

Appendix 2. Fiji Final Dispatch (8 Oct. 1970)

By

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Governor of Fiji

It is hard to believe that in two days' time Fiji's new flag will rise slowly to the top of the mast in the presence of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales and distinguished representatives of foreign powers. For seldom can a country have prepared for independence with such aplomb; there has been an air of quiet satisfaction and polite interest during the last few months, but no sign of the nationalistic braggadocio which one has grown to expect. This is not to say that the prospect is not widely welcomed. It most certainly is. But the diverse people of these islands do not yet seem to think of themselves as a nation, and reserve their fervour for the rugby and soccer fields.

2. Ten years ago Mr Julian Amery wrote

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

3. There remains some truth in his judgment. But whereas in the past relations were dominated by a mixture of fear and suspicion, today this has been replaced by a frank acknowledgment that potentially dangerous differences exist and a widespread acceptance that only by playing it cool can Fiji avoid following Malaysia to the very edge of the pit.

4. No one appreciates this better than the leaders of the two major political parties, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara (Alliance) and Mr S. M. Koya (National Federation), who themselves could hardly be more different in character or appearance. Mara is a six foot four aristocrat, the *Tui Nayau*, paramount chief of Lau, the eastern group of Fiji's islands; a dignified and most impressive figure. Koya is a plump little lawyer, full of intrigue and calculation, who wears a mask of amiable geniality which occasionally slips to reveal the hatchet man beneath.

5. Mara, however, is very far from being a typical Fijian. He was the first of his race ever to become an MA and prior to this completed five years' medical training in New Zealand. He also has a diploma in economics from LSE. He is a man of vision who sincerely believes that, with tolerance and understanding, each community can retain its own identity whilst at the same time contributing to make Fiji into a nation; and he is not afraid to pursue policies to this end, even if they entail sacrifices not popular with his people. But he also believes (without being anti-Indian) that Fijian-paramountcy is proper and natural, if

only because his race would not tolerate any alternative so that an attempt to impose one would inevitably provoke violence. Personally a moody, shy and solitary man who inspires awe rather than confidence, he nevertheless has a keen sense of humour and is capable of exercising very great charm when in a relaxed mood. But unfortunately he reverts under pressure to a dictatorial arrogance which does not make him easy to work with. One result of this is that his Ministers are frightened of him, so that too little authority has been delegated and decisions are often slow in coming. Some of the younger members of his party have fretted against the bit in the past, but since the London Conference there have been no signs of the upsets in the party which had previously given rise to cause for concern.

6. Nor is Koya a typical Indian. For a start he is a Muslim in a predominately Hindu party, of which he became the leader about a year ago on the death of Mr A. D. Patel who had led it since its formation. He is a very different man to his predecessor: Patel was born in India, learned his politics there and came to Fiji as a mature adult with beliefs already hardened. He never shook off (or grew out of) many of the attitudes of the Congress leaders of the early nineteen twenties, although most of these have long been outmoded. He was an intellectual, sincere and dedicated, but misguided. His opponents respected some of his qualities no matter how bitterly they disliked his views, but they never trusted him very far. Koya on the other hand was born in Fiji and is very much a man of this country. Unlike Patel he has a distinctly murky past, having over a number of years been closely involved with a well known bunch of murderers and thugs whom he defended in court whenever they slipped up and secretly advised outside. Before he became leader of the party he had not been noted for his moderation and had never missed an opportunity to exploit anti-European feeling. But he has never shared Patel's main fault as a politician — a complete inability to compromise. A wheeler-dealer if ever there was one, he probably has no basic principles.

7. These then are the two men who have presided over the two major parties during the last year. They share an interest in power and a distaste for colonialism, being sufficiently political animals to operate on the same wavelength. More indeed than that, they have achieved a remarkable degree of mutual trust and accord which has facilitated inter-party agreement and even led some to speculate about the chances of a coalition Government. Although sure that Koya would dearly like to become a minister, I doubt whether this is a serious possibility for several years. But before hazarding guesses as to what the future may hold, I should perhaps turn to what has happened since my predecessor's dispatch of the 11th January 1968, written when the Opposition was boycotting the Legislative Council, and by-elections in the nine Indian communal constituencies seemed likely to result: for during this period Fiji has, politically speaking, been turned upside down and will never be the same again.

