

## CHAPTER 3: RECUPERATION & RUPTURE

*All great leaders have had one characteristic in common: it was the willingness to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time. This, and not much else, is the essence of leadership.*

John Kenneth Galbraith

‘I have only had a short experience of Mr Reddy,’ Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara said in December 1978, ‘and I have a lot of admiration for him. Whether I like it or not, I think it is good for the country for a man like that to help run it.’<sup>1</sup> Finance Minister Charles Walker was equally laudatory in his praise for the NFP leader. Reddy would make ‘an excellent spokesman for us in the North/South dialogue,’ he said. ‘I sincerely hope, if we get a composite team, he would be on it.’<sup>2</sup> Len Usher, former journalist and Alliance functionary, called Reddy’s criticisms of government policy ‘penetrating but at the same time both responsible and constructive.’ ‘Reddy,’ an independent observer wrote, ‘was viewed by many as a plausible alternative Prime Minister. People were impressed with his cool eloquence, and his transparently balanced, reasonable views on fundamental issues. There was something reassuring about his style and personality.’<sup>3</sup> Clearly Jai Ram Reddy impressed both his political friends as well as his opponents as ‘intelligent, thoughtful and calm,’ ‘not personally ambitious’ but genuinely concerned about the future of Fiji.<sup>4</sup>

The accolades were not surprising. The hallmark of Reddy’s political modus operandi was caution and moderation in the two roles he had to perform in parliament: one as the leader of his party and of the Indo-Fijian community, and the other as a watchdog over the government. The government was invariably Fijian-led and dominated, with the ever present danger

that any criticism of government policy could easily be misconstrued, as it often was, as an 'Indian' attack on 'Fijian' leaders and institutions. 'All my political life,' Reddy once said, 'if I can avoid it, I don't talk about race. I'd rather talk about issues.' But what began so promisingly and augured well for dialogue across the political divide, soured within less than five years. A once constructive and responsible political leader would be described as devious and dangerous, with whom the Alliance leader, Ratu Mara, could not work. Internal bickering within his own party and constant acrimonious exchanges with the government side frustrated Reddy. He would leave parliament, for good he thought, in 1984. Such were the exigencies of political transformation in early postcolonial Fiji.

#### BUILDING BRIDGES

Reddy's first task upon winning the September elections was to unite a deeply divided party and to heal the festering wounds of the past. It was not an easy mission. The embers of the recent past were still alive. In June 1978, Reddy proposed a three point peace plan to unite the two factions. The Dove faction, Reddy said, should 'immediately stop heaping scorn and abuse in public meetings on other party leaders,' that every one carried out 'their personal dealings in an atmosphere of trust, understanding and tolerance,' and that all the fifteen sitting NFP members should become united under a joint opposition.<sup>5</sup> This was akin to asking the Doves to lay down their arms peacefully and surrender unconditionally, commit political suicide, a former Dove told me. Vijay Parmanandam, the rebel parliamentarian and maverick, remained a bitter Reddy foe to the end. The political unity that Reddy sought, Parmanandam said, would be like a puncture patch on an overheated tyre, likely to break any time. For him and some of his colleagues, the removal of Jai Ram Reddy from the political scene was the prerequisite for reconciliation in the party. After the September 1977 elections, Siddiq Koya retreated to his Lautoka law practice, defeated but not down, still with strong following in many parts of the country. Reddy brought him back into a reunited party. Perhaps that was the price he had

to pay for reconciliation and unity, knowing full well that the re-entry of the former leader would revive factionalism again. Koya would contest the 1982 general elections under the NFP's banner, but his body language and public posture suggested a decided lack of enthusiasm for the party leadership which had once worked under him. For him, not being the head of the party he had helped form was an unnatural state of affairs, and he would not let others forget it either. As late as 1981, Koya was staging walkouts from party conventions when unable to have his loyalists installed, or generally have his way in party matters, leading Reddy to denounce walkouts as a 'disgraceful' feature of the party's past.

The NFP, Reddy said, was nobody's 'private domain.'<sup>6</sup> Koya remained unrepentant. He was fond of saying '*Ham jaise party ke banaya hai, waise bigaad bhi sakta hai.*' Just as I made the party, I can destroy it as well. I vividly recall an NFP rally at the Suva Civic Centre in 1982 at which Koya made a grand appearance in the middle of the proceedings, while all the speakers had been on the podium for over an hour, drawing applause and attention to himself as he walked down the isle. He was in the party, but not quite of it. Perhaps Koya knew in his heart that his best days were over. He was no longer the dominant, domineering figure he had been a decade earlier. 'If someone says we have already got unity, I'll say it's not completely true,' Reddy conceded truthfully in March 1980. But if 'someone tells me we have progressed some way to achieving unity, I'll say it is true.'<sup>7</sup>

Beyond the party itself, Reddy was concerned to unite the Indo-Fijian community politically. The impetus for this came from an official visit that Reddy made to the United States in 1980 under a leadership program sponsored by the American embassy in Fiji. He toured widely, including in what was once the Deep South. What impressed him most on that visit, he said, was the manner in which Black politicians, Democrats and Republicans alike, could put aside their political and ideological differences and come together in a joint caucus to discuss issues of particular concerns to their people. If the Blacks could do it in the United States, why couldn't the Indo-Fijians in Fiji, he asked himself. With that goal in mind, Reddy reached out

to Indo-Fijians on the other side of the political divide in a way his predecessors could not because of the bitter fights they had in the past, especially in the emotionally charged atmosphere of the 1960s. Thirty years later, Karam Ramrakha still could not bring himself down to forgiving Sir Vijay Singh for his hurtful taunts about Indian leaders being cowardly and unpatriotic in a 1967 Legislative Council debate during which the Federation Party staged a walkout. Siddiq Koya similarly found it difficult to reconcile with his old foes and share the same platform with them. Reddy's strength and advantage was his freshness on the scene and his lack of a political baggage. Not narrow political advantage but the larger interests of the Indo-Fijian community were foremost in his mind. He emphasized the commonality of interests that united his people, not the quite real differences which divided them. He talked at length to people like James Shankar Singh and found in them a receptive audience. He reached out to the former Indian Alliance heartland by praising leaders like Ajdhoya Prasad, once a sworn enemy of the National Federation Party.

The timing was opportune. By the late 1970s, Indo-Fijians in the Alliance were on the outer, neglected and un-consulted by the party leadership on major policy issues. They were, in truth, always the weakest spoke in the Alliance wheel and, with a few exceptions, people without clout or credibility in their own community. Not having delivered a much-cherished single Indian communal seat to the Alliance hurt them deeply and for which they were not forgiven. The leading lights of the Indian Alliance were either publicly humiliated or forced out from the party. Among them was Sir Vijay R Singh, a founder of the Alliance party, who was forced to resign as Attorney General over his role in a court case involving the Flour Mills of Fiji. Insiders said Sir Vijay was asked to leave because he had Ratu Mara ears, rather too much for the comfort of many in the Cabinet. Mara, inexplicably, refused to come to his rescue, being conveniently away from Suva when his cabinet colleagues sacked the Attorney General. The manner of his sacking, by a cabinet and not the Prime Minister, as Sir Vijay later reflected, was probably unprecedented in the history of the Commonwealth.

Another casualty of the Alliance's disdain for its 'non-performing' Indian members was the Tavua politician, lawyer and Minister of Commerce and Trade MT Khan over alleged corruption, for which he was later acquitted. Khan had left the NFP in 1968 to join the Alliance. He rejoined around 1980, but died soon afterwards.

The latest casualty was James Shankar Singh, president of the Indian Alliance, no less, who resigned from the Alliance, bitterly claiming that the Indian members of the Alliance were used by Ratu Mara as his 'foot-stool,' and treated liked 'coolies.' 'It is my sad experience,' Singh said, that 'throughout the existence of the party Indian Alliance leaders and members have been made tools or vehicles of convenience by the party leader, and once the general election is over and Ratu Sir Kamisese conveniently seated in the Prime Minister's chair, he treats them like a bunch of coolies.'<sup>8</sup> He had 'irreconcilable differences' with the Alliance leader whom he described as 'uncompromising, arrogant and dictatorial.'<sup>9</sup> These were strong words from a genuinely mild-mannered man well regarded across the communities, but they were fairly widely shared. Said Armugan Pillay, the Assistant General Secretary of the Indian Alliance in June 1982: 'People need better treatment. This is a party where democracy has no place at all. If one differs from the party leader, than he is a marked man. We in the Alliance are treated as third class members.'<sup>10</sup> Most of the Alliance 'refugees' found a welcoming home in an inclusive NFP, much to the quiet dismay of some of the older members with strong memories of bitter past fights, who now felt neglected and on the margins of the party's affairs.

Harish Sharma, a long-time Reddy deputy, expressed their feelings this way. Referring to Sir Vijay Singh's admission to the NFP, Sharma told Reddy: 'I can't trust this man, if you see his record. The man will dump you the moment he is finished.' Reddy snapped at him: 'Here I am trying to unite the people, and he is such a big political fish. The problem with people like you is that you can't trust anybody.'<sup>11</sup> Sharma, having made his point, did not respond. Sure enough, Sir Vijay resigned from parliament in 1985 to become the Chief Executive of the Sugar Cane Growers Council. And

Reddy and Fiji's first Indian knight fell out in the 1990s over the latter's tacit support for the Fiji Labour Party and his niggling newspaper columns against his own former party, and would never reconcile. No one doubted Sir Vijay's intelligence and his command of the English language. He was sharp and witty, but they questioned what they loosely called his 'consistency'.<sup>12</sup> In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Reddy was busy transforming the NFP into a 'broad church' for the Indo-Fijian community and former opponents were welcome to join it.

A very similar development was taking place on the Fijian side as well. According to Sir Vijay Singh, the turning point for the Alliance came after the April 1977 elections when it lost 25 per cent of the Fijian communal votes to the Fijian Nationalist Party. It was then, Sir Vijay told me, that Ratu Mara went 'soft' on his multiracial philosophy to accommodate the more radical elements of the Fijian community.<sup>13</sup> He realized anew the accuracy of the advice that David Butler, the Oxford (Nuffield College) political scientist, had given him on the Independence Constitution that Fijians would have political control provided they were united. To consolidate Fijian unity, Mara was prepared to put aside the needs and aspirations of the weakest element of his party which included, as James Shankar Singh pointed out, more admission of Indo-Fijians into the military and the opening up of more land already available rather than reclaiming swampy land near the sea.<sup>14</sup> Soon after losing the April 1977 elections, Mara set about recapturing the Fijian constituency, urging unity without which, he said, everything which the Fijian people held dear could be jeopardized. But his problems were not over yet. There was rumbling in Western Viti Levu which would evolve into a major political headache for him in a few of years' time.

## RACE AND LAND

With positions solidifying along ethnic lines, the politics of race once again came to the fore, coalescing around a number of predictable issues. Education was one of them. In 1979, Irene Jai Narayan moved a motion in parliament expressing grave concern at the mishandling of the admission of

students, especially private students, to the University of the South Pacific. Private students were required to pay \$3000 admission fee.<sup>15</sup> The NFP asked the government to reduce it to a more realistic, affordable figure. The government was caught in a bind. 1976 was a bumper year when 895 students had passed their University Entrance exams, 295 more than expected. To qualify for government scholarship, Indo-Fijian students had to have a mark of 260, while Fijian students required only 210. Figures showed that from 1971 to 1977, more Indo-Fijians got admission with scholarship to the university than Fijians, but figures in the abstract meant little to those who had missed out and now faced a bleak future.<sup>16</sup> Education was one commodity the Indo-Fijians valued more than any other. It was their passport to hope. Ratu Mara reminded the NFP of the recommendations of the 1969 Education Commission, which had recommended reserving 50 per cent of the scholarship for Fijian students on a 'parallel block' basis (directing the unallocated balance of scholarships to other specifically Fijian needs) and providing assistance to repeating Fijian students where they had demonstrated 'serious and sustained application to his studies.'<sup>17</sup> Tomasi Vakatora was blunt: this was nothing but a disingenuous ploy on the part of the Indians to get a greater share of the education cake than was their due. 'If you want that [more scholarships] why go about in a devious way? Why do you just not stand up and honestly say that you want more scholarships for Indians?'<sup>18</sup> .

It was not an issue of race, Reddy would say later, nor was it a case of Indians adopting a knee-jerk opposition to all efforts to help Fijians. For more than a decade, the NFP had accepted 'that the Fijian people are in need of special help in the fields of education and commerce and industry. In the former case, the reservation of 50% of places at USP is the manifestation of that policy. The granting of soft loans by the Development Bank to ethnic Fijians in order to help them in commerce is another example. Similarly, much of the rural development effort is geared to help the Fijians better their standard of living. Massive assistance to the Fiji Pine Project is yet another example of special assistance primarily aimed at helping one section of the

community but indirectly helping the whole. We recognize that this effort must continue. Indeed we must look at ways and means by which more effective use can be made of our resources to bridge the gap between the haves and the have nots.<sup>19</sup> But the presumption that all the 'haves' belonged to one community and all the 'have nots' to another was the real problem. De-racializing important issues of public policy would be an intractable problem in a country obsessed with racial characterization of everything.

If discrimination in the education sector was one pressing and persistent matter of concern to the Indo-Fijian community, glaring disparity in the civil service was another. In December 1979, Reddy raised this issue in parliament.<sup>20</sup> The statistics about the absence of Indo-Fijians from the top echelons of the civil service were as stark as they were startling (see table on facing page). Of the four District Commissioners, only one was Indo-Fijian (Narsi Raniga), and of the six High Commissioners, only one (Satya Nandan) was an Indo-Fijian.

Reddy accused PSC chairman, Joseph Sykes, of breaching Section 105 (9) of the constitution which covered appointments to the civil service. It stipulated that 'each community in Fiji receives fair treatment in the number and distribution of offices to which candidates of that community are appointed on entry.' And he reminded the parliament of the Public Service Commission Constitution Regulation 1974 which provided that in the event of two or more applicants being available for appointment, 'preference shall be given to that officer who in the opinion of the Commission has the most merit for appointment to the post.' Said Reddy: 'I cannot believe that there are no Indians in the Service who, by merit, are not in a position to be moved up to these decision-making levels, so that some parity is maintained, as the constitution requires... . The one thing that emerges from an examination of the constitution is that the PSC itself is unable to make any of these appointments without the concurrence of the Right Honourable the Prime Minister and I think as Leader of the Opposition, I am entitled to ask him, that how is it and why is it that this imbalance has occurred at this level of our Civil Service.' The imbalance, Reddy said, was an issue of



## HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

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Secretary to Cabinet	Dr Isireli Lasaqa
Foreign Affairs	Jioji Kotabalavu
Public Service Commission	Joseph Sykes
Home Affairs	Mosese Buadromo
Solicitor General	Qoriniasi Bale
Finance	Winston Thompson
Labour	Satya Nand
Educaton	Filipe Bole
Fijian Affairs	Ratu E Kanaimawi
Agriculture & Fisheries	Robin Yarrow
Commerce & Industry	Laisenia Qarase
Health	Dr Jona Senilagakali
Urban Devt & Housing	Bhuwan Dutt
Posts and Telecommunications	John Manikam
Works and Communication	M Tukituku
Transport & Tourism	Robert Dodds
Auditor General	Tamessar Bhim
Information	Don Diment
Cooperatives	J Nacoke
Forestry	H Williams
Mineral Resources	Ron Richmond
Social Welfare	Rev. V Liga
Lands	T Rupeni
Youth & Sport	Inoke Tabualevu

great concern to his community. Ratu Penaia Ganilau, the Deputy Prime Minister, rejected outright any allegation of ‘political manoeuvring and unfair treatment,’ saying that there was no interference in the work of the PSC by the Prime Minister or anyone else. And the insinuation that Mara

had influenced decisions was vehemently denied. But the glaring absence of Indo-Fijians at the top echelons of the civil service could not be. That was the main point of contention.

