

# Appendix 1. Policy in Fiji (Nov. 1960)

By

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1. The Fijians and Indians are more distinct as communities than Jews and Arabs in Palestine, Greeks and Turks in Cyprus or even Europeans and Bantu in South and Central Africa. Inter-marriage, business associations, even personal friendships are rare.

2. In the past, so long as we have held the undisputed power, relations between the communities have been good if distant. In the past few months this has changed. The December riots and sugar dispute have made the Fijians fear that the Indians are out to bring the wind of change to Fiji and use it to establish Indian preponderance. Their fears have been further increased by the Burns report which they regard as an attempt to give the Indian community control of the land by breaking up traditional Fijian society. The resentment aroused by the Burns report has been to some degree extended to Government and for the first time for many years, has shaken Fijian confidence in British intentions. The point is crucial when it is remembered that the Fijians are the 'loyal' community providing 75 per cent of the security forces. The Islands could hardly be governed without them, let alone against them.

3. In this climate the Fijians have become increasingly communally minded. They have also become more resistant than before both to constitutional changes for the Colony as a whole and to the modification of their own traditional system. In the face of what they regard as the Indian threat, there has been an instinctive closing of the ranks around their traditional Chiefs.

4. The Indians on their side are sharply divided over the sugar issue and over the proper course to follow in their relations with the Fijians. The more moderate leaders among them realise that they have antagonized the Fijians and would like to heal the breach. At the same time they are subject to fairly strong pressures from within their own community; and the more extreme elements are thinking in terms of self-government on the basis of a common roll which would enable the Indo-Fijians to rule the roost.

5. How then should we proceed in the constitutional field and in regard to the Burns recommendations about Fijian administration?

6. To begin with, we must, I think, accept that it is impracticable to think in terms of a single Fijian nation or of a common roll at any rate for the foreseeable future. Any suggestion of this is bound to arouse Fijian suspicions that the Indians would dominate by counting heads. The moderate Indian leaders recognize this. This points to the conclusion that we will have to recognize not

just the equality of individuals before the law but the equality of Indian and Fijian communities irrespective of their numbers. There is no other way of reconciling both the pledges in the Deed of Cession and those in Lord Salisbury's dispatch, let alone the need to keep communal peace. We should, therefore, let it be known that any constitutional advance must be so designed as to preclude the domination of the two main communities by the other.

7. The European community (20,000) can hardly expect, in the long run, to maintain their position as a community equal in importance to Fijians and Indians. For the time being, however, the Fijians insist that they should be so regarded. The Indians for their part have not asked for any change in the status of the European community.

### **Leg. Co. and Ex. Co.**

8. The Indians have asked, but not pressed, for an official majority on Leg. Co and Ex. Co. while preserving the present communal composition of both. The Fijians are flatly opposed to any reduction in the Governor's powers.

9. After full discussion with the Governor and his advisors we came to the conclusion that the best way to proceed would be to reverse the traditional colonial pattern and introduce a quasi-ministerial system while observing the official majority in the Leg. Co. The 'Ministers' who would be bound by the ordinary doctrine of collective responsibility, would count as officials for the purpose of securing the official majority. They would of course be dismissed and replaced by others if they ceased to support the Governor. Leg. Co itself would be somewhat expanded, though on a communal basis, to balance the expansion of Ex. Co. resulting from the introduction of the Ministerial system. The composition of Ex. Co. would not be laid down, so that, if all members of the community refused in certain circumstances to serve, the governor could still govern with the help of the other two communities and his officials.

10. A change of this kind is likely to be criticised by A. D. Patel and those Indians who consider that their numbers entitle them to a predominant position. The Governor and his advisers, however believe that the 'jobs' created by the introduction of a ministerial system will be popular with leading men in both communities and that there will be little difficulty in maintaining the official majority in Leg. Co. They consider that such a system might work for a number of years.

11. If this general principle is accepted, its implementation might be carried out in two phases. In the first, the Governor would simply invite existing members of Ex. Co. to assume ministerial functions on a basis of collective responsibility. In the second, and only after the next election, the number of seats in Leg. Co. would be increased.

## **The Public Service**

12. Just as the Fijians will not accept a common roll, so they will not accept that recruitment for the public service should be solely on a basis of merit regardless of race. The Indians are probably abler and certainly have more graduates than the Fijians. On this basis they would soon dominate the Administration. This the Fijians will not accept. In the long run, it will probably be necessary to have some rule — as in Cyprus now or in India in the old days — under which government jobs would be divided in some such proportion as Indians 45 per cent, Fijians 45 per cent, Europeans and others 10 per cent in each grade of each department. For the time being there is no need to be so precise and we can probably continue on the present basis on promotion according to merit subject to a public assurance that neither community will get more than 45 per cent of the jobs in any grade or department. It will be some time before the Fijians can hope to provide suitable candidates to fill their quota and meanwhile Europeans will have to fill their places. Later on it will from time to time become necessary as good Fijians come forward to pass over Europeans who are marginally better qualified. This will raise problems of compensation and it is for consideration how far these would be covered under the terms of the new White Paper as applied in Fiji.

## **The Fijian Administration**

13. I see no future in the Burns recommendation that the Fijian administration should be wound up as soon as possible. The Fijians are determined to resist any move in this direction. They realise that whatever its defects the tribal system does provide a leadership capable of defending the Fijian communal interest against what they regard as the Indo-Fijian threat. Without their chiefs they would be leaderless. In many respects, of course, the Fijian administration is old fashioned and we should seek opportunities of modernizing it. But rather than curtail its activities I would be inclined to give it more responsibilities particularly in the sphere of local government. It may still be possible to develop multi-racial local government except in a second tier (i.e. delegations of Fijian and Indo-Fijian local government bodies meeting in joint conference). In each case the Fijian Administration could play a big part.

14. I would personally be inclined to go further and encourage the development of some Indian counterpart to the Fijian administration. This would offer Indians opportunities for public service which they both want and need. The existence of two communal organizations moreover would help us to overcome a major problem. At the present time, many necessary development or administrative projects tend by their nature to favour one community rather than the other. Fair shares for all is a slogan which makes government hesitate to do anything for anybody. If roughly equal subsidies could be given to both communities to spend as each thought best there would be less cause for jealousy. Scholarships

are a case in point. A number of Indian children are educated abroad at their parents' expense. Few Fijians can afford this. The Fijians are thus keener on scholarships than the Indians. Yet at present scholarships which are centrally administered have to be given on a basis of merit; and the Indo-Fijians — deservedly on this basis — tend to scoop the pool. If scholarships were a communal matter, the Fijians would probably spend more on them than would the Indians who could then spend the money on other projects of which they are in greater need.

15. Hitherto we have held up the concept of a single multi-racial community as the goal towards which Fijians and Indians alike should strive. The Fijians will no longer accept this; and the more we lay the emphasis on multi-racialism, the more suspicious they will become that we plan to sell them out to the Indians. The only way, in my view, to exorcise the fear of communal domination is to make it clear 'as of now' that we stand for equal rights for both communities as communities and that we shall not pull out until both ask us to do so.