8. By-elections duly became necessary after the Opposition did not appear at two consecutive meetings. They took place in the autumn of 1968 and were preceded by a bitter campaign vigorously conducted by both parties. The Alliance by then had over 30,000 Indian members on their books and had convinced themselves that they stood a real chance of winning a large measure of Indian support. They thus confidently expected to reduce the majorities in most, if not all, constituencies and even to win one or two seats.

9. This was not however to be. The results were little short of a landslide. All nine National Federation Party candidates were successful and most received an increased share of the poll. Despite the earlier assurances which they had received, the Alliance only managed to attract a total of 12,000 votes (this was nevertheless 20 per cent of the poll and proof of not unsubstantial Indian support — far more than the NFP would obtain from Fijians).

10. Fijians then felt that their leaders had extended the hand of friendship to the Indians only to have it brushed aside, and that promises had not been kept. Moreover they were angry that during the campaign abuse had been heaped upon Mara, and indirectly on his fellow chiefs. The outcome was a highly emotional reaction. There ensued a round of Fijian Association meetings held in all the main centres at which were passed some extreme resolutions, often verging on the seditious. One group of warriors marched through the streets daubed in war paint. Another processed with a banner saying 'Kill the Indians'. For a couple of months there was an ugly atmosphere almost throughout the country. Mara and his colleagues, every bit as disappointed and bitter as their supporters at what, with some justification, they regarded as a cynical rejection of their very genuine and sincere overtures, at first made no effort to restrain their people. It was only after repeated stone-throwing incidents and assaults by Fijians on Indians that he was prevailed upon to produce a very lukewarm statement, calling the hounds off. Although he was at once obeyed he had by then allowed the Fijian back-lash to progress almost to the brink: there could easily have been widespread and potentially serious disorder.

11. As a result of all this, the political situation changed fundamentally. On the one hand the Alliance, hitherto disinclined to consider early constitutional change started to do some hard thinking. Mara appointed a research group of well educated young Fijians for the purpose. Both they and he himself soon concluded that the best policy would be to go for early independence whilst the country was still under Fijian leadership. At about this time Ratu Penaia Ganilau, then Minister for Fijian Affairs and Local Government as a civil servant and now shortly to be appointed a Senator and to become Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, observed with unaccustomed vehemence at a Fijian Intelligence Committee meeting that the Fijians had now come to see clearly

where they stood and had realised that they must take the initiative if they were to remain in their own house.

12. On the other hand the Opposition was thoroughly alarmed. Ordinary Indian country folk were apprehensive about their own and their families' safety, whilst businessmen foresaw damage to property and looting. The party's triumph at the polls was therefore so short lived that it could really be called still-born. They immediately dropped all activities which Fijians might consider provocative. In addition they became extremely cooperative in Legislative Council, doing all in their power to heal the breach. And they began to say they wanted to hold private talks with the Alliance about constitutional change, with a view to there being another conference if these succeeded. Mara soon responded if at first with some suspicion and only because it suited what by then had become his book as well as theirs. After some initial sparring and many delays, one caused by the illness and death of Patel which in fact opened the way for progress, the two parties eventually got down to serious discussion. Early last November they announced their wish that the next move should be to what they then called 'Dominion status'. A month later Mara informed me that they had reached agreement that Fiji should proceed to this stage without further elections and as quickly as possible.

13. From then on events have moved at what has often seemed a bewildering pace. In January this year Lord Shepherd visited Fiji. He formed the opinion that, despite continuing differences of view over the key question of electoral arrangements, accord might be reached before or during a Constitutional Conference. One was duly held in London during April. It was a success, and very shortly, on the 10th October, the ninety-sixth anniversary of Cession, Fiji will become an independent member of the Commonwealth.

14. That so much has been achieved can be a matter of satisfaction for all concerned. To achieve it, however, the electoral issue had to be fluffed. For 'having regard to the national good and for peace, order and good government of independent Fiji' the Conference settled on an interim composition for the new House of Representatives. It went on to record agreement;

that at some time after the next general election and before the second election the Prime Minister, after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, should arrange that a Royal Commission should be set up to study and make recommendations for the most appropriate method of election and representation for Fiji and that the terms of reference should be agreed by the Prime Minister with the Leader of the Opposition ... Parliament would, after considering the Royal Commission Report, provide through Legislation for the composition and method of election of a new House of Representatives, and ... such legislation so passed would be regarded as an entrenched part of the Constitution.