The facts could not be ignored. And they were not surprising. Mara knew very well that the future of his government depended upon consolidating Fijian support, and appointing Fijians to the top positions was a part of that strategy. The position of Indo-Fijian civil servants would continue to deteriorate over the next decade, their numbers rapidly thinning at the top. In 1995, Reddy repeated what he had in effect said a decade earlier. An attempt was under way to 'ensure that all strategic levels of government are staffed by loyal personnel which in effect means that indigenous Fijians are placed in positions of command in order to create an 'out group', namely the Indo-Fijians.<sup>21</sup> When Reddy spoke, only six of the thirty one permanent secretaries and seven of the thirty two deputy permanent secretaries were Indo-Fijians. The culture of political patronage and ethnic 'preferencing' in appointments would ensure the continuation of the disparity in the future. In raising the issue of racial disparities in the civil service, he was not playing the card of racial politics, Reddy stressed. 'Whether I ask that question here or not, people are asking that question and I would be a naïve fool if I pretended that this is not a problem and is not an issue that people are talking about. I feel that the sooner the air is cleared and answers are given, the better it will be for all concerned.' A decade or so later, Reddy was making the same point, saying that he was not asking for dominance nor for charity. 'I am asking you to treat the Indian civil servants as you treat your own people. Since you have the political power, dispense it justly.'<sup>22</sup>

While discrimination in education and the public service were stirring public emotion, the perennial topic of land raised its head again. The issue this time was not leasing arrangements but the reserving of Crown land. In 1975, the Alliance government decided to reserve (for future Fijian use) some 62,240 acres of Schedule A and Schedule B land, affecting some 192 leases and at least five government projects. These were land which were declared unoccupied or where the original *mataqali* had become extinct

around the time of Cession. Surprisingly, the new reserves policy was not announced publicly through a news conference, as all major decisions of the government usually were, but to a meeting of the Great Council of Chiefs. On 2 May, Jai Ram Reddy wrote to Ratu Mara, informing him that he had decided to raise the issue in parliament but had been dissuaded by Ratu Penaia Ganilau, who had advised private discussion among the three of them. 'Ratu Sir Penaia gave me the assurance that government will take no further action in this matter, namely, the Governor General will not be asked to sign the relevant proclamations and the status of Crown land will not be changed.' 'On that assurance,' Reddy continued, 'I agreed not to raise the matter immediately but to participate in the proposed discussion to see if some acceptable agreement can be reached.'<sup>23</sup>

No discussions took place. Reddy wrote to Mara again, on 27 February 1980, when it seemed certain that the government would go ahead with the plan. 'I would have thought that the government would be seeking to preserve such Crown lands as there are to settle evictees from native lands as pressure from land owners grows to farm their own land.' He continued:

I believe the government decision is wrong, and it cannot be justified on any account, particularly where it will involve throwing out tenants on Crown land, who have always believed that they were secure on them and have carried out substantial improvements. Besides, this move will be seen by them as an act calculated to make life more difficult for them in this country – which many of them believe is theirs also. On what basis does one justify evicting one landless man to put another on it? Frankly, I am extremely distressed about what is proposed. This single decision more than any other in the ten years of independence will help ruin the kind of inter-racial relations we would like to see develop in this country.

Reddy raised the subject in public for the first time at the NFP convention, questioning the 'secretive' nature of the transaction.<sup>24</sup> 'Given Fijian strength in this area and the Indian vulnerability,' he asked, 'is it necessary

to take over what little Crown land there is and literally to convert it into Native land?' 'You may have the power to do it,' he continued, 'but the power to do what is right and good is also the power to do what is wrong.' 'I would have thought that a reasonable government would preserve as much Crown land as possible consistent with the principles of fairness to all in order to settle future evictees from Native lands now waiting to be resettled.' For Reddy, the reserving of Crown land was yet another attempt by the government, deliberate or not, to weaken the Indian community and thereby compound its vulnerability.

Ratu Mara denied any impropriety. Writing to Reddy on 3 April, he said that 'the policy to reserve Crown land for allotment to Fijian proprietary units is not new.' He reminded Reddy of Section 18 (1) of the Native Land Trust Act which authorized the Governor General to set aside as much Crown land as he deemed necessary for the use of the landowning units. This was the provision which had been invoked in 1975, after consultation with the Great Council of Chiefs. Reddy disagreed with Mara's interpretation. He had 'grave reservation' about the applicability of the particular section cited by the Prime Minister. 'It is not without significance,' he wrote to Mara on 9 July 1980, 'that successive Colonial Governors do not appear to have found it necessary to invoke Section 18 (c) of the Native Land Ordinance to displace sitting tenants of Crown land.' He doubted if that provision was 'intended to be used literally to convert large areas of Crown land into Native land by a simple administrative device of a proclamation. Indeed that Section seems wholly inappropriate to the post-independence situation in Fiji.'

Once the matter entered the public arena, Mara went on the offensive. Addressing the Alliance convention at the Trade Winds Convention Centre in October 1983, he reminded Reddy of the generosity of the Fijian people, the concessions they had made for the greater good, such as agreeing to ALTO and ALTA and to 50 percent of the fifty year leases in the Seaqaqa Cane Scheme. He went on:

It is well known that 83 percent of the land is owned by the Fijians, but as Professor Spate found out, all the eyes of the land have been picked out by the immigrants. All the best Fijian land is under lease and the majority of the tenants on the best lands are Indians. Most of the valuable properties in urban areas are now occupied by the Indian people. Their ownership, like the tentacles of an octopus, has embraced retail commerce, industry and transport. The Fijians in the name of equity have not asked for an equitable share in these. They abide by the constitutional rights and protection given to property.'

The Alliance had not resorted to the Bumiputra-style affirmative action policy in Fiji. The Fijians had given much, yet 'even the pieces left in the hands of the landowners are being demanded again by the Leader of the Opposition for the section of the community which dominates our economy.'<sup>25</sup>

The cumulative picture that the Prime Minister's response, intentionally or otherwise, portrayed of the Indo-Fijian community was one full of greed, never satisfied, always seeking advantage wherever they could find it. Broadly speaking, this was the Fijian view of the Indo-Fijian community. Mara accused Reddy of public posturing, playing to the gallery. Reddy denied this. 'To answer those who are accusing me of raising this issue at my Party's Convention, I can only say that I have corresponded with the Prime Minister on this subject and it was only after it became clear that no solution was in sight that I informed the Prime Minister in writing of my intention to raise the subject at my Party's Convention.' He continued: 'I might be disappointing some who may wish to use this issue for their own political gains but it is no secret that the National Federation Party has never questioned the ownership of Fijian land and it does not do so now.'

In an interview in 1978, Reddy was asked about his views on the land problem. He talked about it in a balanced way. To achieve a viable solution, the interests and concerns of both the landlords and the tenants had to be considered. 'It is not simply an economic problem,' he said. 'It is a complex

of economic, social and political issues, and it is perhaps ironical that at the centre of it all is fear and suspicion that the unscrupulous on both sides will exploit.<sup>26</sup> 'To the Fijian people land is very close to their hearts — it is part of their culture and tradition; they see land as the basis of their security and very existence. They also see it as a bulwark against their apparent backwardness in commerce and industry.' The Indian tenant knew that it was in the nature of leases that they would expire one day. What would happen then? 'And because the Indian community comprises the bulk of the tenant community, they see their insecurity in this respect as a threat to their very existence in this country.' The constitution did not help, for the tenant knew that the same constitution 'that gives him citizenship also protects the Fijians' ownership of the land, and he is deeply conscious that certain rights flow from that fact and one of them is the landowners right to dispossess him.' The problem was not insoluble, Reddy said, but it would require 'goodwill, honesty and forthright discussion.' He urged the government to produce a long term policy on land. Maintaining the status quo was no solution. 'Land by itself (like anything else) is not important; what is important is what we produce out of it.' 'The greatest potential for future growth in our country,' he continued, 'is in agriculture — there is no doubt about it — and maximum use has to be made of our land resources.' This was true. But it was also the source of great power in the hands of the Fijian political elite. A whole range of complex vested interests ensured that there would be no easy resolution of the problem. It would re-appear on the political radar a decade later, but again without resolution.

#### GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY

In 1979, Dr Ahmed Ali, a former secretary of the Alliance party and an academic at the University of the South Pacific, prepared a paper on a possible government of national unity at Ratu Mara's request. The idea of power sharing in some form had been floating around for some time, but this was the first time that it was being committed to paper. The Ali paper dwelt heavily on the problems of governments in crisis-prone plural societies.

Those elements neglected in national decision making tended to 'become more disenchanted with the government and country and with little reason for loyalty to a system which excludes them through no fault of their own apart from their attachment to a political party in which they genuinely believe,' Ali wrote.<sup>27</sup> This was clearly an undesirable state of affairs. The paper rejected coalition as a solution 'because a coalition is always a temporary measure devised for times when no group possesses a reasonable majority to govern on its own and joins in a loose association with another or others merely to keep the country going' until the next elections. The coalition arrangement was not good for Fiji for two reasons, the paper argued. First, compromise might be required, 'but the country's crucial problems do not lie in resorting to compromises' What was required was 'all groups accepting to assist the disadvantaged, especially in one ethnic group agreeing to help another.' That point is obvious, and it would require compromise. The second reason for the coalition arrangement's unsuitability was that bargaining might be required, and 'the bargaining is likely to be mildly successful at the best and a complete failure at the worst.' Why this should be so, the paper did not elaborate.

The best solution lay in a government of national unity 'which draws upon the best talents in the country having in mind simultaneously adequate representation of the various ethnic groups in Fiji.' A 'national government wherein all communities are participants could act confidently and decisively,' fending off accusations of ethnic bias. And, finally, 'a national government would present the nation with the example of a group of persons from different communities working together for the general good of the whole country, not primarily for any section or sections of it. The picture of leaders in harmony would register in other minds and spread to the people as whole.' The paper continued in this very generic mode about the need for balanced participation and adequate representation of all the major communities 'to obtain consensus for critical policies thereby nullifying the likelihood of a sense of alienation developing in any one or more ethnic groups through apparent or real neglect.' But beyond the elementary state-

ments in the paper, there were no concrete ideas about how power might be shared, how the concept might actually work in practice.

Ali met with Reddy in April 1979, but NFP leader told him 'that in order to have any fruitful discussion, the Prime Minister and I should personally discuss this rather than through an intermediary.'<sup>28</sup> No discussions took place, though Mara claimed that he had 'a preliminary discussion with him on a Coalition Government, and gave him a paper as a prelude to further discussions.'<sup>29</sup> But then on 3 March 1979, he admitted that he had not discussed the idea with Reddy at all. 'I felt that if I had gone to the Leader of the Opposition without discussing it with my colleagues in the Alliance that in itself would start prejudice in their minds.'<sup>30</sup> Mara sent a copy to Reddy apparently 'as an opener to talks' on government of national unity. Why, on this important issue, the phone was not picked up or some arrangement made to facilitate a face-to-face meeting, remains a mystery. Reddy read the paper and had it returned to Ratu Mara, without comment or advice, absolutely denying slipping the paper under the door of the Prime Minister's office, as Ratu Mara later alleged. Reddy recalled his reaction this way: 'I expected that when the Prime Minister gave me the paper that I would take it and read it and, at some stage, he would discuss it with me. I thought that is how it would work. It didn't happen. He raised it publicly, and it was floating around but I never heard from him officially.'<sup>31</sup> Mara took Reddy's silence, or rather non-response, to mean rejection of the concept, and Reddy has continuously been blamed for the collapse of the proposal.<sup>32</sup> 'It has been said that the NFP rejected the proposal for a government of national unity,' Reddy wrote to Mara on 20 December 1982, 'but as we see it, a proposal was never made.'

Mara went public and accused Reddy of rebuffing the idea. 'We are not unmindful of the fact that the price for the establishment of dialogue on the Government of National Unity demanded by the Leader of the Opposition — the undermining of the constitutional protection afforded to Fijian interests — is too much for any Fijian leader to entertain. The price makes mockery of the constitution which emerged from the consen-



sus and compromise reached at the London Constitutional Conference in 1970.<sup>33</sup> Precisely what constitutional protection given to Fijians Reddy had jeopardized remained unstated. In his defense, Reddy said that 'the fact that so sensitive an issue as a government of national unity was raised for public discussion without real attempt to discuss the issues directly with the Opposition and thereby virtually forcing the Opposition to respond to the proposal in a public way and in an open forum and the rapidity with which the idea was rejected leaves me wondering whether the whole exercise was not a public relations gimmick, an exercise in public meditation in order to give the government a facelift.'<sup>34</sup> 'One thing that has clearly emerged from the recent debate,' Reddy said, 'is that no government of national unity can or will work in Fiji if emotion rather than reason is allowed to dominate public discussion on important issues.'

Ratu Mara appropriated the high ground on the subject, but while he talked about the virtues of a coalition government, he rejected it when the opportunity offered itself. The first was in 1965 when, as we have seen, the report of the constitutional conference of that year provided for a broad-based government. Mara had won the 1966 elections, and he would not have the Federation Party in his Cabinet. Their policies were too dissimilar, he had said. The second opportunity came in 1975, when the NFP proposed to the Street Commission the idea of a 'government of national unity and concord,' consisting of all parties. The Alliance government rejected the report outright, without even tabling it in parliament. The third opportunity presented itself in April 1977 when the NFP made the offer of a coalition government. The offer was rejected outright because Mara thought he was being asked to bail out a beleaguered opposition 'from a position they did not feel capable of sustaining.'<sup>35</sup>

Karam Ramrakha recalled that when Mara talked of coalition, he 'was basically talking of us becoming part of his consultative group and therefore a 'prisoner' to the majority.' 'I am glad it did not eventuate,' he continues, 'not that Mara was ever genuine about it. He used to shout Coalition as a sort of mantra to destroy us, and to make us feel we did not want to work

with him.<sup>36</sup> Ramrakha's view is inadvertently supported by Ratu Mara himself. When the NFP–FLP Coalition refused to join the Governor General's Council of Advisors in 1987 because only two of them were invited to join it (Harish Sharma and Dr Timoci Bavadra), the overwhelming majority being Alliance Party members, Mara said that their refusal was yet 'another opportunity for a government of national unity missed.'<sup>37</sup> It was a very curious idea of a government of national unity indeed, to say the least. Reddy's fears of being co-opted and destroyed were apparently well founded.

In June 1980 at the NFP convention in Ba, Reddy subjected the Ali paper to searching criticism and what he thought were its hidden political agendas. He wondered whether Mara wanted 'the National Federation Party as a substitute for the now almost defunct and discredited Indian Alliance.'<sup>38</sup> He asked two questions which, he said, required immediate answers. 'First, if the NFP wins majority of seats at the next general elections, will the Alliance agree to serve in a coalition headed by the NFP?' And, second, 'if the Alliance was to retain power at the next general elections, will they still invite the NFP to participate in a government of national unity?' Instead of raising the issue in public, Reddy advised Mara to raise it first with the Fijian Association, the dominant part of the Alliance. Reddy reminded Mara of his refusal to form a coalition with an 'Indian-dominated party' after the April 1977 elections because that would be playing straight into the hands of nationalists like Butadroka. Nothing had changed, Reddy said. The NFP was still Indian-dominated. Precisely what kind of coalition or government of national unity Mara had in mind was never clear. Reddy said: 'The Prime Minister's apparently contradictory and irreconcilable stand on this important subject of conciliation and his subsequent statements, have created the widespread suspicion that the only kind of coalition the Prime Minister has in mind is one that will be led and dominated by the Alliance.' Reddy's hard hitting response led to the Fijian Association resolution at their 16th annual convention in 1981 to leave the matter 'in abeyance.' A Vice President of the Indian Alliance, Hasan Raza, welcomed Reddy's response as a 'blessing in disguise, for in a

government of national unity, the members of the Indian Alliance would have been the first casualty.<sup>39</sup>

What motivated Mara on the subject remains unclear, but he did say that a change of government 'may not go down well' with sections of the community. As will be made clear shortly, the Alliance was facing problems within its Fijian ranks and a government of national unity might have been a way of keeping the Alliance in power. At least that was Reddy's assessment. He accused the Alliance of failing, after ten years in power, to educate the people 'on the most fundamental tenet of democracy,' which was 'the right of the majority to change a government, irrespective of racial considerations.' He said: 'For any leader, least of all the Prime Minister, to suggest that a duly elected NFP government could not go down well with the Fijian people does not auger well to both parties' commitment to multiracial harmony in this country.' Fiji had enjoyed ten years of multiracial harmony, Reddy said, and personally he had 'no reason to think that this will not be the continuing feature of our national life in years to come.'<sup>40</sup> Mara was prescient, even though he might have been motivated by narrow political motives; but Reddy also could not see why, if elected, the NFP could not rule although he had raised the question of the viability of a government by the NFP a few years earlier. He had learned the lessons and the past would not be allowed to be repeated. With the wisdom of hindsight, Reddy regrets the turn the discussions on government of national unity took. He says now, knowing what he does, that he might have raised his concerns in public in a more general way, without compromising the substance of his thesis, keeping the door open for private discussions, but whether that approach would have borne fruit, bearing in mind Ratu Mara's own stated views on the matter, is not certain.

