote, one value, with geographical constituencies. This type of constitution is not new; it has been in existence and tried in many countries. The fashion is to describe it as multi-racial. There is no country in the world which is not multi-racial.

We would be better advised to follow the types of constitution which have proved successful and beneficial over a large number of years, rather than make ours and our people the guinea pigs of constitutional experiment. New adventures by constitution makers in recent years in this field should be carefully avoided. We should be rather careful of accepting anything from outside which has either not been successful in that country or has not had sufficient test of time.

The next point is: on the basis of such a national franchise, what should be the constitution of our country? The first question should be whether it should be unicameral or bicameral. Now considering size and population and our economic resources, in the opinion of our party a unicameral form of government is better. There is unanimity in this country amongst all political parties that there should be a Bill of Rights enshrined in the constitution to safeguard the minority. As far as that goes, there is no difference of opinion, as I understand it, amongst any group in Fiji. At the last constitutional conference we found ourselves entirely in agreement. As to what should be the optimum number of members in the parliament in a country like ours, we are of the view that number should be between 40 and 60. 60 would be an optimum number. I think I have offered you enough substance to chew on.
Ratu ETT Cakobau.52

I would like to go over that part of your statement where one man, one vote system has been introduced throughout the Commonwealth. This is generally in a homogenous community, and where you have a party system of two, three or four, the aims of each party are very much the same. The method of achieving the aims may differ but when one party moves out and another moves in, there is a common denominator. Yet in African colonies bloodshed is taking place, there is trouble and disunity. Where we have multiracial group care has been taken to ensure that there is unity amongst the people, apart from the unity of the political leaders. Again, there has been trouble in Malaya. From our point of view, instead of one man, one vote, we are thinking of extension and enlargement of cross-voting so as to at least keep some uniformity, some consistency.

AD Patel

I am afraid that anything more than a one vote system has not proved successful here or anywhere else. At the last conference, I asked whether it [cross voting] had been tried and we were told that it had been tried in Tanganyika, or one of the South African colonies. And they admitted it had not worked there. One of the UK people expressed the hope that although it had failed it might succeed in Fiji. But in our opinion it has totally failed; it is too complicated. Voters are querying so many things—identification and everything else with four voting slips in their hands. And I shall tell you about an instance in where wives of two European officers—one the District Commissioner’s—they frankly expressed that they found it difficult to follow the system. Our opinion is that, after all, all you want is a man’s opinion as to who he would like to represent him, and as long as he has only one vote he can give it. To call upon a man to vote for one race, another race and then another, perpetuates and accentuates racial differences in voters and candidates.

Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara

Where have you abolished race—that it can be ignored.

AD Patel

I am not saying that you can ignore it, but it should not be the main point. If you do that, there will be trouble and difficulties.

Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara

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52 Ratu ETT Cakobau was the chair of the confidential talks.
When you generalise, ‘It works everywhere else in the world,’ can you give an example?

AD Patel

As far as humanly possible, it has worked in many countries where national franchise is in existence, even India.

Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara

But it has divisions. You cannot say even now that it works.

AD Patel

The constitution has not been an obstacle; even now, other countries pay tribute to the Indian constitution.

Vijay R Singh

Is it that ethnic differences come into the formation of these various states?

AD Patel

That is because of the large size of the country, and not because of the basis of franchise. Suppose ours was a large country and we had our states: that happens in every country, including Australia and the US. That is in the nature of a federation.

Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara

You said the Indian constitution is perfect but it does recognise classes [such as the scheduled castes].

AD Patel

The principle of franchise is not challenged: common franchise. It is a different thing altogether. Say, for instance, any community feels that because of its backwardness [it needs special assistance], there is well-known device in a constitution that there should be certain seats reserved. When these groups feel confident, and they are sure that they have nothing to fear, no reservation is necessary.

Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara

Is not cross-voting a system of reservation itself?

AD Patel
No, because as I see it you call upon a voter to elect more than one representative and each of them should be of a different race and he must racially vote for them. The system of reservation as it is in India, in particular, only a member of a scheduled caste can be a candidate for election but all will vote.

Ratu sir Kamisese Mara

It is still a reservation of seats whether it is given by the President or by the constitution. We have reserved seats for Fijian, Indian and European.

AD Patel

There is no racial representation [in India], but here in our Council we are described as Fijian, Indian or European. That is the label that sticks to us right throughout our tenure of membership in the Council and that is the basis on which we are elected. In India, it is totally different. Say, for instance, this country is divided into geographical constituencies, then you might reserve a certain number of constituencies for certain groups or communities. That is to create confidence; as soon as there is trust it is not intended that they would be permanent. If you voted on these lines here with certain seats reserved for Indians, reserved for Fijians and Europeans, and certain number thrown open, then these seats are reserved seats and designed to create confidence and trust among the various groups for which seats have been reserved. Say, for instance, that there was no reservation; the Fijians mistrusted and the Indians were strong as is being very often said, though I am quite prepared to convince you if you go through our census that it is for the time being only) when national consciousness becomes more or less widespread in the country, immediately the Indians will be the losers under common franchise because they are not spread out all over the country as the Fijians are. Their population is concentrated in certain areas only, the cane areas generally. Indians though larger in number will only have votes in these areas and will have surplus votes.

Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara

That is what we do not want; we do not want anyone to be losers, Indian losers or Fijian losers.

AD Patel

That is what I said. If you want nobody to lose then for the time being you have reservation of seats to assure a community in this national system that they are not going to lose anything. But these five unreserved constituencies will help the group, that if they—for instance
the Europeans—say that they are grossly outnumbered and can never have a chance under common franchise. Out of five constituencies, 1 retained 1 European, 2 retained 2 Fijian and Indian, than that will prove that in spite of unreserved constituencies not being reserved the way their electors exercise their votes is above consideration because eventually these parties will have to develop not on racial lines but on some political ideology. One party might stand, say Conservatives as in England for certain things; Liberal for certain things; Labour for certain things. We have only made a start but even now we can see differences in outlook between the two parties and as time goes by, the country will be divided on these economic and political issues rather than racial lines.

Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara

When you say independence, you mean there has been a suggestion from your party of a republic…The Fijians particularly feel that there has been real meaning for them in the link with Great Britain because of Cession and this is what they would rather have developed to full internal self-government [rather than full independence].

AD Patel

The link will be there as Fiji remains in the Commonwealth. There are so many other members of the Commonwealth and yet the Queen is accepted as the Head of the Commonwealth and they have that link with Britain. The only difference is to have an elected Governor from Britain and those elected on their own. If a Governor or a Viceroy is appointed by the Crown, it will be on the advice and recommendation of the Prime Minister of the country. Whether you call him a Governor General, as in Australia, whether he is appointed or nominated by the Prime Minister, or whether Australia declares itself a republic, it does not make any difference to her relations with Britain. [On whether going republic would lead towards the American system] We unanimously agreed at the last conference, and I have not noticed any deviation on that score here, that as [far as] the system of government was concerned, we were all in favour of the British system and not the American system. [On the implications of the United Kingdom joining the European Common Market] If the UK gets the opportunity to get into the Common Market, she will throw the Commonwealth out in her own interests. And we might have to form new alliances ourselves with new groups. It is just a matter of time, and probably it might take its own course. The only difference is the link is still there. People might feel that instead of a Prime Minister they would like a Head of State. The people by vote should decide who
should be the Head of State. But if there is no Commonwealth, there is no question of a link with the British Crown—either for Australia or New Zealand. This is just a marriage of convenience, frankly.

NB: This was the first and the last meeting Patel attended. When the committee convened in October, he was dead.