15. A calm search for a just solution to the problem of representation has in the past proved virtually impossible; feelings ran too deep. One is therefore bound to regret that in effect a time bomb will lie buried in the new Constitution, and to pray it may be defused before exploding. The two parties have however, publicly committed themselves to an act of faith which must give reasonable ground for hope.

16. There are other grounds for this too: the new nation will start with many advantages. The economy is healthy. As developing countries go it is not badly off. There are few really poor people in Fiji, nor are there many millionaires. The average *per capita* income is about £150.0.0. Food is plentiful and, by and large, so is water. Much of the land could be more intensively farmed. An enlightened family planning program, unopposed by any religious group, has succeeded in reducing the birthrate from 40.88 per thousand in 1961 to 28.97 per thousand in 1969. The standard of medical services is relatively high. Ninety-five per cent of children of primary school age attend school. There are admirable traditions of voluntary public service and of self-help.

17. The Civil Service is efficient, remarkably free from corruption and generally apolitical. The Independence Constitution contains the standard provisions to safeguard against patronage, and although there are already signs that Mara and Koya may find these irksome I am hopeful that the worst abuse of a spoils system will be avoided. Localization has proceeded at what some regard as a dangerously rapid pace, but is not likely to result in the traumatic experiences from which many countries have suffered. For one thing, there is a widespread recognition that an important handful of top administrators and key professional officers will be needed for some time: it is indicative of this that Mara has told the present expatriate Secretary to the Council of Ministers, who will be the first Secretary to the Cabinet, thus he can look forward to staying here for at least five years. For another, almost three quarters of the overseas officers in Fiji are on contract or on secondment, so that there is no question of their being compensated and retiring prematurely. And finally, the country is fortunate enough to possess a substantial number of senior local officers with good qualifications and reasonable ability.

18. Industrial relations have been remarkably stable during the last couple of years. The Trade Union movement is led by moderate, sensible men; and employers, by and large, have behaved in a reasonable fashion. The two Union leaders who caused serious trouble in the past have been away in Australia for some time. Both are ostensibly studying, one at The Australian National University for a PhD and the other no one knows quite what, under the tutelage of Dr Cairns, the leading figure on the left wing of the Australian Labor Party.

19. The country's isolated position in the middle of the enormous Pacific is in one sense an asset; it is shielded to a very great extent from the influence of

external ideologies and events. Although a few individuals have been exposed to communist parties and individuals overseas there is no present likelihood of the ideology itself being introduced. There are no incipient revolutionary bodies nor are there any primitive cults. There is no history of serious riots and civil commotion and there is no present subversion. Even slogans like 'Black Power', 'Student Power', 'the New Left', etc. are virtually unknown, although the recent foundation of the University of the South Pacific may change this. Some of the lecturers there certainly appear anxious to encourage dissent.

20. The Fiji Military Forces and the Police are efficient, and their morale is high. But the loss of UK backup in the event of serious disorder will leave a yawning gap. Plans have accordingly been made to create a Police Mobile force, especially trained in riot duties, and to enlarge the FMF, giving them more modern IS training and equipment. Implementing these may however cost more than the country can rapidly afford, and it is to be hoped that generous assistance will be forthcoming.

21. This is not to say that there are no serious problems: indeed the most immediate one concerns the future of the sugar industry, which still forms the backbone of Fiji's economy and provides a livelihood for 15,000 peasant growers.

22. Late last year Lord Denning, the Master of the Rolls, arbitrated in a dispute between these growers and the sugar millers, South Pacific Sugar Mills Ltd., an almost wholly-owned subsidiary of the Australian Colonial Sugar Refining Company Ltd. Rightly judging that the Company had done well over a substantial period, he decided to tip the scales in the growers' favour. Whether he tipped them too far is a matter of opinion. The Company obviously thought so. After a long silence it pressed Government privately to decide at once to buy its assets on terms to be settled, saying it would then be prepared to continue running the mills and marketing sugar for a period, on a fee basis.

23. The pressure proved counterproductive. Even had Ministers thought that its offer was attractive, they could not for political reasons have afforded to give the appearance of being the Company's puppets. On the contrary, they were determined to show the public that it would be obliged to dance to their tune. For it has long been regarded by local people as at best paternalistic and all too often a bully, browbeating the Fiji Government into helping it make assured profits at the growers' expense and not above a bit of trickery in the process. As a result both the Alliance and the NFP had engaged counsel to support the growers against it during the arbitration. Both had subsequently claimed credit for the favourable decision, being thus committed to making the Company accept this.