When Sitiveni Rabuka mooted the idea of a government of national unity in the mid-1990s, Reddy elaborated on his deeper concerns because what appeared a noble concept on paper had to be thought through carefully before it could be given practical effect. 'It is not just putting together a dozen people of different races or as simple as four Indians joining the

Rabuka cabinet and pursuing his policies. It means reconciling seemingly irreconcilable interests. A government of national unity is only possible if you have an agreed program and agreed objectives that you are going to work towards.' With an agreed program, no party could manoeuvre itself into a situation where it had no control over the government's program which it could not criticize. 'If you go in there not knowing what you are in for, not knowing what a government of national unity is supposed to do, it will be worse for inter-communal relations if you withdraw prematurely. It will create a worse disaster than the one we have on our hands now. It will be portrayed as unwillingness of the Indians to work cooperatively with other communities, and it will be bad for us.'<sup>41</sup> By the early 1990s, Reddy was thinking not so much about a government of national unity under a flawed constitution, but another form of political power sharing arrangement whose scope and focus has already been mentioned.

But all this was far from Reddy's pressing concerns in the early 1980s, which were to give the NFP a viable platform as the alternative government. The lessons of 1977 had been learnt. This time, the NFP would be ready to form government if it won the general elections. To that end, Reddy created a shadow cabinet to bolster opposition performance in parliament. Irene Jai Narayan assumed the portfolio of Finance and Economic Affairs. H M Lodhia was appointed spokesman for Trade and Industry, SN Kanhai Education, Harish Sharma Law, Administration and Justice, Senator Colin Weaver Tourism, Transport and Civil Aviation, and Senator Subramani Baswaiya Land and Agriculture. More appointments were promised, the idea being to introduce a degree of professionalism and prior preparation in the party's front bench. There had been a shadow cabinet under Koya, but it was in truth more shadow than substance when all the energies were spent on internal party battles. The absence of Fijians in the shadow lineup is glaring. How to increase the party's support base among Fijians was Reddy's most formidable political problem, and to this task he began to turn his serious attention. 'It is very important,' he said, 'that more of us try to get to know leaders of other races, to get closer to them and under-

stand how they feel.' Fijians, he said, would come to the party if 'they found the NFP sincere about Fijian problems, and this could be demonstrated to them.'<sup>42</sup> It was an admirable ambition but idle because electoral politics in Fiji was structured in such a way that cross-ethnic appeal for votes was always viewed suspiciously as an attempt to divide a community, not as a genuine effort to enlarge the common space. Fijian leaders appealing for Indo-Fijian votes were seen to be dividing the community. And vice versa. Reddy would shoulder his share of blame, with grave consequences for himself and his community.

#### NFP-WESTERN UNITED FRONT COALITION

By the early 1980s, Sakeasi Butadroka was no longer the threat he had been in the mid-1970s. He had been in jail for breaching the Public Order Act prohibiting the incitement to racial hatred, and his party was in disarray. The ground from under its feet had been cut by the Alliance's assiduous courting of the Fijian voters. But just as the embers were being doused in southeastern Viti Levu, a new threat emerged in western part of the main island where Fijian feelings against the Alliance coalesced around the pine industry. Pine (*pinus caribaea va hondurensis*) began to be planted in Fiji in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and by 1979, 28,000 hectares were under pine, mostly in the dry and arid hills of western Viti Levu between Sigatoka and Nadi. To govern the operations of the pine industry, the government established the Fiji Pine Commission in 1976 to 'facilitate and develop an industry based on the growing, harvesting, processing and marketing of pine and other species of trees grown Fiji.'<sup>43</sup> But the pine industry was not the exclusive domain of the Fiji Pine Commission. The other major partner was the landowners, assisted by the Forestry Department. The Commission invited proposals from interested companies to harvest the mature pine. Four proposals were received: from the MK Hunt Foundation, Shell/New Zealand Forest Products, British Petroleum (BP) Southwest Pacific Limited, and the United Marketing Company (UMC) owned by a convicted US businessman, Paul Sandblom. The Commission accepted the BP proposal

because it appeared more flexible and promised a rational, more sustainable development of the industry. The landowners, led by Ratu Osea Gavidi, leaned towards the UMC proposal because it apparently recognized legitimate landowner rights, offered them a greater share of the profits, and allowed them participation at all levels of the industry. The Fiji Pine Commission remained unconvinced, and the government declared Sandblom a prohibited immigrant because of his previous criminal conviction. It might be added parenthetically that this was neither the first nor the last time that Gavidi would associate himself with foreign entrepreneurs and fortune hunters with dubious financial credentials, in the process undermining his own credibility in the public eye.

The simmering tensions between the landowners and the Fiji Pine Commission, and through it the government, erupted in the open as landowners boycotted several of the Commission's pine planting programs. To the western landowners, the Alliance government's approach and determination to have its own way was yet another unacceptable interference in their right to utilize their resources as they themselves saw fit. The landowners preferred 'the establishment of a decentralized, socially compatible, technologically appropriate and economically viable processing system for both native and exotic forests [and assisting] direct participation [of landowners] in the exploitation of such forest resources.'<sup>44</sup> In short, the landowners wanted direct control and the bulk of the proceeds from the industry. As Gavidi said, 'I am committed to promoting the pine industry, the interest of the landowners, and indeed of Fiji and I am not about to surrender this obligation for the private gain of any company or person, Mr Sandblom included.'<sup>45</sup> The government, on the other hand, preferred a more centralized control of a resource that had the potential to become a major revenue earner for Fiji. The interests and concerns of the landowners had to be balanced against many other competing interests.

The pine dispute brought into sharper relief longstanding private resentment among western Fijians at the perceived iniquitous treatment at the hands of the eastern chiefly establishment. It served to highlight other

grievances such as the paucity of western Fijians in the civil service and other statutory bodies, disparities particularly glaring — and galling — in view of the overall western contribution to the national economy. The issues came into sharp focus during a parliamentary debate on the allocation of \$435,868 to renovate certain historic sites on the chiefly island of Bau. Tui Nadi, Ratu Napolioni Dawai, attacked the motion as unjustified, and pointed to the more pressing needs of western Fijians such as water supply, roads, and dormitories for school children from outlying areas studying on the mainland. Dawai resigned from the Alliance and joined Gavidi. A new political party, Western United Front, was launched in traditional Fijian style on 17 July 1981 in the presence of some twenty ranking chiefs from various districts of western Viti Levu. Gavidi, elected president, outlined the party's goal: to protect and encourage the unity of western Fijians, protect the interests of landowners and defend their rights to develop their resources according to their aspirations, to seek changes in the Ministry of Fijian Affairs and Rural Development to improve the lives of western Fijians, and to improve the educational facilities of western Fijians and provide them opportunities in commercial and industrial enterprises.

The list of grievances and the proposal to address them seemed familiar enough. They had been raised before by, among others, Apolosi Nawai and Apisai Tora, and Tora would continue raising them well into the 1990s. But Tora, the longstanding advocate of western interests, was not with WUF. He had joined the Alliance party after resigning from the NFP in 1979, although privately he probably applauded the daring challenge to the eastern Fijian establishment. Another high western chief, Ratu Mosese Varasikete Tuisawau, a leading Fijian light of the NFP in the 1960s and editor once of the party's Fijian newspaper, had also left the party in 1979 and joined the Fijian Nationalists, eventually becoming their president. So the western front was not as overarchingly western nor as solidly united as it was portrayed to be. Western United Front was the handiwork of a few individuals and in truth centred around the disputes in the pine industry alone, little more. But the new party potentially offered the NFP new op-

portunities. The departure of Fijians of seniority had fatally narrowed the NFP's multiracial appeal and membership. The emergence of the Western United Front offered the party an opportunity to expand into the Fijian community through the new channel. For the WUF, the NFP also provided all the infrastructure and financial resources of a well established party to expand beyond its regionalist base. At first, though, the Western United Front had flirted with the Fijian Nationalists to form a joint, progressive front, but the effort was abandoned when an irate Butadroka reportedly assaulted Solomone Momoivalu, an Alliance minister of state, for accusing him of practicing voodooism to attract Fijian voters.

After a series of meetings involving Jai Ram Reddy, Siddiq Koya, Irene Jai Narayan and Ratu Osea Gavidi, a NFP–WUF Coalition materialized on 11 January 1982 in the presence of Ratu Apimeliki Varakuka, Penaia Browne, Sunia Naulago, Raba, Isikieli Nadalo, Tui Nawaka, Ratu Osea Gavidi (Snr) and Ratu Osea Gavidi, and Sekonaia Niukula representing the Western United Front, and RS Goundar, Jai Ram Reddy, Siddiq Koya, Shardha Nand, SN Kanhai and Koresi Matatolu representing the National Federation Party. The exact terms of the arrangement were never publicly stated, but in the *Coalition Bulletin*, Reddy declared:

In this arrangement, each party is to maintain its independent identity and objectives. In other words, there is no submergence of one party into another. It must be remembered that the two parties are totally independent, with interest that each would like to protect. I don't envisage that where parties are independent and are being led by strong leadership with principles that they themselves espouse, there is any real danger of anyone becoming subservient. It is a partnership of equals.

Speaking at the launch of the NFP–WUF Coalition, Reddy said that a coalition merely for the sake of winning a majority of the seats in parliament or for simply toppling the government was not good enough. He wanted the parties first of all 'to establish areas of common ideals — of which there were many — and to iron out any differences in policies. Ultimately, the



partners should be equipped to work as a Government on clearly defined and agreed policies or, of [the] occasion arose, to function as supportive partners in Opposition.' Each party would select its own communal candidates but would cooperate and consult each other in selecting candidates for the four Fijian national seats (by a joint committee comprising Reddy, Koya, Gavidi and Nadalo) to be shared equally by the coalition partners. Koya suggested the idea of co-chairs of the campaign and his proposal for Reddy and Gavidi to be the co-chairs was accepted with acclaim. On 17 April, Reddy was unanimously elected the leader of the NFP–WUF coalition and the decision ratified by the NFP's Working Committee in Tavua. The resolution, Reddy said 'should put an end to the speculation, misgivings and doubts that existed in the minds of people about the leadership issue.' The time was now to 'concentrate on real issues important to us all.'<sup>46</sup> This is what Reddy told the convention:

Let me assure you that the Coalition between the NFP and the Western United Front is not one of convenience, nor is its sole purpose to topple the Alliance. It is an attempt to bring together people of different races and backgrounds in an endeavour to create a nation out of our diverse communities. It is a sincere attempt to build a bridge of understanding and appreciation of the hopes and aspirations of the different people who comprise the Fiji family. It is not an attempt to politically isolate a section of the community. It is an attempt to establish for Fiji a genuine multiracial government in which all sections of the community are seen to be participating in making decisions that will affect them and their future. The Coalition was born out of a conviction, deeply felt and held, that one thing we cannot afford and do not need is the isolation of one half of the total community from participating in government in a real way. No nation was built on slogans, however impressive. All our people must be made to feel wanted and part and parcel of the total Fiji family.<sup>47</sup>

The coalition of an exclusively Fijian splinter party with a predominantly Indo-Fijian party was seen by its supporters as heralding a new era in Fijian


politics, presenting the Alliance with a more formidable challenge than it had faced from the NFP alone. It was Jai Ram Reddy's first foray into consociational politics, with two race-based parties cooperating for national governance. To its opponents, though, it was simply an expedient political arrangement with the sole purpose of dislodging the Alliance from power. Speaking to a thousand strong Fijian Association meeting in Rakiraki soon after WUF was launched, Ratu Mara denounced the new party as a 'disruptive' force which 'preached ridiculous political ideologies'.<sup>48</sup> Speaking in Fijian on the radio, Mara warned the Fijians about the dangers of the Coalition. The National Federation Party, he said, was trying to achieve power it had failed to do at the London constitutional conference, implying that what the Coalition was doing was breaching some undertaking given in London. It was not the last time that this interpretation would be raised in Fiji, as we shall see.

Reddy did not share that understanding, if it was an understanding at all. He said: 'I feel nothing in the constitution of Fiji or of the Declarations made at the time [of independence], are incompatible with the coalition we are trying to form. Let me remind the people of Fiji that the Prime Minister himself has been advocating a coalition which he said we turned down. Of course I disagree with him. We have never turned down a coalition. We offered to go into coalition. We offered to go into serious discussions which have never eventuated; but the point I would like to make is that there is nothing in the constitution which says the NFP should not ever govern either with or without a coalition. So this attempt to link the constitution with this coalition arrangement is rather a curious one, strangest of all that has been made in relation to the coalition.'<sup>49</sup> Seeking to plant seeds of doubt about the coalition in Indian minds, Alliance alleged that the NFP had done a 'political deal' with the Fijian Nationalists. Reddy dismissed this as nothing more than a fabrication 'to destroy me and the National Federation Party.' It was 'unnecessary for any political party to resort to this kind of thing to win the election.' In reality, no strategy, however unpalatable or unethical, was superfluous in a tense and close campaign.


## THE 1982 GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The 1982 campaign for the NFP was of a different kind to those it had mounted in the past. In both the elections of 1977, the party was fighting its own internal battles, first and foremost, more so in September than in April, rather than contesting the Alliance for national leadership. But in 1982, all the doubts and hesitations of the past were, or appeared to have, gone as it made a serious and concerted effort to dislodge the Alliance. To pre-empt any questions about who might lead the party if it won power, Reddy had the parliamentary board endorse him as its nominee for Prime Minister if the party won. Some members complained about this being a breach of the party's constitution, but the practical realities on the ground won the day. 1977 was not to be repeated. There would be no more bickering about leadership post-election. Reddy made a serious effort to reach to audiences beyond his own traditional constituency, and he made a good impression. The Alliance saw Reddy as a serious threat, a credible leader. Its own private briefing documents supplied to its candidates described Reddy as 'Made for unity,' 'Liked by many Fijians,' 'He is policy oriented,' 'Intelligent, thoughtful and calm,' 'He is seen to be safe,' and 'Seen by some not to be personally ambitious but seems to care for Fiji. Understandably, Reddy became a particular target for the Alliance in the campaign.

The NFP's preparedness for the campaign was evident in its election manifesto, a carefully thought-out policy document of eighty two pages quite unlike any other before it or since. The NFP had policies on all major aspects of society and economy: production and income, project identification, fiscal and monetary policy, measures to reduce inflation, trade, exchange rate and balance of payment, agriculture (the sugar and copra industry), cocoa and rice, animal husbandry and the dairy industry, land and land tenure, forestry and fisheries, industrial relations, Fijian affairs, rural development, communications and tourism, energy, health and education, youth, women, social welfare, the culture and the arts. 'Good Government,' Reddy said, 'is not simply, or necessarily, to be seen in terms of investment and wages, important though these are. It is about justice and equality; it



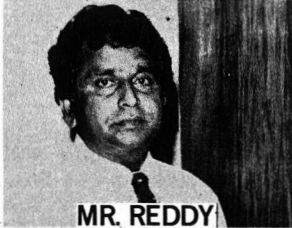
# NFP/WUF VICTORY



In 1980 Dr. Ahmed Ali, **Alliance** political scientist, predicted that **NFP** will win the 1982 general elections.

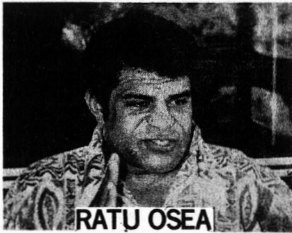
“The **NFP**....could capture not 24 but most probably 28 seats in 1982.”  
(**Business News**, May 1980 p. 23)

Today the **NFP** is not only united it has formed a coalition with the powerful **Western United Front**.



MR. REDDY

“We are proposing a realistic programme which can become the basis of a dynamic economy and a progressive and just society. The coalition offers the nation a new hope, a new beginning and new achievements.”