24. Having realized it must adjust its tactics the Company then published a critique of the award, purporting to prove that it could not operate profitably under the proposed new contract. The following day it announced that it would

nevertheless sign this, but, more in sorrow than in anger, would give notice in accordance with the law to withdraw from operation in Fiji after the next three seasons.

25. It may secretly have been glad of a good excuse to disengage. Accustomed to count on Government support, it was plainly going to face suspicion and perhaps hostility: a position long privileged had of a sudden become uncomfortably vulnerable. In Australia it has anyway been busily diversifying out of sugar, which is not a good long term prospect. Moreover almost half the sugar which Fiji produces has hitherto been sold to the UK at favourable prices under the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement. But for this assured market the industry would not have been viable; and the market is now at risk as a result of the UK's application to join the EEC.

26. However all that may be, Government was obliged to declare its firm intention that the mills would continue to operate after 1972 and that SGSM might have to be purchased 'for the people of Fiji'. Having done so, it had to face complex questions about future ownership, management and marketing. Advice on possible answers to some of these has already been provided by a UK firm of Chartered Accountants, one of whose senior partners visited here under Technical Assistance arrangements. And a Select Committee of Legislative Council has opened discussions with CSR. It includes members of both parties, for this is rightly regarded as a national issue. The discussions are certain to be protracted and tough, but there seems a reasonable chance that they can be successfully concluded, without bitterness.

27. From the country's point of view their timing is nevertheless unfortunate, for if its biggest overseas investor is seen to be pulling out on independence, hazarding the future of its most important industry, the appearance must be given that there may be good cause for anxiety about political instability, or about nationalization. There is not yet any sign of a consequential loss of business confidence, though the risk must be obvious.

28. Though sugar poses the most immediate problem, race relations may prove the most perplexing. I do not imply that the atmosphere is ordinarily tense: far from it. Despite the fundamental and abiding differences between them, the two major communities here co-exist in a quite surprisingly relaxed manner. There are nevertheless many sensitive subjects. Each needs to be handled with particular care, for fear of arousing the sort of angry passions which can drive men to senseless violence.

29. One such subject is land. Of this there is not by the standards of many other countries a real shortage. But a lot of people here think there is, and this colours their attitudes. Moreover most of the parts which are suited to intensive agriculture have of course already been developed; and Indians occupy a large proportion of them and prosper accordingly, although Fijians own 83 per cent

of the country's land area. So the Fijians, not by nature hard-working peasant farmers and not in the past anxious to change their ways, now feel they have somehow been cheated of opportunities they would like. They are in consequence increasingly determined to recover the use of the better agricultural areas. Meanwhile the Indians feel with some justice that in the national interest all land should be properly used, and they look covetously at Fijian Reserves which too often appear neglected.

30. The Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Ordinance was enacted in 1966 and brought into force the following year in the hope of containing the situation equitably enough to satisfy all concerned. It provided tenants with a right to renew their leases if they could prove greater hardship than their landlords, and with an entitlement to compensation for improvements if dispossessed. As a *quid pro quo* it also made provision for landlords to revise rents upwards, to 6 per cent of the market value of their land. Revision took some time to arrange however, so the Fijians were slow to appreciate the potential value of the Ordinance and it came under heavy fire after the 1968 by-elections. Its repeal was only averted by some skilful manoeuvring by Mara himself, which involved setting up a Committee to consider amendments to it. During the past year or so many Fijians appear to have realized that its basic principles are fairer than they had at first thought. With the apparent concurrence of both sides of the House, the Committee has therefore avoided reaching any conclusions yet. As a result the Ordinance will now be enshrined in the new Constitution — so amendments will require the approval of two-thirds of both Houses of Parliament.

31. Further time has been bought in this way. But a solution to the land problem is no nearer. I doubt whether the problem will ever be solved without far more radical changes in the system of land tenure than Fijians have hitherto been prepared to contemplate. Any attempt to impose such changes would provoke a thoroughly hostile reaction; unless they commanded popular confidence they would stand no chance of success. There are however now some signs that people are at least beginning to question the present paternalistic arrangements. These vest control of Fijian land in the Native Land Trust Board, a body which is hopelessly inefficient and probably corrupt. It has the power to negotiate leases without consulting the landowners, and it deducts 25 per cent of all rents for its services. Once a sacred cow, it is fast becoming an Aunt Sally. An increasing number of Fijians favour drastic reform. They feel, with justification, that they are no longer children, that land is their only capital (of which they are chronically short) and that they ought to be permitted greater powers of decision. Few may yet be prepared to contemplate any substantial lifting of the restrictions on the alienation of their land; but it is significant that a question long taboo can now be discussed.