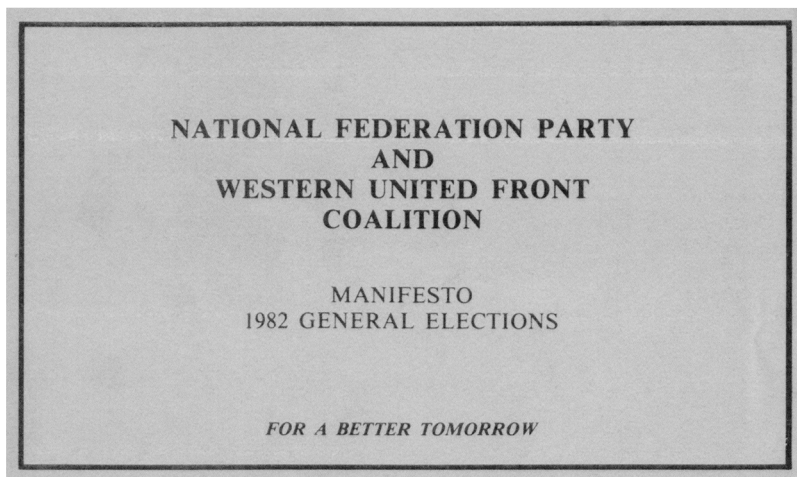


RATU OSEA

“We in the coalition are anxious to get over the elections so Fiji can see the end of the deteriorating Alliance rule and witness a new and dynamic dimension in leadership.”

## NFP/WUF IS A WINNER IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE

*A typical election campaign advertisement, 1982. Courtesy of Fiji Times.*



is about care and protection of the unemployed, the underpaid, the needy, the handicapped, the pensioners; it is about building a humane society and making people aware of the needs and aspirations of those less fortunate than ourselves. Good government was an ‘attitude of mind nationally created and felt.’ It was about ‘inculcating in the people of Fiji a sense of national unity and common destiny.’ The thoroughness of its preparation for the elections showed that the NFP meant business; it was ready to assume power if it won the elections. In newspaper advertisements and in radio debates — there was no television in Fiji then — the NFP matched the Alliance word for word, diatribe for diatribe. For every attack, there was a rapid counter-attack, which led Mara, who was clearly perplexed to see such a revitalized Opposition, to call the NFP campaign ‘relentless, deceitful and prejudicial to good order.’<sup>750</sup>

NFP’s most thorough election manifesto to date, 1982, which perplexed the Alliance Party. NFP meant business. The party machinery, for once, was working smoothly. Gavidi appeared to have gravitas and charisma; he was young and articulate, and an effective speaker on the campaign trail. And Reddy was at his eloquent best. He inspired confidence and enthusiasm among his supporters. His speeches were thoughtful and policy-oriented,

as the Alliance had feared. He was a galvanizing presence at the helm of the party. And he had experienced campaigners in his team as well. These included especially Sir Vijay R Singh, a sharp and effective speaker. His admission into the party had rankled some old faithful supporters, as we have seen, who thought Sir Vijay should have 'done time' before being rewarded with a blue ribbon seat, but all that seemed to be forgotten now. Siddiq Koya was quiet on the campaign trail, sidelined, not the fiery orator of the past at the centre of things. His quiet demeanour puzzled some but was a plus for others. Many of Koya's supporters had either quietly shifted to the Alliance or were biding their time for some other alternative. Even his opponents accepted that this was Reddy's moment in the sun and that his leadership was secure.

The 1982 campaign was more 'issue-based' than those in the past. The economy emerged as a major issue. Reddy attacked the Alliance's management of the economy, with ammunition derived from official statistics. It relied heavily on a gloomy picture of the economy painted by the high-level Financial Review Committee which had prophesized bankruptcy of the country to the tune of \$51.7 million by 1983 unless current trends were reversed. It raised the 'certain prospect of massive unemployment' which developments in pine, fish and copper industries were unlikely to alleviate. The unemployment rate, which had been steadily increasing, was 16 per cent in 1981, and it especially affected young school leavers. Inflation (11 per cent), mounting squatter problems, rapidly increasing food imports (which had soared by 270 per cent between 1971 and 1981 while the population had increased only by 25 per cent), the widening foreign trade gap from \$153 million in 1980 to \$271 million in 1981 and a generally sluggish growth of the economy (3 per cent) were all issues the Coalition raised in the campaign, frequently supported by a barrage of confounding statistics. But beyond merely criticizing, the Coalition put forth its own proposals for generating employment and growth.

The Coalition also made an issue of the conduct of government under the Alliance. It argued for a 'parliamentary' democracy where the parlia-





*Reddy with supporters at the Natabua Primary School polling booth, 1982.*

ment, not the cabinet, was supreme, as it had seemed to become under the Alliance. Troops had been committed to Lebanon and Sinai on the decision of the cabinet and not the parliament, and, as already seen, some large tracts of Crown land in Viti Levu had been reserved without any parliamentary debate. The Coalition proposed to halt this trend through the use of 'parliamentary committees, with members drawn from all parties and different sections of our society.' This, it argued, would not only widen discussions on a wide range of issues but also lessen dependence on foreign consultants and advisors. Along with advocating open government, the Coalition pressed the idea of a truly multiracial cabinet, reflecting the interests of all sections of the community. It pointed out that while Indians comprised half the population, there was only one elected Indian in the cabinet, although how many 'elected' Fijians there would be in a Coalition cabinet was wisely left unsaid. In response to all this, the Alliance paraded experience and purposeful management of the economy, and, above all, its

leader. Mara was not the same invincible figure of the 1970s, politically tall and awe-inspiring, but he was still the best Fiji had.

#### CHOTA GHAR AND BEYOND

Campaigns on paper are very different to what actually goes on the ground. But what was remarkable about 1982 was that the Coalition was able to match, often more than match, the Alliance's paper war. It was until then the most even, and most enlightening, election campaign postcolonial Fiji had experienced, or so it seemed to me from my vantage point as the chairman of the national panel discussions broadcast live on Radio Fiji. Ideas and alternative visions once again entered the national political discourse that were absent in the 1970s. But dry facts and abstract concepts, powerful though they might be, can take a party so far and no further. On the hustings, words are spoken both to enlighten as well as to entertain. Belittling an opponent is an entertaining part of the deal. Rustic metaphors convey messages that audiences understand perfectly. It was at a campaign meeting in Labasa that Reddy, getting carried away by the intensity and theatre of the moment, uttered words that would return to haunt him for a very long time. Reddy had witnessed how Mara was moving around the country, visiting Indo-Fijian electorates as he had not done before, being led to believe by the more ardent members of the Indian Alliance that an Indian communal seat might finally be within reach. Reddy was campaigning in Nasinu and was told that a minister and his running mate on the cross-voting seat were in the area and had been invited to open a private home. That struck him as odd at the time, 'but it sort of stuck in my mind.' The Alliance was so desperate, he said in Hindi in his Labasa address, that their leaders were willing to open even a 'small house' (*chota ghar*) to get Indian votes. He did not mention Ratu Mara by name, but a connection to him was quickly made.

I was at the Labasa Fire Station rally that day and knew instantly the faux pas Reddy had committed. Reddy himself realized his unfortunate choice of words the moment he had uttered them, but what was done was



done; there was nothing he could (or would) do about what he had said. The *Fiji Times* reporter, Umendra Singh, reported the speech for the national daily. For a few days nothing happened, but then the words were picked up the Alliance campaign committee, and the world crashed on Reddy's head. The words translated into English as 'toilet,' and Reddy was excoriated unmercifully for his 'toilet remark.' Mara, the astute politician facing a tough contest, feigned deep hurt and promised never to forget them or forgive Reddy. A high chief had been 'insulted,' the name of his *vanua* dragged into the mud. This was yet another instance of Indian insensitivity to Fijian cultural protocols. How dare Reddy utter the words? And so it went.

The uttered word acquired other associations. A week earlier, Ratu Mara had opened the King Fahd Islamic Library in Labasa. Reddy's toilet remarks, some Muslims said, was a direct reference to the opening of the Library! Not only had Reddy apparently offended Fijians, he had also managed in the same breath to offend the religious sensibilities of the Muslims as well, who were already disinclined to support him and his party. 'Mr Reddy so cunningly directs his remarks towards the Muslim community,' wrote Mohammed Mazhar Khan of Samabula (a fictitious name because there was no one under that name in the telephone book). Reddy, he continued, behaved 'sordidly and shabbily in relation to our religion' and 'Muslims of this country will not sit back and let such remarks go unchallenged,' urging all Muslims to 'unite and show their strength and solidarity by voting in the coming elections against people and their party who maliciously enjoy themselves by condemning others' religions.<sup>51</sup> VH Samad, General Secretary of the Vanua Levu Muslim Youth Movement, responded in a similar vein. In Suva, Faiz Sherani, President of the Fiji Muslim League, suggested that around 25 per cent of the Muslims had left the NFP for the Alliance. 'Mr Reddy and his colleagues have always abused the Muslims and their religion. He has lost the support of the majority of the Muslims who once believed that the NFP would include Muslims.'<sup>52</sup>

'I never used the word toilet,' Reddy said in his defense. He was speaking in Hindi. 'The point I was making was in no way calculated to insult or

injure either the Prime Minister or the Fijian community.' The point he was emphasizing, he continued, was 'that it is in the nature of democracy that at the time of elections, those in power must come to the people and are seen to be doing some very ordinary things which they would not be doing in normal times. In other words, I was emphasizing how much democracy means to the ordinary and common people.'<sup>53</sup> This may have been his intention, but his choice of words was poor, and everyone knew that a 'small house' in colloquial Hindi meant the toilet, although strictly speaking, *chota se chota ghar*, which is what Reddy said, literally means 'the smallest of the smallest houses.' Reddy was not allowed to forget the 'insult' long after the campaign itself was over. As late as 1996, Tomasi Vakatora told me that despite all that Reddy had done and said since that general election, there were Fijians, particularly from Lau, who had not forgotten his 'insulting' words.

Another of Reddy's statements became a topic of heated debate in the campaign. Reddy had said that if the NFP-WUF Coalition won, it would introduce a Singapore-style of government. What he meant was that the cabinet would be genuinely multiracial and the bureaucracy merit-based.<sup>54</sup> 'In the Cabinet of twelve Ministers,' Reddy pointed out, 'there is only one elected Indian Member serving as Minister, which makes it a lop-sided racial Cabinet and it was in that context, and that context alone, that I mentioned Singapore, where a multiracial community and a multiracial government ensures that people of all races are equally represented in government.' Reddy's proposal put the constitution at risk, Ratu Mara told his election rallies. Singapore was a republic, and the Coalition's secret plan was to make Fiji a republic and sever Fiji's ties with the Crown. This had been its policy since the late 1960s. Ratu George Cakobau, the Governor General, would have to go. Fijian rights, particularly rights to land, would be in jeopardy.

Addressing a thousand-strong Fijian rally at Raiwaqa, Apisai Tora said that making Fiji a republic had been a long term goal of the NFP, and Reddy was merely following a well-laid out plan of deception. 'This is the kind of thing which can injure the Fijian race,' he said. 'This is dangerous (*rerevakī*) and frightening (*vakadomobula*) thing if it happened

in this country. You will ask why the NFP want a republic.<sup>55</sup> Reddy was confounded by the astonishing distortion. This was political campaigning at its most brutally raw. 'It must be blatantly clear to one and all,' he responded 'that it would be a physical impossibility for any one political party to bring about these changes — which we don't want — because of the firm entrenchment of our constitution.' He went on to list the safeguards for the protection of Fijian interests. 'Therefore I can only assume that this is a red herring thrown in by the Prime Minister to excite public opinion, to confuse the real issues that confront us as a nation and to polarize the people into racial compartments.' This, he said, 'was not the way to take the country forward.' Stirring an already well heated pot further, Ted Beddoes raised the bogey of the common roll. If the NFP came to power, he told his rallies, they would introduce common roll and the General Voters would have no guaranteed representation in parliament. 'Common roll issue is being raised for purely political ends,' Reddy replied. 'Mr Beddoes knows very well that the constitution is entrenched — it can't be changed unless both sides agreed. Every child in Fiji knows that.' And he advised the General Voters not to be hoodwinked by 'these bogeys, non-issues.'

The attacks and the counter attacks heightened tensions and heated the rhetoric. 'Keep Fiji in Good Hands,' Alliance told its supporters if they wanted to have 'Business As Usual.' Once again, its chief asset was its leader, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who campaigned vigorously throughout Fiji, and once again silently harbouring the hope of wresting at least one Indian communal seat from the National Federation Party and capturing, improbably, between 25 percent to 30 percent of the Indian communal votes. This was not the first or the last time that the Alliance leader had bad advice or bad intelligence about his chances in the Indian communal seats. They were rock-solid Federation territory. Knowing how close the contest was, Mara upped the ante by betting on the popular perception of his indispensability to the future of Fiji. He would resign —take a vow gracefully,' to use his words — if his party did not win thirty seats.<sup>56</sup> That was his old true and

tried tactic to rally wavering supporters to his side. In the end, he did not win thirty seats, only twenty eight, but refused to resign. He was not the only Fiji leader to renege on his words. A few years later Koya threatened to resign 'instantly, instantly' if his candidate lost a by-election. He remained leader until he was forced to leave by his parliamentary colleagues.

And, true to form, Mara tried to set the cat among the NFP pigeons by saying that if Reddy did not 'get a commanding majority' in his seat, 'his future is going to be at stake,' adding hopefully that he 'wouldn't be surprised if the old warhorse Sid Koya comes out on top again,'<sup>57</sup> incidentally, the very same man he had vowed never to work with again! Reddy, Mara said, had prevented Koya from becoming Prime Minister.<sup>58</sup> Mara was not too subtly fanning the embers of the Flower-Dove fire of the previous decade. Reddy rejected Mara's charge as 'astounding and untrue,' adding: 'We are amused to find that Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara's heart is now bleeding for Mr Koya. It is more strange coming from Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara who spent years publicly quarrelling with Mr Koya and privately exhorting Alliance supporters to oust Mr Koya from the Lautoka seat.'<sup>59</sup> For his part, Reddy predicted thirty seats for his party, with the promise that there would be no hesitation about forming a government this time. 'We are prepared for the event and are ready to physically move out of the Opposition office into Government. The nation can expect a very balanced and multi-racial cabinet.'

To Mara's hint that he would find it difficult to work with Reddy, the NFP leader was blunt: 'We are also, frankly, getting a bit tired of being told who he will work with and who he won't work with.'<sup>60</sup> Mara's claim to resign if he did not win thirty seats was a 'bluff' the Alliance leader had called often 'just to entice people into coming to him and saying they want him to stay and lead them forever.' At a two-thousand meeting in Nadi in June, Reddy responded to the fear expressed by some Indo-Fijians that there would be no peace if Ratu Mara lost the elections. There were real concerns in the countryside about the renewals of land leases. 'Blood-will-flow' type statements were floating around in the settlements. 'Is that the kind of peace you want, one that is dependent upon the continuation and the existence of

one individual? What kind of peace is that? What kind of future is linked up with the survival and political existence of one individual? It's a worthless future, if that is what people believe.' The future, he said was 'what you make of it; your future is not in the hands of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. Our future has to be rooted a little more deeply in a conviction that is held and felt that this is our motherland.'<sup>61</sup> This was typical of many speeches Reddy gave throughout the country, trying to instil pride in his people, stiffening their spine, asking them to stand up for their rights, to believe in themselves.

#### THE CARROLL REPORT AND *FOUR CORNERS*

As the campaign entered its last phase, all the previous drama faded onto the margins as an Australian Broadcasting Commission's public affairs program, *Four Corners*, aired allegations about the misuse of Australian aid money by the Alliance party to boost its campaign for the election. The charge focused around Clive Speed, an Australian media consultant, working in the Prime Minister's office. The ABC program also aired the contents of the 'Carroll Report' ('Report of Consultants to the Prime Minister of Fiji on the Economic and Political Outlook and Options for Strategy and Political Organization')<sup>62</sup> prepared by Australian business consultant Alan Carroll, strategic consultant and advisor Jeffrey Race, head of the Thailand-based company Asian Strategies and consultant to multinational 'service' organization Business International, Jeff Allen, director of Australian Industries Development Association (AIDA) and Melbourne-based market researcher Rosemary Gillespie. The report was commissioned by businessman Mahendra Motibhai Patel, an Alliance party member and a close friend and confidante of Ratu Mara's. Aside from an economic report for Patel, the team also prepared a special report, with the participation of some leading Alliance functionaries (Dr Ahmed Ali, Len Usher) and even civil servants such as cabinet secretary Dr Isireli Lasaqa, on the political situation in the country, and provided advice on how the Alliance Party might go about the campaign and win the election by targeting its opponents.

The report recommended a number of tactics to deal with the opposition and with internal critics. The consultants suggested, among other things, the need to 'conduct an image-building campaign emphasizing such themes as re-birth, renewal, new sense of movement, or the like,' the appointment of impartial commissions of enquiry into the Native Land Trust Board and the pine industry about which there was substantial public dissatisfaction; 'stronger commitment to mobilizing the energy of the private sector;' consolidation of Fijian support 'while expanding the Alliance's support among the Indian community;' establishment of a think tank, and so on. There was nothing exceptionable about these innocuous recommendations. But what proved controversial and grabbed the national attention were the more divisive recommendations in the report. To the Nationalists, the Alliance was advised to say: 'We hear what you are saying; we have well-thought out and responsible programs. Our opponents are madmen.' To the voluntary and involuntary dropouts from Cabinet: 'either let them leave happy (appointments) or make sure they understand they will be sorry if they challenge the Alliance (get something on them). 'Combine divide and rule with stroking,' For Sakeasi Butadroka: 'either buy him off or take him out of running.' As for Osea Gavidi, 'since he is going to jail anyway, best to pile on all effort and accelerate prosecutions so that he cannot run.' On Jai Ram Reddy 'We have got to hit Reddy, but what can we hit him with? Questioning Reddy's ability to control other NFP members; saying 'NFP cannot form government, that they could not before, and so on. Say NFP has no strategy, no ability to perform.' 'Toe-cutting' was recommended, along with encouraging Muslim leakage to the Alliance by keeping alive the old Reddy-Koya rift.<sup>63</sup>

In the course of their investigations, the *Four Corners* team interviewed Mara in Taveuni. During that interview full of pointed questions about Clive Speed and the use and abuse of Australian aid money for party political purposes, the Alliance leader felt ambushed, and angrily walked out of the interview. The team then travelled to Lautoka to talk to Reddy, and showed him parts of the draft report. At a meeting in Waiyavi on 22 June,

Reddy generally described the contents of the report he had gleaned from the pages he had read. Four days later, at Coalition rallies in Rakiraki and Tavua, Reddy revealed the identity of the expatriates who had prepared the master plan for the Alliance party detailing strategies which it should use for the general election.<sup>64</sup> Clive Speed was accused not only of helping the Alliance with its media campaign, but also of passing political information — ‘situation reports’ — to Alan Carroll.

The Alliance’s response to Reddy’s allegation was contradictory and confusing. On 26 June, Ratu Mara at a five hundred-strong rally in Naulu, Nasinu, effectively denied the allegations, labelling them ‘really stupid...attempts to bamboozle and mislead the electorate.’<sup>65</sup> The Alliance campaign, he said, was under the general direction of Isimeli Bose, Len Usher and Ahmed Ali. Suspecting, correctly, that Reddy might not have the report in hand, the Alliance challenged him. ‘Why doesn’t he release the report? He claims to have seen it and he claims to know what it contains. We challenge him to release the whole report. What is in the report that he is afraid of? There is nothing in the report we are afraid of.’ When Reddy repeated the allegations and named the consultants who had prepared the report, Ratu Mara on June 27 acknowledged both the report as well as the identity of the consultants who had prepared it. Reddy pressed on. It was Allan Carroll, he said, who had recommended Speed and Mara and Cabinet Secretary Dr Isireli Lasaqa had travelled to Australia to recruit him. ‘A new dimension has been added to the campaign by the allegations of Mr Reddy that outside advice was sought on strategies to preserve the rule of the Alliance Government,’ wrote the *Fiji Sun* in its editorial of 28 June. ‘The implications of Mr Reddy’s allegations [of] tax payers and aid money being used to support one party in power are such that they will need to be seriously addressed and rebutted to the satisfaction of all.’

With the political temperature rising as a result of all the claims and counter-claims swirling around, Reddy dispatched Sir Vijay R Singh to Sydney to obtain the papers and the report (which researcher Rosemary Gillespie gave him, travelling from Melbourne to Sydney). Sir Vijay also

obtained a copy of the tape after it was broadcast on the ABC, and returned with them to Fiji. The tape was viewed by a small group of party strategists, including Reddy and a couple of senior Fijian members, such as Ratu Osea Gavidi, for their 'take' on the tape. The group agreed that the tape should be widely distributed to all the campaign centres. In the end, some four hundred copies were made and distributed. The tape became a campaign sensation. In the days when there was no television in Fiji, watching the tape at meetings and public halls made for an electrifying atmosphere. The program highlighted a number of contradictions and inconsistencies. Mara's claim that he and his officials had 'found' Clive Speed was at variance with what Carroll himself had written to Mara. Isimeli Bose's statement that he was a part of Burns Philp contribution to the Alliance and that his salary was partly covered by that company was denied by Mara, while the company itself refused to comment. Mahendra Motibhai Patel was found in the awkward situation of being presented with evidence contradicting his denial of any role in providing contacts for Rosemary Gillespie in Suva. Later he admitted commissioning and funding the report on his own, without involving the Alliance Party. Again, this claim was at variance with the contents of the covering letter from Alan Carroll to Ratu Mara referring to his team of four as 'your consultants.'

At first the Alliance seemed to be stumped, stuttering in its response and unsure of what more Reddy might have in his arsenal, or how the whole saga might continue to unfold. Still, Mara made a whirlwind tour of western Viti Levu condemning the TV team's visit 'as an act of political sabotage against a sovereign nation.' The team, he said, falsely, had collaborated with the Coalition to discredit the government; 'they tried to bully people into speaking to them without revealing the purpose of their interviews.' He said that it was only on 5 July that he had read the report and found 'some of the ideas it contained unacceptable and repugnant to everything the Alliance stands for.' In any case, there was no evidence that the party had used or implemented any of the advice given by the consultants. But the NFP thought it had struck gold. It was electrifying drama to see local big-shots being in-



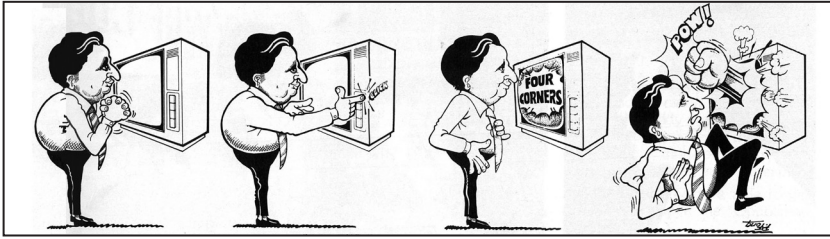
terrogated by intrepid journalists, their assertions challenged and refuted, to see a visibly angry Ratu Mara walk off the interview set. Nothing like this had ever happened in Fiji elections before. And Reddy was absolutely certain that the Alliance had made a concerted effort to exploit religious and cultural divisions in the Indian community in a blatant manner unprecedented in Fijian electoral history. Repeated reference to Muslims and Gujaratis by the Alliance in the campaign was proof enough of that, he argued.<sup>66</sup>

It was not long after the program was screened in Fiji that the Alliance campaign team seized upon an extraneous and incidental opening remark in it about Ratu Mara being a descendant of Fijian chiefs who once ‘clubbed and ate their way to power,’ a clumsy, cryptic reference to the practice of cannibalism in the islands in the pre-colonial era. The truth or otherwise of that remark was not at issue, many Fijians privately conceded, pointing to the many cannibal jokes that did the cocktail rounds in Suva.<sup>67</sup> The issue was ‘insult,’ and the fact that the remark was made by foreigners made it even worse, or so it was said. ‘As far as the Fijians are concerned [the main issue has been] the aspersions cast on the Fijian traditional system,’ said Ratu Mara.<sup>68</sup> ‘By telling the people of the country that Ratu Mara’s ancestors clubbed and ate their way to power,’ asserted Ratu Sir Josua Rabukawaqa, an authority on traditional cultural protocol, ‘the television producer was also saying ‘beware of this man; he has in his veins the same blood.’ ‘Such a deliberate attempt to denigrate a chief legitimately installed by custom, constitutes a conspiracy against the Fijian people, their customs and traditions.’ A suggestion such as this would be offensive at any time, ‘but when it is put on television and repeatedly placed before the eyes of all and sundry to cast aspersions on the character of a recognized leader of greatness and integrity, then the insult and offence multiply and arouse fears of threat to one’s culture and therefore one’s existence as a cultural community.’<sup>69</sup>

The Alliance made other wilder allegations that, viewed from the vantage point of hindsight, show up some of the silliness of the campaign, but which were effective at the time. One Alliance advertisement accused Reddy of being a racist because he had referred to the consultants as expa-

triates. 'Is this intended to incite racial feelings against people who come to make Fiji their home and who are here to assist the development of Fiji? Is this what the Opposition means when they talk about Mr Reddy as a leader with anti-colonial mentality?'<sup>70</sup> Coming completely from the left field, Dr Ahmed Ali asked whether, as Prime Minister, Reddy would break diplomatic ties with Australia, and whether he would bring the Russians into the Pacific! No wonder Reddy had little time for Ali. In Lautoka, four hundred Fijian women, led by Senator Akanisi Dreunimisimisi, marched from Namoli village to Reddy's Thomson Street home, carrying banners saying: 'Reddy You Must Apologize to the PM,' 'Reddy You Are Muddy,' 'Reddy Five Corners,' 'The *Four Corners* Program from Australia is Bogus,' 'Reddy You have Divided the Indians.' Several angry speeches were made in front of the house after which Adi Salote Lewanavanua left the petition in Reddy's mailbox as he was not at home at the time.<sup>71</sup> In Suva, thousands marched in support of Mara. More was to come in the days ahead.

The *Four Corners* program had the net effect of uniting the Fijians behind Mara. Minds were closed; one's cultural heritage had been denigrated and that was enough for many. Jonate Mavoa, a senior Alliance government minister and one of the more astute observers of the political scene, made a further point of some note: 'By widely screening that program throughout Fiji, the NFP aligned itself with and adopted what was said in the program about Fijian chiefs, and in particular, the Prime Minister.' That was the NFP's major strategic error in the campaign. Reddy and NFP had no foreknowledge of the *Four Corners* program, had no hand in its preparation, did not know of its existence until the television crew came to Fiji. The program was made for an Australian audience and designed to show how Australian foreign aid was being misused by the Alliance. The makers of the program, all left-leaning Australian Labor Party supporters led by Peter Manning, intended primarily to embarrass Malcolm Fraser's Liberal government and its alleged support for right wing causes and organizations. It would have been politically prudent for the NFP not to associate itself with the program as closely and as enthusiastically as it did. Reddy



*The Four Corners saga unfolds. Cartoon courtesy of Islands Business News.*

might not have done that, some suggested, if he had listened to wise counsel from senior people within the party, such as Irene Jai Narayan whom, one writer suggested, he had not included in his ‘inner sanctum of advisors.’<sup>72</sup> Most probably, the ‘special writer’ was Vijendra Kumar, editor of the *Fiji Times*, and close to Irene Narayan. There was criticism, too, that Reddy had aligned himself too closely with Sir Vijay Singh upon whose advice he seemed to place much weight.

Reddy was unrepentant. Did he think the cannibal quote was offensive? No, he said. ‘It merely records a historical fact.’<sup>73</sup> Why was the program screened so widely? ‘I would say to reveal the truth. My primary concern was that the Alliance had commissioned such a thing as Carroll Report and that it contained such highly questionable tactics.’ If only the Alliance had said ‘Yes, of course, we had commissioned a Carroll Report, but we never implemented it; here it is and showed it to the public. There would [then] be no need for me to get that program from Australia.’ Denying its existence, covering it up, was what had led Reddy to pursue the matter. But then Reddy said something that showed his true character: ‘I felt it my duty that the truth be known to the people of Fiji. There have been a lot of people who have said to me since the election that we would have won had we not shown that film in Fiji. I took the view then and I take the view now, quite irrespective of the consequences, it was my duty as the Leader of the Opposition, possessed of that information, to make it known to the people of Fiji. That was my primary duty and I would not have shirked from that duty, quite irrespective of the consequences.’

This was not the first time that principle would take precedence over political expediency for which Reddy would again pay a heavy price. To the accusation that Reddy was an anti-Fijian racist, Vijendra Kumar wrote: 'Mr Reddy is not by the remotest stretch of the imagination, a racist, or anti-Fijian. On the contrary, he has been sincere in his talk of national unification. But you cannot shout sanity.'<sup>74</sup> 'In the final judgment,' he said, 'he has been bested in the old game of power politics by a seasoned and skilful practitioner of the art.' He might usefully have added the word ruthless as well. A *Fiji Sun* editorial put the controversy surrounding the *Four Corners* program this way: 'The people most responsible for this situation reaching the current proportion are those who in their moves to counter the *Four Corners* programme seized on the 'cannibal quote.' To trumpet this as a racial insult to all Fijians was politically expedient at the time, but it is showing signs of getting a little out of hand.' To extend the cannibal quote to suggest Australians did not think that Fiji should not have the government it does was irresponsible, 'bordering on the dangerous.' It continued: 'Doubtless the remark in the context of the programme designed incidentally by Australians for Australian audiences, could have been omitted without damaging the programme but to single it out, repeat it and extend it to the lengths seen over the past few months amounts to a calculated use of one race which will not do that race or the well-being of all Fijians much good.'<sup>75</sup>

Alliance won twenty eight seats to NFP's twenty four. It was a much closer result than was expected given the division in the party of a few years back. Reddy continued to have his detractors both inside and outside the party, but no one could, or did, challenge his authority as leader. He had rescued his party from potential oblivion. Reddy handily won his Lautoka communal Indian seat with 8503 to Alliance's Surendra Prasad's 2334 votes, the latter having briefly been a NFP parliamentarian but who had switched to the Alliance when denied a party ticket. The new parliamentary line showed only a few recognizable Dove faces: Ram Sami Goundar, Siddiq Koya, Vijay Parmanandam and Shardha Nand. The rest were either former Flower faction or variously aligned or sympathetic to it. Perhaps it is not appropriate to see the result in

terms of Dove and Flower. Perhaps people rallied behind Reddy because they saw him as a credible leader, and his approach to politics more attuned to the needs and temper of the times. The overall voter turnout among Indo-Fijians was around 85 per cent to 86 per cent for the Fijians. Western United Front fared badly, not winning a single seat. Party leader Osea Gavidi lost narrowly (4862) to the Alliance's Apenisa Kurusiqila (4926). Overall, WUF won only about seven per cent of the Fijian communal votes. And Sakeasi Butadroka (3421) fell once again to the Alliance's Tomasi Vakatora (7492).

Reddy was expectedly elected the Leader of the Opposition, but his remaining detractors in the party continued to taunt him, reminding everyone of past disputes and squabbles. Among them was Vijay Parmanandam who wanted someone else to be elected the Leader of the Opposition, possibly Siddiq Koya, who was absent when the leadership was decided and who, in any case, did not have the numbers. Parmanandam continued to be a thorn in Reddy's side, despite being elected on the party's ticket. He accused Reddy and Sir Vijay Singh of contributing directly to the deterioration of race relations between Fijians and Indo-Fijians, blaming them for their 'uncontrolled and unwarranted utterances.'<sup>76</sup> No doubt he had in mind the 'toilet remark' and the 'cannibal quote.' And he took it upon himself to apologize to the Fijian chiefs for the 'insults' which Reddy and Sir Vijay had in his view heaped upon them. Reddy ignored him. The NFP members staged a walkout when Parmanandam attacked Sir Vijay during his budget reply. Parmanandam knew his days in the NFP were numbered and decided to make life as uncomfortable for Reddy as possible, accusing the NFP leader of all manner of things, including soliciting communist aid in cash and kind when he, with Parmanandam, had attended a Socialist International meeting in Sydney at the invitation of the Australian Labor Party, a claim which Reddy vehemently denied and which the NFP rebel could not substantiate, because there was no substance to the allegations in the first place.<sup>77</sup> Among the other participants at the same conference were Australian Labour Party leader Bill Hayden, New Zealand's Bill Rowling and India's George Fernandes, later that country's Minister for Defense. As

far as Parmanandam was concerned, however, 'it was a communist meeting — socialist is another word for communist, after all,' said the maverick.<sup>78</sup> But, by then, no one took him seriously except as a loose, unguided, canon.