32. Another sensitive subject is the racial composition of the Civil Service. Fijians still outnumber Indians in it, though the better qualifications and greater diligence of the latter win them more of the senior positions. Hitherto, as a generalization, the Service has in consequence been officered by expatriates, and has had Indians NCOs and Fijian privates. If rapid localization were to result in Indo-Fijian officers as well as NCOs much bitterness might result. Except for lawyers the most outstanding locals are by chance a mixed bunch, so the top managerial posts are likely to be equitably distributed. Moreover it has proved possible to distinguish the areas (like the Administration) where undue imbalance might result in a public outcry, and to ensure that particular attention is paid to the staffing of these. However the Judicial and Legal Departments are vulnerable areas and will continue to be so for a few years.

33. Yet another sensitive subject is that of employment generally. When jobs are scarce, members of each community are always liable to resent losing an opportunity of work to someone of another race. Fijians also now realize how much they have missed by failing to start businesses of their own. Their reaction is to blame everyone else for their lack of the necessary capital and training, and to ignore the fact that with greater effort and resolution they could have done much to help themselves. A reconstituted and (hopefully) revitalized Ministry of Fijian Affairs is to be charged with particular responsibility for securing for them a fairer slice of the economic cake, probably by providing them with special assistance.

34. The Government recognizes that this alone will not suffice: the essential is that Fijians' dismal performance in school examinations should be improved, so they become better qualified to compete on equal terms in an aggressive world. An Education Advisory Committee reported last year, making recommendations designed to give them preferential treatment with this object in view. Perhaps more important still is the recognition by Fijian leaders that success must ultimately depend on the efforts made by children of their own race. If they can get this message across to parents, the effect may be dramatic.

35. Many of the measures I have mentioned must seem to be designed to accord Fijians privileges which others will be denied. They are; and are probably necessary. For racial inequalities are at the root of all the problems under discussion. The Fijian people have a growing awareness of the present differences between their wealth and opportunity and that of other races. They may as a result become embittered, embitterment may lead them to lash out wildly. This is the more likely to happen at a time when the whole Third World is in the throes of a revolution of rising expectations, and it may happen the more quickly if many hold high hopes of independence, but find these are disappointed. Both political parties recognize the danger. Both are thus committed to a policy of

improving the Fijians' position: any argument will be about the means rather than the end.

36. Whether the policy will succeed is another matter. Doubts must assail even the warmest admirer of the Fijian people, and they have never lacked admirers. This may indeed have been their undoing. Big genial men with huge smiles, ready courtesy and natural dignity, they are physically courageous and captivate men who meet them. But they have at the same time a deep pride in their own culture, an appreciation of the value of leisure and a childlike trust in others, all of which has tended to arouse protective instincts. Some have thus felt that they should be comfortably wrapped in a cocoon: treatment they have welcomed. So they remain, and have perhaps been encouraged to remain, accustomed to look for leadership to others, particularly to their Chiefs (whose authority is still immense), rather than to exercise much individual initiative. Changes in attitude will not come easily to them.

37. This need not be a cause for dismay: traditional societies are often stable and cohesive. But it probably means that much will depend upon whether the economy expands particularly fast. If it does, the Fijians may be swept along rapidly enough to allow possible discontent even though they do not catch up much on other races.

38. The prospects of its doing so look hopeful. Tourism is booming at a phenomenal rate, almost doubling in size every three years. Moreover it is labour intensive; it attracts large-scale capital investment; and it provides many fringe benefits. It will of course bring its own problems. Fortunately the dangers are appreciated in particular by Mara, and there is every sign that development will be controlled in a sensible manner. Mineral exploration during the last year or so has shown promising results and mining developments may well provide a substantial increase in job opportunities and in much needed infrastructure in the interior of the main islands. And forestry continues to show great long-term promise; a pulp industry now seems a likely starter.

39. A recent World Bank Mission to Fiji revealed a similar conclusion about prospects. It recorded a view that the country 'will enter Independence on a firmer economic base than many new countries. Balance of payment problems have been avoided and equilibrium should not be difficult to maintain. Minimal foreign borrowing has kept public debt service ratios low and debt service on private account is not significant. Debt service ratios in 1975 are estimated at 3 per cent of commodity exports and 1.3 per cent of non-factory export receipts for goods and services, the difference indicating the importance of tourism. Fiji can be considered creditworthy for Bank lending on its own account, following Independence'.