Embers from the campaign refused to die. Navua experienced random acts of stone-throwing. Fijian landowners in western Viti Levu called for the eviction of Indo-Fijian tenants who had misled them into thinking that they would vote for the Alliance. In Toge village in Ba, tenants were told to return eight hundred acres of land leased out to them. In Nalato, some villages tried to ban Opposition politicians from entering the area. Landowners' spokesman, Navitalai Raqona, wanted tenants evicted for rental arrears and for 'not fulfilling pledges to vote for the Alliance.' Paramount chief of Sabeto, Ratu Kaliova Mataitoga, said his Christian principles had made him 'tolerate' his Indian tenants in the past, but since 'they are the ones who opposed us during the elections, I will have them no more.'<sup>79</sup> Fortunately, few threats were actually carried out, for when common sense returned, the landowners realized that they more than anyone else would be the losers from the loss of rental income if leases were not renewed.

Within the NFP itself, there was much debate about the impact of the *Four Corners* program on the final outcome of the elections. A very widely held view about the paucity of Fijian support for the NFP and the Coalition generally was that Fijian support was coming but suddenly halted by Reddy's 'toilet' remark and the 'cannibal quote' of the *Four Corners* program. There can be no doubt about the impact of these, especially the latter. The Alliance's deft distortions of the remarks, when translated into Fijian and dramatized in emotional speeches around the country, reduced everything to one simple sectarian issue: insult to Fijian chiefs and traditions. But the impact of the television program should not be overemphasized because the attendance in somewhat larger numbers of Fijians at Coalition rallies than in the past did not necessarily mean their votes also. In any case, even western Fijian support was low. Moreover, the 'insult' theory does not give credit to the immense efforts of the Alliance party in regaining its natural constituency among Fijian voters.

The lessons of 1977 were not lost: Fijian unity alone would ensure that political power remained in Fijian hands, as Mara had told a Fijian Association conference in Rakiraki in 1981. The Alliance made sure that Gavidi lost, to prevent further slippage from its ranks. Western United Front had no support outside the pine belt. Interestingly, the Alliance won an astounding 21 per cent of the Indian communal votes in four constituencies: Nadi, Ba, Ba-Lautoka and Lautoka. This had been the heartland of the 1977 elections where the fiercest battles were fought between the Flower and Dove factions. Overall, the Alliance captured some 16 per cent of the Indian communal votes. This was no mean achievement especially since all the leading lights of the Indian Alliance as well as many of its ordinary members had left the party in droves and joined the NFP. It was widely believed at the time that many Indo-Fijians who voted for the Alliance were in fact former Dove supporters still smarting from their ouster in the 1977 elections. Koya's vanishing presence on the campaign trail sent signals his followers did not miss. And it was also suggested that the slippage from the NFP to the Alliance would have been greater had it not been for the *Four Corners* program. There is some truth in that suggestion. The claim that the *Four Corners* led to the NFP's failure should, therefore, be put in its proper perspective.

#### THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING

A month after the elections, Ratu Mara travelled to Australia and there he dropped a bombshell to his favourite Australian journalist, Stuart Inder, the publisher of *The Bulletin* magazine. He alleged that the National Federation Party had received \$1 million from Russia to fight the general elections. Fijian candidates had been paid up to \$10,000 to stand against the Alliance. Large overseas funds were channelled to the NFP via Canada, Australia, the Middle East and India. 'The Soviet Union,' he said 'felt that with him gone, it could pick off Pacific Island States separately and gain permanent foothold in the South Pacific.'<sup>80</sup> The Indian High Commissioner to Fiji, Mrs Sonu Kochar, came in for severe criticism for her alleged interference in Fiji's internal affairs by trying, so it was said, to

heal the rifts in the National Federation Party. It was later alleged, even more improbably, that Siddiq Koya, with the concurrence of Jai Ram Reddy, had procured the funds. The evidence was said to be a letter with his signature on it. Why Mara made the allegation in Sydney and not in Suva and that too after the elections were over when he had the information about the alleged Russian connection much before remained (and remains) a mystery. The Government of India denied Mara's allegations as 'unadulterated rubbish.'<sup>81</sup> Reddy called them 'false and baseless.'<sup>82</sup> 'The Prime Minister very much needed to refurbish his image, particularly before the Australian people,' he said, referring to the controversy caused by the *Four Corners* program 'and what better tactic than to raise the bogey of foreign involvement in Fiji's general election.'

In the last days of the campaign, Mara had promised to appoint a Royal Commission of Inquiry to investigate the Carroll affair. Retired New Zealand judge Sir John White was appointed, but with narrow terms of reference, confining the enquiry to the allegations made during, and not after, the campaign. This meant that Mara's astonishing allegation about the one million dollar Soviet connection would fall outside the purview of the enquiry. Reddy wanted the Commission to investigate all allegations 'made before, during and after' the campaign 'to put the matter beyond dispute.'<sup>83</sup> But this was to no avail. The Commission was asked to determine the nature and extent of any infringement which may have occurred in Fiji that compromised protections guaranteed and safeguarded under the constitution, especially those relating to maintenance of democratic processes in Fiji. The Commission would determine whether the Alliance commissioned the Carroll Report, whether it implemented it, whether Clive Speed was appointed on the recommendation of Allan Carroll and whether the *Four Corners* team had collaborated with the NFP.

Reddy was furious, calling the terms of reference a 'pathetic attempt at cover-up.'<sup>84</sup> The terms of reference, he added, were drawn up without any consultation with the aggrieved party. 'A careful examination of the terms of reference will show that while the commission is empowered to



## RECUPERATION AND RUPTURE

SECRET  
IN CONFIDENCE

I, S.M.Koya of Suva, Fiji herein make the solemn confirmation for self, my colleague Mr. Jairam Reddy and our party in Suva Fiji that we are being helped in good will in the interest of our Nation of Fiji, by the USSR Govt. to contest and put up our party candidates on all seats in the forth-coming FIJI General Elections.

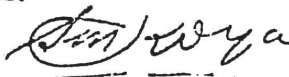
In consideration, I am authorised to confirm that in acknowledgement and appreciation of the assistance and help thus received, and in the event that our Party is able to form the Government, our Govt. shall be :

- a. co-operative and maintain friendly political and economic relations with USSR;
- b. at all times willing, agreeable and receptable to permit USSR to organise their scientific experiment base in/or round FIJI Islands, park experimental ocean floats, without causing disturbance to Military standing of Fiji Govt. and the Island, within International rules of ethics, at their own cost,
- c. through due approval in Fiji Parliament/Senate approve establishment of USSR Embassy for South Pacific, at a suitable station/s in Fiji.

It is agreed that all such co-operation and political tie-up shall be only in keeping with the laws and rules of the land.

And upon default on our part, the USSR representative can encash the Bank Gurantee, seperately given by me; expose this agreement against us any where they choose to, to seek enforcement of the terms. In case of adverse results the agreement shall be null and void after july '52

Sydney..... March 1902.



*A badly mangled so-called Koya Letter. Courtesy of Fiji National Archives.*

inquire into the circumstances surrounding the various allegations and complaints made during the period of political campaigning for the 1982 general elections, yet when it comes to determining, the commission is restricted to infringements which may have been committed by a body or persons contrary to principles of fundamental freedoms and those that safeguard the democratic process in Fiji. This appears to be unnecessary constraint on the scope of the inquiry given the nature of the allegations and complaints made.’<sup>85</sup> Reddy wanted the allegation of Russian financial support for the NFP investigated by the Commission. ‘We have repeatedly said that this allegation is false. The allegation has far reaching implications for the Opposition and indeed for Fiji. The people of Fiji are entitled to know from the Commission what its findings are on this issue. Is there any basis in fact or is this another propaganda ploy to discredit the Opposition?’ Reddy asked. Mara refused to budge; the terms of reference were fair and wide enough, he said, to conduct a full enquiry, but the Commission agreed to expand its work to include some of Reddy’s concerns, at which point the NFP leader agreed to participate in its proceedings.<sup>86</sup>

After weeks of hearings in Suva at which all the major players in the election campaign gave evidence — interestingly, Reddy was not cross-examined by the Alliance — the White Commission issued a vague report: a ‘whitewash,’ many said.<sup>87</sup> Among them was Rosemary Gillespie, the researcher who had been part of the Carroll team. ‘Sir John in his report seems to be more concerned with the personal reputation of the witnesses rather than finding the facts.’ She thought the report ‘quite unsatisfactory,’ and that ‘people will be questioning his findings for a very long time.’<sup>88</sup> The Alliance was deemed to have commissioned the report and it was reasonable to assume that they had followed some of the recommendations, but the Commissioner noted that it had not been established that any repugnant recommendations had in fact been implemented as alleged. The NFP was cleared of all allegations of collaborating with the Australian journalists. The result of the inquiry into the Carroll report therefore was to show that

none of the allegations and counter allegations between the main political parties 'of conduct amounting to infringements of stated principles' had been established. On the serious Russian allegation, which the NFP wanted probed, Ratu Mara claimed Crown Privilege and refused to cooperate. Sir John Falvey had told the enquiry at the beginning that 'The Alliance Party maintains that the Koya letter is authentic, that the original was in fact signed by Mr Koya and that money was paid to, or for, the benefit of the NFP in exchange for the promises made to the USSR in the letter.'<sup>89</sup> But soon afterwards, he inexplicably accepted 'without reservation a categorical denial by Mr Koya that he had ever signed the document or had any part in, or knowledge of, any such document. They [Alliance lawyers] agree that Mr Koya is a loyal citizen of Fiji.'<sup>90</sup> Such an immediate, unqualified, retraction of a serious allegation calls into question the veracity of the allegation made in the first place.

In all, the Russian allegation can only be seen as a bumbling attempt by the Alliance Party to sully the reputation of the NFP leaders who had come close to dislodging it from power. It is now beyond reasonable doubt, propaganda to the contrary, that Mara had no evidence to provide in the first place. The allegation against the Indian High Commission and against Russia was arguably the lowest point in Mara's long political career. Mara relied on the strategic advice of his Attorney General John Falvey. He and Len Usher appear to have been the masterminds behind the Russian allegation. They made the baseless allegation knowing, from the outset, that they would use the route of 'Crown Privilege' to prevent any investigation into an allegation which had seriously impugned the character of the Opposition and implicated a foreign embassy in sordid and unsavoury machinations. The National Federation Party had every reason to be aggrieved, but it decided not to make an issue of it. Ratu Mara later claimed that Reddy and Koya 'made strong, and in Mr Koya's case persistent, approaches to persuade me to try to have the whole enquiry called off.' He speculated on why this might have been. 'Was it because Carroll's survey gave some rather unfortunate accounts of some of their leaders, though these had

been withheld from the previous versions given by the National Federation Party when they supplied copies to journalists.<sup>91</sup> Koya's version of Ratu Mara's recollection is lost to us, but Reddy flatly denies Ratu Mara's claim as 'plain rubbish.' 'We never asked for the enquiry to be abandoned. We persisted right through to the end.' The evidence supports Reddy. Interestingly, Siddiq Koya made an allegation of his own which was dismissed too easily at the time, but which cannot be dismissed out of hand in the light of subsequent events. He alleged that the forged 'Koya Letter' was part of a broader Alliance strategy of remaining in power. If the NFP had won the general elections in 1982, 'the Alliance party would have disclosed the content of the document to pave the way for the army to overthrow the government,' with the covert support of the American Central Intelligence Agency.<sup>92</sup>

#### FIJIAN PARAMOUNTCY AGAIN

Tension was evident when parliament met for the first session after the election. In breach of the Westminster convention, the Alliance nominated Tomasi Vakatora for the Speaker of the House without consulting the Opposition. Retaliating, the NFP refused to nominate the Deputy Speaker, whereupon Vijay Parmanandam, the embittered rebel, accepted the position in defiance of his party's directive. Mara's relations with Reddy were at a nadir. 'I have never known any Opposition leader who exhibited so much personal animosity as Mr Reddy did, not only during the election, but after the election.'<sup>93</sup> In truth, Reddy's only 'crime' was his 'effrontery' in mounting a sustained campaign which nearly succeeded in dethroning the Alliance.

In the Senate, fiery Fijian speeches flowed freely. Senator Inoke Tabua, a Great Council of Chiefs' nominee, told his colleagues that 'trouble would have erupted' if the Alliance had lost the general election. Fijians were ready to 'fight for the leadership of the country.' He added, helpfully, that he had nothing against the Indian community, but it was their leaders 'who should be deported from Fiji.'<sup>94</sup> Deported to where, he

did not specify. Senator Tevita Vakalalabure, another GCC senator, concurred, saying that ‘blood will flow’ if the Indo-Fijians did not ‘cling’ to the Fijian people. If they did not, they should ‘pack up and get out.’ Who was Jai Ram Reddy, he asked? *O ira ogo e sega odra somo*. These people have no land. If he had seen the *Four Corners* program before the election, Vakalalabure said, he would ‘rallied my people to start fighting.’<sup>95</sup> When Arthur Jennings suggested that Mara and Reddy meet in the middle of the parliamentary chamber and shake hands, the Macuata chief erupted: ‘Chiefs do not cross. They (commoners) come [to them]. Let the mountain come to Mohammed. You want me — you come to me.’ *Fiji Sun* editorialized: ‘It is sad that little knives leave long scars. This is particularly apt to describe the extraordinary reaction by leading politicians to repeated references to bloodshed, violence, chiefly racial insults, mountains coming to Mohammed and the like. The reaction has been silence, which coming from a self-avowed multiracial party under and internationally respected Prime Minister can only be described as tacit approval.’<sup>96</sup>

Racial vilification reached its crescendo at the Great Council of Chiefs meeting on the historic island of Bau which was opened for the first time in the Council’s hundred-year existence by a reigning British Monarch, Queen Elizabeth II. The very symbolism of the occasion was potent. After the Queen opened the proceedings and left, the chiefs began their deliberations. There was more talk of blood flowing, retribution, of expulsion of Indo-Fijian leaders, of the dangers of ‘insulting’ chiefs. Trade unionist Joveci Gavoka said that Indians were worse than dogs ‘At least dogs wag their tail in appreciation, but the Indians will never be satisfied.’ The brother of the Governor General, Ratu Tevita Naulivou, called for the exile of Indo-Fijian leaders and their families for insulting Fijian chiefs and for inciting racial antagonism.<sup>97</sup> And Ratu Meli Salabogi from Ra said that his people were ready to ‘fight for the motion.’

But it was the speech by Deputy Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, that caused the greatest interest and aroused the deepest emotion. He was a leader Fijian people listened to. His voice choking and his eyes filled with tears, Ratu Penaia lamented the erosion of the foundations of

traditional Fijian culture and the unprecedented questioning of Fijian leadership. *Era sa kila na tani ni oqona yavu kaukauwa e vauci keda tu. Ni da san a kasere rawa, sa yaco na yaco na lomodra mera vei liutaki.* 'The foreigners know that this is the bond that ties us together and if that is broken, then they would have their wish to rule.'<sup>98</sup> He pleaded for the unity of the Fijian people, hoping that 'Fijians who had been led astray would not be used to break the bond that tied them together.' Dr Wilisoni Malani, chairman of the Ra Provincial Council, moved a motion to amend the constitution to give Fijians two thirds of the seat in the House of Representatives and to reserve the office of Governor General and Prime Minister for them as well. The motion was put to vote twice, twenty two in favour and twenty one against in the first round and twenty seven for and fifteen against in the second. Alliance members of the Council including Ratu Mara, Mosese Qionibaravi, Ratu William Toganivalu, Dr Apenisa Kurusiqila, Ratu Josaia Tavaqia and Akriva Nabati abstained. Mara called the motion a 'waste of time.' Only three members voted against the motion. They were the Speaker of the House Tomasi Vakatora, Minister of Works and Communications Semesa Sikivou, ironically the two more nationalist-minded Fijians in parliament, and former Education Minister and now backbencher, Jone Naisara (all commoners).

When asked about his abstention, Mara said he was present in the Council in his capacity as a chief and was not obliged to explain his stance to anyone. Mara's stand provoked this response from Mohammed Razak Khan of Drasa, Lautoka: 'Now, those Ministers of the Crown who abstained may agree that they participated in the meeting not as Ministers of the Crown but as members of the Great Council of Chiefs and therefore 'wore a different hat,' so to speak.' But, then, Razak went on, 'If this argument were to be accepted than why can't the Chiefs of Fiji also accept the fact that any Chiefs who contested the General Elections did so as politicians, and not as Chiefs, and hence if any abuse came their way, they were the targets to them as politicians and not as Chiefs.'<sup>99</sup> The motion may have been a 'waste of time, as Ratu Mara thought, and incapable of implementation anyway, however

desirable it might have been for some. But it touched the deep reservoir of anxiety in the Indo-Fijian community, which was edgy ever since Sakeasi Butadroka's deportation call in 1975. What was particularly disturbing was that what had once been thought to be minority opinion among Fijians was in fact the majority opinion, if the Great Council of Chiefs represented the true views of the Fijian people.

In a strongly worded statement written by Reddy, the NFP condemned the motion. The motion, the party said, had nothing to do with insults to Fijian chiefs. 'It is now obvious that those indulging in the abuse of Indians are not reacting to any so-called insults heaped upon them but are reacting because the NFP-WUF coalition dared to challenge for power in the last general election and came within a whisker of wresting it from the Alliance.' The 'whole exercise,' the statement said, 'was carefully stage-managed to intimidate non-Fijians, especially the Indians and Fijian supporters of the NFP/WUF coalition.' The statement went on: 'It is also very clear that an entire community, that is the Indians, is being subjected to intimidation.' The party found it 'curious' that both Mara and Ganilau had not voted against the motion, which was clearly repugnant to their stated multiracial philosophy. Ganilau's defense of Gavoka's constitutional right to 'express his views however insulting they may be to half the nation's citizens' was unacceptable.<sup>100</sup> 'Yet in the same breath,' the statement continued, 'he also defends the Council members' dissatisfaction with those who had exercised their constitutional rights to criticize the Alliance's political leaders during a political campaign because some of the criticisms were directed at chiefs.'

Speaking to an NFP meeting in Nadi soon after the Bau meeting, a clearly emotional Reddy asked his people not to tolerate insult. Making 'highly insulting and provocative remarks,' he said, 'appears to be part of an emerging campaign of hatred and ill-will towards the Indian community. It is no longer possible to keep silent. Things have to be said and said straight. There comes a time in the life of a community when it must be prepared to swim or sink. These insults and humiliations can no longer be allowed

to pass for they are not isolated. A dangerous pattern has emerged. The assumption seems to be that Indians are fair game. It is in order to say anything you like about Indians. They can be abused, their ancestors ridiculed, their contributions ignored, their leaders referred to as *kaisi bokola botoboto* (the worst scum of the earth) in Parliament and with impunity.' Then he asked Indians not to be fearful. 'Fear is paralysis. It cripples and renders us worthless. It makes us victims of the bullies.' And he asked Indians to remain united. 'We have to stand together firm and united. Let no one divide you from within or outside. Those who seek to divide you are not your friends. If unity is good for some, it is good for others. The unity I speak of is a unity that will be your shield. It is a community's protection. We must be united to protect our fundamental rights as citizens of this country. Courage is made of sterner stuff. It arises out of one's convictions. It is a people's quest for justice and honour.' In November 1982, a clearly disappointed Reddy told close colleagues that he may have to discard the policy of moderation because it had been 'sadly ineffective.'<sup>101</sup>

The five years between 1978 and 1982 changed the political landscape of Fiji. Reddy had consolidated his position as the leader not only of the National Federation Party but also of the Indo-Fijian community. The fractures and divisions of the past had been healed, though not completely. Reddy had made a serious and sustained effort to dislodge the Alliance from power. He had learned the hard way the brutal realities of the political contours of the country, and of the assumptions and understandings which underpinned national politics. His determination had ruffled feathers and wounded egos; his policy of moderation had been put to the test, along with his steely resolve to steer a calm, middle course. The years since 1977 had presented Reddy with many challenges, both from outside as well as from within which had tested his character and stiffened his resolve. The 'Vitogo Boy,' as he was called derisively by some, suggesting softness and a tendency to wilt under pressure in the manner of the *lajonia* plant, was made of sterner stuff than his foes had imagined. The next five years would be full of even greater, unexpected, challenges for him.



## INTERLUDE

### I: STATEMENT TO THE SIR JOHN WHITE COMMISSION BY JAI RAM REDDY

I was first elected to the House of Representatives in April 1977 as Indian member for Ba/Lautoka rural constituency. I was re-elected in September, 1977 this time as member for Lautoka Indian communal constituency.

I was elected Leader of the NFP on the 28th of September 1977 and appointed Leader of the Opposition on the 30th of September 1977. I have since been the Leader of the NFP and the Leader of the Opposition.

The NFP/WUF held an election rally at Lautoka on Saturday 12th June 1982. An Australian television crew which I later learnt was the ABC team covered the meeting. I was informed during the meeting that the leader of the television crew, Mr Peter Manning, wished to interview me for the programme they were making for viewing in Australia. This information was given to me by Mr Dijendra Singh who was the Coalition campaign manager for Lautoka communal/national constituencies. At this stage I was reluctant to become involved in such an interview and therefore declined. Furthermore, I had to proceed immediately after speaking at Lautoka rally to attend a similar rally at Ba. I did not know or meet any member of the ABC Television crew on that day and nor had I met them before that day.

A week later on Saturday 19th June, 1982 I was in Labasa to address an NFP/WUF rally. In the course of that meeting I received a message that there was a telephone call for me at the Labasa Fire Station. I took that call and the person on the other end introduced himself as Mr Peter Manning of the ABC Television team. He told me that they had interviewed the Prime Minister in Taveuni and that the Prime

Minister had walked out in the course of that interview. Furthermore, he said that these were matters in respect of which they wished to question me and my party. I then suggested to Mr Manning that he might like to call on me at my house in Lautoka on the following day, ie, Sunday, 20th.

On Sunday Mr Manning and his companions including Mr Jim Downs arrived at my house at 37 Thomson Crescent, Lautoka. Mr Manning asked if I thought foreign business interests, particularly Australians, were interfering in the political affairs of Fiji, and specially, in the 1982 General Elections. I said I did not think so, and that I certainly had no evidence of any interference.

He then asked me about Mr Clive Speed's presence in Fiji and about his activities. I told Mr Manning that Mr Speed's presence was a matter of some concern to the Opposition. I told him that it seemed odd that when the Ministry of Information was adequately staffed, a media consultant should have been brought in under Australian aid in the election year. (I knew then that Mr Don Diment, an experienced information man, was already acting as advisor to the Ministry. I also told Mr Manning that it seemed Mr Speed was involved in the Alliance Party propaganda work rather than confining himself to his civil service role. I later made such statements at various public meetings.

Mr Manning then asked me if I had heard about the report made by foreign advisors to the Alliance on strategies to be employed in winning the 1992 General Elections. I told him I did not know of any such report. He then showed me a report which was titled 'Strategic Issues Facing the Fijian Government.' He allowed me to glance through it before the interview. I had a quick glance through the document and my attention was particularly drawn to the page marked *Private and Confidential*. I took some notes from the document and especially that page. I asked if I could take a copy of the report but Mr Manning said he was unable to give me a copy. Mr

Manning also showed me a copy of a letter from Mr Alan Carroll to the Prime Minister of Fiji accompanying the November 1981 report. I was then interviewed and my contribution in that interview is fairly represented in the *Four Corners* Programme. I was not told in any detail about the interview of the Prime Minister, nor about interview of anyone else. That was the first and the last time I met Mr Manning. I then decided that the information I received about the existence of the Carroll Report and its contents should be made public. I first spoke on the subject on or about the 22nd of June, at Lautoka.

When I first spoke on the subject I did not name the members of the Carroll team but merely asserted that some expatriates had prepared a plan for the Alliance Party to follow in the 1982 General Election campaign and that Mr Clive Speed was recruited as part of that plan. I deliberately did not name the members of the Carroll team as I wished to gauge the reaction of the Alliance. Shortly after the Prime Minister rejected my allegations, saying the campaign was under the direction of Mr Isimeli Bose and described my allegation as 'really stupid and an attempt to bamboozle the electorate.' In fact the Prime Minister's reaction appeared to me to be a total denial of the existence of any such thing as a Carroll Report, let alone its implementation.

On Saturday June 26, 1982, I spoke at two public meetings, one in Rakiraki and one in Tavua. At both these meetings I named the Carroll Team and the title of the plan and dwelt on the unsavoury tactics recommended in that Report. On Sunday June 27, 1982, the Prime Minister appeared to me make an about turn and admit that there was such a thing as a Carroll Report but he said it was only a public opinion survey. The *Fiji Times* of 28th June, 1982, reported the Prime Minister's reactions.

Thereafter I continued to speak at public meetings about the Carroll Report. I was challenging the Alliance to produce that report and explain who had commissioned and paid for it. At that time I did not have the Carroll Report and was in no position to produce it myself. The various newspaper clippings put in evidence contain a fairly accurate record of what was said by me on the subject during this period and I therefore do not wish to recount them again in this Statement. In a paid advertisement appearing in the *Fiji Sun* and *Fiji Times* on 1 July 1982, the Alliance challenged me to release the whole report. This raised the question of my credibility, which point the Prime Minister was making.

As a result, I decided that it was important for the Coalition to try and get a copy of the Carroll Report and if that was not possible then at least a copy of the programme the ABC were to screen. It was agreed that Sir Vijay R Singh go to Australia for this purpose. At about the same time, I cannot now pin point the date, I also received a telephone call from Marion Wilkinson of the *National Times* of Australia who told me about foreign interference in the Fiji General Election and asked me several questions. My answers as appearing in the *National Times* of 4 to 10 July 1982 is a fair report of what I told her.

Sir Vijay R Singh returned from Australia on 4th July, 1982 and spoke about the Carroll Report on the same evening at a public meeting in Lautoka. I arranged for a private viewing of the *Four Corners* programme and also had Ratu Osea Gavidi see it the following morning before approving it for public viewing. I was keen to have Ratu Osea's reaction from a Fijian point of view. He told me he did not find anything objectionable in the film from a Fijian point of view and that it would be in order to show it publicly. However, he did express shock and sorrow after viewing the film.

We arranged for copies of the film to be made and distributed to our various campaign centres. The allegation that the NFP/WUF Coalition collaborated with the ABC team in the production of the *Four Corners* programme to embarrass the Alliance is utterly false and mischievous.

As I read parts of the Carroll Report, it struck me how well some of the strategies in that report were being implemented by the Alliance. There was an almost undisguised drive to divide the leaders of the NFP and to fragment the Indian community. This was a complete contrast to calls for Fijian solidarity. Long before I had seen the Carroll Report I had publicly complained on more than one occasion about the Alliance Party's efforts to particularly divide the NFP leaders, and the Indian community along narrow 'provincial' and religious lines.

As early as 18th January 1982, the then Deputy Prime Minister was talking about the 'promise of large Muslim support' for the Alliance Party which he said had been openly discussed by Muslim people and that Senator Sherani was encouraging Muslim people to support the Alliance. This he said took place during Prophet Mohammed's birthday celebrations in the west.

A few days later, the Prime Minister added yet another dimension to the Deputy Prime Minister's pronouncements when he said that the Alliance was getting 'large Gujarati and Muslim' support which would more than off-set the loss of Indian support that the Alliance could suffer as a result of Sir Vijay R Singh joining the NFP. This was a new angle to political campaigning in Fiji. Although from time to time one heard of the need for the communal solidarity of the Fijian people and the General Electors from Alliance leaders, never before had I known of such blatant appeal for the support of sections of the Indian community based on religion and provincialism.

The other matter that struck me was the way in which the Alliance had gone about wooing into its fold former NFP supporters who had missed on selection or were aggrieved with the NFP and use them to criticize the party and its leaders. The Alliance even went to the extent of encouraging a small group of NFP dissidents numbering no more than 50 and calling themselves the National Labour and Farmers Party in Lautoka. There was even talk of a coalition between this group and the Alliance with the PM making a special effort to meet them in Lautoka. I now have no doubt that this and other manoeuvres were activated to 'segment the market.'

The Alliance speakers at election meetings in the Lautoka area invariably spoke about the Alliance 'responsible leaders' against 'irresponsible leaders' in the NFP/WUF. Ratu Osea was reportedly described as a 'crook,' Tui Nawai, Ratu Napolioni Dawai, as a 'lunatic,' and I as 'stupid and 'Mr Nothing.' My opponent at many of these meetings devoted much time to attacking me for forming a coalition with what he called irresponsible Fijian leaders of the Western United Front. Invariably he contrasted this with praise for the PM and other Alliance Fijians as responsible leaders.

Even the Prime Minister made the astonishing and baseless statement that I had prevented Mr Koya from becoming the Prime Minister in April 1977. He also joined Dr Ahmed Ali in portraying me as an anti-Muslim.

The Alliance campaign in Lautoka Indian communal constituency included house-to-house calls and their campaigners told many of he voters that since I was of South-Indian origin, all the non-South-Indian Indians should vote for my opponent, Mr Surendra Prasad. Many of my constituents informed me that Mr Prasad himself had visited their homes and told them that it was their duty to support

him since was a Arya Samaji and a North-Indian. I had to spend a good deal of my time countering this propaganda in Lautoka.

The Alliance publicly exploited the Hindu/Muslim division within the Indian community; portrayed the NFP as a divided party; and NFP/WUF leaders as irresponsible. They even suggested I would sell out to the Russians. All this clearly indicated a style of campaigning which was not only very different from that undertaken by the Alliance in previous elections, but also showed foreign influence.

It was the need to gauge the depth of this influence, as well as to check if such influence was calculated to undermine the electoral process that I promised to press for a judicial inquiry.

I therefore hope, Sir, that his inquiry will not only find the truth, but will also, in terms of its reference, make meaningful recommendations to safeguard future attempts to undermine democracy and democratic institutions in Fiji.

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PAPER ON GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY, 1979  
AHMED ALI

Plural societies, that is, states where are juxtaposed within a political system, communities with diverse cultural traditions, have experienced not a dilemma but a trauma in their efforts towards nation-building. The first task of the leaders in the post-independence era has been to weld into a nation peoples with strong ethnic allegiances. Their efforts have been constrained by existing economic resources or their inadequacy, the nature of the political system inherited from former colonial masters, and the desires of the people themselves concerning attachment to their cultures as well as the strength of the traditions themselves.

Fiji has proved no exception to the rule though its ten years of independence have been characterized by political stability. Its various communities have continued to live side by side in harmony despite incidents arousing ill-feeling and occasional comments which have sent tremors of insecurity through one group or another. The world-wide inflation and Fiji's own disparities between its two major communities have frequently given cause for concern. All Fiji citizens agree that unless remedies are found the prevailing political stability would be threatened.

In Fiji, group attachment lingers despite contact between the various cultures for at least a century. Socially, people of different ethnic groups interact at weddings, funerals, cocktail parties and increasingly in schools and in sports. But intermarriage is rare and does not have the general approval of any community. Even where it occurs there are rules, which though unwritten, require strict observance; offenders can still pay the price of ostracism.

Fiji is also a very religious country as is evident from the devotion with which the various communities observe their rituals and festivals. Government for its part has recognized this by proclaiming as public holidays not just the important Christian occasions but also Diwali and Prophet Mohammed's birthday. While tolerance has been a feature of Fiji's religious history there have been occasions when religious attachments have been exploited. The second General Election of 1977 provides an obvious example. Religion has buttressed the various religious identities found in the country and limited social interaction.

In addition there are crucial cultural differences among the various communities; these affect their social structure and outlook and influence their behaviour. Fijian society is kinship-based and accepts communal co-operation and traditional hierarchy for its development



and preservation. Indians and Europeans tend to be individualistic and thrive in no-holds-barred competition, where material success is of prime importance and kinship relations of secondary value. The sensitive issue of land will serve as an illustration of different values. Fijians attach to their land a social-psychological significance and see it synonymous with their survival as a cultural entity; Indians and Europeans see it as having an economic function. Hence within the different emphases lies the potential for conflict.

The interplay of cultural diversity, deep ethnic allegiances and desires for preservation of the distinctness of each group all occur in an environment characterized by significant socio-economic disparities and different perceptions towards them. Fijians are absent from commerce and see it as Indian dominated whereas in fact only one sector of the Indian people are in it and only at the middle level. Big business still tends to be foreign-owned. Indians see Fijians as having 83% of the land and as being reluctant to allow them free use of it and in the process ignore: first, that this percentage excludes some of the most fertile tracts of Fiji's land and second, the reality that there are Fijian mataqali without adequate land for own well-being. Indian educational achievement has hitherto been better than that of Fijians but attempts to allocate scholarships on a 50-50 basis to redress the imbalance raise deep Indian fears of deprivation.

Given the magnitude of the problems confronting us and the need to solve these with justice for all a national effort based on consensus becomes imperative, The solutions demand both political will and political action but not by ethnic groups acting unilaterally, rather by their co-operating and jointly accepting decisions, not interpreting these for communal political mileage. It becomes crucial in our situation, as plural societies tend to be crisis-prone, that the Government of the day commands the faith and goodwill of all communities domiciled in Fiji.