40. Moreover the strategy contained in Development Plan VI (to cover 1971-75) appears sound. For the economy as a whole the projected growth in domestic

produce is 6.9 per cent a year. This compares with 5 per cent annually over the last five years, during which there was a much higher rate in 1968–70 than in 1966–67. Tourism is expected to be the leading sector with an annual growth rate of 25 per cent, and emphasis is also to be placed on export growth and import substitution. Investment is projected to grow at more than 10 per cent per annum, exceeding 32 per cent of Gross National Product in 1975.

41. Emphasis is also rightly to be placed on rural development — on bringing the income of the population in the country areas, where incidentally most Fijians live, closer to that of town dwellers, and on providing those areas with better services so that they will be an attractive place to live. It is hoped thus to stop the drift to the towns and the consequent growth of a large urban unemployed class, many of them Fijians in a strange environment, cut off from their village roots: the increase in crime by young Fijians is already causing concern.

42. The plan is ambitious. The growth rate may prove a little beyond the country's capacity when viewed in the perspective of past performance. Furthermore the present high rate of private investment will be difficult to maintain. The construction sector in particular appears to have been reaching capacity in the last two years, so that further expansion will be difficult in the short run.

43. Whether the plan can be implemented in full will partly depend on what outside assistance is available. So I end with a brief look at an independent Fiji's likely international interests, hopes and attitudes. As an isolated archipelago, she will not be troubled by defence problems. Her immediate concern will be with neighbouring South Pacific Islands. Mara would undoubtedly like to be regarded as their leader, but is very conscious that others are jealous of Fiji and that he must be careful. He will probably continue to work for regional co-operation wherever possible, offering help where he can (for instance in training), hoping to increase trade and perhaps trying to coordinate some economic activities. I am sure he has no present ideas of any political confederation, however loose; nor should I regard one as a starter in the foreseeable future.

44. He will enjoy playing a part on a wider stage too, when Fiji joins the United Nations and the Commonwealth. But I expect it to be a cautious part. He has already shown that he would prefer to avoid taking sides — between Israel and the Arab States, between the two Chinas, and so on. Caution comes naturally to him: it is symptomatic that rather than inherit all Treaties unexamined on independence (signing a blank cheque ... he said) he has arranged for advice from an Australian Professor of International Law, so that an effective exercise can be done. Moreover he is unlikely to wish to be permanently aligned with any group, and Fiji is more likely than most new Commonwealth nations to be

open to argument about, and prepared to take a line helpful to the U.K. on, colonial issues at New York.

45. Partly as the result of encouragement from India, he has become involved with bodies like ECTFE and the Asian Bank, and has shown interest in the Colombo Plan. Links with India seem certain to be developed, even though there is not yet to be a Fiji High Commissioner in New Delhi. London and Canberra alone have been chosen, probably because most is expected of the UK and of Australia by way of trade and aid. For the UK here there is a great store of goodwill. This will not prevent Mara from the occasional display of bad temper when denied his way, but it should generally ensure a lasting and valued relationship.

46. Relations with Australia may be more difficult. Many here consider that the Australian Government has a large debt to repay, because Fiji has been exploited by big business from there and that official Australian attitudes are too often overbearing when they are not indifferent. These attitudes are in fact gradually changing, as is the Fijian view of Australia. But it is to be hoped that change will become rapid and radical enough to ensure much greater mutual understanding: Fiji certainly needs Australian interest and support.

47. From New Zealand she can look forward to getting both, although she will have no High Commission in Wellington. For there has long been close sympathy between the two countries, and this should continue to survive the occasional difference of view.

48. All in all, therefore the outlook is bright. There are certainly problems, but everyone is united in a genuine desire to solve them. There is not yet any real feeling of nationhood, but there is a solid core of goodwill and genuine tolerance which is a sounder basis than many emerging countries have had at the start of the journey. Above all Fiji is a country of common sense, and that is no small asset. Those of us here who have seen other countries at the same stage are at one in believing that things should go well.

49. It is perhaps not without significance that with the willing agreement of all concerned, the Union Flag will be lowered for the last time not as part of the Independence Parade on the 10th but, with the dignity which befits the departure of an old and respected friend, at a special Retreat ceremony on the evening before. In addition the new flag to be raised on the 10th incorporates the Union Flag.