Towards this end we chose a form of representation in Parliament designed to guarantee membership for all our racial/ethnic groups. As a unifier this device on its own has proved insufficient. Indeed it has been negated by the trend in political behaviour and the nature of our political parties. Fijians have placed their faith in the Alliance of which they form the backbone. Indians prefer the National Federation Party whose strength has continued to grow among that community since 1966. In the first General Election of 1977, the National Federation Party though divided collected 75% of the Indian votes cast. In the second General Election, the two factions of the National Federation Party totalled 85.5% of the Indian votes, the Alliance lost 1.5% in six months. In other words, Indians do not see the Alliance as an alternative to the National Federation Party, they prefer Indian leaders organized separately to those associated in an organization with other groups. Similarly Fijians have favoured the Alliance and when in early 1977 they did not they turned to the Fijian Nationalist Party which received 25% of the Fijian votes cast. Indeed the National Federation Party has found less than negligible support from Fijians. The General Electors alone have remained constant: with the Alliance. There is no reason to believe that this trend will change; if one goes by what has happened elsewhere it is likely to consolidate and polarize along firm racial/ethnic lines.

The racial pattern of voting has hitherto given us a government where the community which does not support the ruling party is likely to be under-represented in the decision-making process for formulating national policy. This has been evident from the limited Indian presence in the Alliance cabinets. If the Alliance were defeated, and April 1977 has shown that this is not impossible, and the National Federation Party emerged victorious, then the process would be reversed. Then Fiji will be confronted with a cabinet predominantly Indian and with inadequate Fijian and General Elector representation.

The question then arises whether the country can afford to continue adhering rigidly to a mode of government wherein at present Indians, comprising 49.8% of the total population, do not possess in national policy formulation a voice commensurate with their size, talents and commitment. When one notes the level of Indian educational achievement and professional experience and expertise one must conclude that their insufficient involvement means that a small country like Fiji with its limited manpower resources is not making the best use of what it possesses and is thereby depriving itself of reaping the full benefit of its talents. Besides, instead of harnessing this pool in the service of the nation the government by neglecting it, is creating a sense of frustration among those ignored. They finding themselves left out grow more disenchanted with the government and country and with little reason for loyalty to a system which excludes them through no fault of their own apart from their attachment to a political party in which they genuinely believe. What is true of Indians today could also become the reality for Fijians later. Worse, Fijians in terms of educational qualifications and involvement in the cash economy are in a much poorer position than Indians, their sense of frustration then is likely to be greater and they could very well reach the point of desperation later. Hence Butadroka's proposed uncompromising solutions for rapid remedy are likely to be more attractive than the alternative of either the Alliance of the NFP. The persistence of the present pattern is therefore not only unsatisfactory but carries the threat of destruction of what has already been achieved.

An obvious solution is coalition. In the National Federation Party overtures of April 1977 this solution was much in favour. But a coalition is always a temporary measure devised for times when no group possesses a reasonable majority to govern on its own and joins in a loose association with another or others merely to keep the country going until a propitious time when the next general election

might be called with the hope that some party will emerge victorious with a majority sufficient to give the country a definite direction. Second, a coalition is characterized by compromise, those coalescing modify their policies to make them acceptable to one another for the sake of clinging to the reins of government. For Fiji, there are two dangers in having such a coalition. First, the solutions to the country's crucial problems do not lie in resorting to compromises: their answer is to be found in all groups accepting to assist the disadvantaged, especially in one ethnic group agreeing to help another. Modification and bargaining for the sake of keeping power will not do; they will become ends in themselves and exacerbate social and economic disparities which might in the end polarize to a degree of intransigency which conflict alone might subsequently thaw. Second, the bargaining is likely to be mildly successful at the best and a complete failure at the worst. If failure results then the whole concept of co-operation among ethnic groups gets discredited; this set-back will have adverse long term consequences.

It has been said that a coalition is an interim measure before another general election. Such a general election tends to be acrimonious with each former partner attempting to usurp all credit for itself and attribute total blame to the other for any difficulties and failures. It would be an election characterized by vituperation, reminiscent of Fiji in 1968. Since our political parties have racial allegiances such an election following a coalition would heighten racial animosities and may even pave the way for violence. Such an outcome would negate the very purpose of a coalition. A primary aim of government in a plural society is to unify different ethnic groups, not to leave them even more divided after an election than before it. A coalition government wherein each party modifies its demands temporarily until the next election when hoping for victory it can proceed untrammelled is no solution.

A second alternative is a government of national unity. Basically this will be reflected in a cabinet which draws upon the best talents in the country having in mind simultaneously adequate representation of the various ethnic groups in Fiji. The purpose would be to ensure adequate participation by all communities in the decision-making processes to obtain consensus for critical policies thereby nullifying the likelihood of a sense of alienation developing in any one or more ethnic groups through apparent or real exclusion. The distribution of cabinet places could reflect both proportions in the population as well as percentage control of various parties in Parliament and of the majority party as a result of previous election. It could even resort to an arrangement whereby all agree to sharing on the basis of Ethnic Group X providing the Prime Minister, Y the Deputy Prime Minister, Z the Minister of Finance, X the Minister for Fijian Affairs and Rural Development, Y the Attorney General and so on. Such an arrangement might on the one hand stabilize government and on the other placate those feeling insecure and neglected.

There are a number of advantages in shifting to this form of government. First, all leaders in the cabinet, irrespective of community or party affiliation, would be committed to a national policy which they would formulate and implement. It would be incumbent upon them all to explain to their supporters the reasons for their action. At present the tendency of the predominantly Indian opposition is to brand all government action as anti-Indian, thus Indians tend to perceive government as against them but legislating in favour of Fijians and General Electors. With the present minimal presence in Cabinet Indians can adopt the stance that they have had negligible voice in the determination of a particular policy and do not feel bound to support it irrespective of its merits. Fijians under a NFP government could do no less. A national government could remove this pretext of absolving oneself from being objective

towards a national policy. Second, a national government wherein all communities are participants could act confidently and decisively. This decisive action with support from all leaders is essential if gaps between communities are to be bridged without any community disrupting the system because it may feel that it is being deprived for someone else's sake.

Third, a national government would present the nation with the example of a group of persons from different communities working together for the general good of the whole country, not primarily for any section or sections of it. The picture of leaders in harmony would register in other minds and spread to the people as a whole. One can illustrate the value of this from Fiji's recent history. The independence settlement was achieved through the political leaders meeting and agreeing with the result that the people accepted the constitution without condemnation or abuse of either groups of individuals. Contrast this with the 1965 Constitutional Conference when various leaders were divided even before leaving for London and the acrimony that followed.

Divided and squabbling, leaders make for a strife-prone people. Co-operating leaders create climate of unity wherein the people generally join. At this stage of our development it is easier to get leaders of goodwill together and for them to pursue a dialogue than it is for the mass of the population who do not share common values and have no way of communicating in a language of politics understood by all without the possibility of misunderstanding and distortion which would enhance distrust and suspicion instead of removing them.

There are of course some who would argue against a national government. One such view holds that if those in opposition were taken into government they would be given training which would not make them hesitant to take control if opportunity offered. While an element of truth exists in this contention it should not obscure the

broader advantage. First, by observing the most capable members of opposition into government one would be giving them an exposure to both the complexities and constraints of governing Fiji. While it is true they will learn the art of government it is equally reasonable to assume that in the process they will be able to acquire some sympathy for the policies of those who have involved them in decision-making. Second, if a wider range from all communities obtain experience in managing the country then we will always have some leaders with the knowledge of charting the ship of state. Third, we will have a pool of people who can share power with one another irrespective of ethnic loyalty. While these will be benefits to those who might otherwise have languished in opposition what is of greater significance is that we will be able to get political leaders of all races and parties to think in national terms and not purely along sectional lines which exists at present and perpetuates divisions.

For a small country with limited manpower resources which has to draw on outside help until it has a sufficiently large cadre of trained and professional persons, the best way forward is to utilize all its talents effectively. Any system that excludes some purely on grounds of ethnic affiliation derived from an accident of birth is in the end self-defeating. In plural societies it is imperative to create an environment where national bonds emerge and strengthen and can restrain parochial loyalties from running amok, a national government becomes an essential step in that direction.

It is also noteworthy that plural societies which have experienced extreme crisis degenerating into violence have resorted to a national government to placate all groups. Malaysia, after May 1969, has ensured that its cabinet sufficiently reflects the presence of all its peoples despite the fact that the Malays are in the majority. Mauritius too has tried the method even to the point of postponing elections for some time. Where the ruling class has been insensitive to the interests of

certain ethnic groups within its boundaries then one or some have dominated others. Trinidad and Guyana, despite the myth about the West Indies, reflect this pattern. The salient feature of life in these countries is ethnic distrust and disaffection coupled with periodic violence. The attempted creation of Biafra illustrated how an ethnic group thoroughly frustrated by what it considered the dominance of others risked secession, bloodshed and failure. On the other hand, European states such as Belgium, Switzerland, Holland and Austria confronted with deeply entrenched ethnic situations worked together to govern in the national interest in a system which has been called consociational democracy. The leaders provided the leadership for which they were chosen, their example of co-operation stabilized politics, permitted economic growth and ensured social harmony. The co-operation of leaders became another step in political development; it warded off strife and provided time for the establishment of understanding and paved the way for harmony ...

A government of national unity which will be based on the agreement of all communities will not be inclined to disregard a constitution which enables its existence. In plural societies constitutions are ignored and discarded when some group or groups feel that others are governing for their own selfish advantage. The threat to Fiji's Constitution lies in the racial dominance of one group to the detriment of the other, a government of national unity removes such a threat. In place of alienation of groups it brings confidence in the political system.

Some will contend that a government of national unity will bring to an end elections and parliamentary opposition. Elections would occur every five years as required by our constitution which will remain intact. What is likely to happen is that the present political



parties will change in that they will have to produce policies based on national needs not those pandering to racial or religious entities centred around the personality of leaders. Those in cabinet will be made even more accountable as they would have to answer to a Parliament where the backbenchers are likely to combine and not merely vote according to the direction of their party. From these backbenchers there will emerge someone who would become the new-style Leader of Opposition. Though it may appear a paradox the parties in this system will retain their identity, backbenchers will not allow their leaders to ignore them and leaders will not wish to lose their backbenchers lest these campaign against them within Parliament and during the next election. Consultation among party colleagues will continue and there will be greater dialogue among all. It could very well be that the whole quality of our parties would be improved.

Our present system has given us elections where the exploitation of racial and religious divisions has paid dividends for many. Issues are always discussed on the basis of which race will gain, not as to whether the country will benefit. Decisions are always interpreted as being made for the advantage of one race or another. Whichever side considers itself deprived proclaims that this has been done for reasons of race. A government of national unity on the other hand will govern by consensus and be able to act decisively in the name of the nation. It will nevertheless be able to preserve ethnic identities, take note of the problems of different groups and resolve these without accusation of bias. In attempting an experiment with this form of government of consensus among leaders we have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

JAI RAM REDDY'S BA NFP CONVENTION  
ADDRESS, 1980: UNITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND  
GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY

*I extend to you all a warm welcome to this Convention. This is the second Convention since we set in motion the machinery to reunify our Party. Since we last met at Nadi, we have made steady progress. We have now brought together the two rival groups in nineteen different branches. In a large measure unity has been achieved. We must build on this. As we approach the 16th Annual convention of the Party, our aim should be to consolidate our unity. Henceforth, the Party should become our first concern. Let us make it clear that the Party — the National Federation Party — the Party that the founding fathers conceived to protect the legitimate rights of people — the common man, the worker, the farmer, the small shopkeeper, irrespective of race or religion. That is our Party. It is our collective duty above all else to preserve the unity and integrity of our Party.*

*We must now look ahead. Any attempt to retrace the steps that led to our internal domestic dispute is bound to stir up old passions and irrational fears. Every time we dig into that ugly past, we will find new issues to divide us. We must let our recent history rest in peace. Historians and philosophers can dredge up the remains for their own past time and pleasures. Our task is to look forward. Our task is to forget our individual misdeeds. Our task is to protect and preserve our home and domestic tranquillity. On the shoulders of each of you today I place this task.*

*At a national level there has been much talk of national unity. Preservation of our internal unity is vital prerequisite for any attempt at external unification. We cannot confront our political rivals from a position of weakness. We cannot promise to deliver on our side any bargain with the Alliance unless we are in a position to do so. We must remain united at all times to give credibility to our positions. No party would want to negotiate peace and harmony with one another unless each knows that it speaks*

*with the authority of unified backing. Our solidarity then is vital not only for our own internal domestic affairs but equally as vital for extending that peace, that harmony, to all of Fiji.*

*Unity is strength. We must pool our energies and resources. Our best bargaining card with our compatriots on the other side is our unity. They must know that it is as good for us as for them. Trust is the key to our success. Trust is the healer of all wounds. Let us trust each other. Any attempt at division would be courting our own disaster committed by our own hands. We must pledge to work, to strive, and if need be, to suffer together in the cause of justice and fair play for all those who have placed their faith in us.*

*Over the past few months, as you are all aware, there has been much talk of a Government of National Unity. The Prime Minister has talked at various times about 'Coalition,' about 'Government of National Unity,' and about 'Consociational politics.' He has also talked about 'power sharing from a position of strength.' At various points in recent months, I have replied to the Prime Minister's proposals. It would, I believe, be true to say that there is much confusion in the minds of many as to precisely what is being proposed as the essential elements of a government of national unity or how it might be accomplished. In many ways, it is great pity that so sensitive an issue is having to be publicly discussed. Neither the Party nor I as its leader have received any formal proposals. All we have to go by is what been publicly said. Naturally these proposals have aroused much public interest and indeed expectations, and we must look at the issues raised critically to identify its strong points and weak points.*

*My intention is that there should be full and free discussion among members at the Convention and when you return, with people generally throughout the country. We are not required to take any decisions on the subject at this stage. In any event, we are not in a position to take any decisions because firstly, the proponents of the idea have not asked for our decisions. Secondly, as I have already said, we do not know exactly what*

*are perceived to be essential elements of the government of national unity — or how it might be accomplished — indeed, how it might work. At this stage, we can only talk about the general principles. The nuts and bolts of the proposals have not been spelt out.*

*There can be no disagreement on some of the basic issues. Communal politics is very divisive: indeed, we ourselves have said on more than one occasion that current government and political arrangements have had very unsatisfactory repercussions on communal politics in our country. Indeed, there are all the signs of growing national tensions and increasing frequency of communal injustices. As early as 1975, we were telling the [Street] Royal Commission looking at our electoral system that the country should opt for a government of 'Concord of National unity.' We warned the Commission against the dangers of racial polarization — and the need to avert those dangers. Consistent with those proposals and when the opportunity presented itself in April 1977, we offered to go into a Coalition with the Alliance. You all know we had then won 26 seats, the Alliance 24, the Fijian Nationalist Party 1 and independent 1.*

*In spite of many uncharitable imputations as to our motives in making that offer, there were many amongst us who sincerely believed that sharing power was not only the solution to the immediate problem of establishing a government, but one way of harnessing all our people in a collective endeavour at nation building. But our pleas were rejected. Our position has been consistent. There should be no doubt as to where we stand. Our position is crystal clear — any arrangement that is honourable and will lead to genuine power sharing is what we have consistently advocated.*

*An election is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. What happens between elections is more important. Elections are held so that at the end of it there is an effective government able to govern. Therefore, apart from all other considerations, such as the need for greater participation and a more representative government, the hard realities of the political situation in Fiji as revealed by the April 1977 result suggest that sharing*

*of political power, if a proper basis for it can be established, may be the only practical option for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it would be unwise for the NFP to shut out altogether the Coalition option, as the Alliance did both before and after the April 1977 elections.*

*Let me come to the Prime Minister's paper presented to the Alliance National Council meeting at Sabeto recently. Firstly, one cannot quarrel with much of the analysis in the Prime Minister's article, which has a very heavy academic bent. But one is struck by the glaring lack of any concrete proposals to which one can put practical application. The call to a government of national unity without specifying the underlying principles for sharing power and the machinery of operations left a yawning gap in the proposals. Having been built up in the first part of the article's commentaries about the divisiveness of the politics of communalism and specially its heavy toll of destruction on the national spirit and our economic and political endeavours, one is left with a very ill-defined and vague proposal of a government of national unity. I would like to look at aspects of those proposals a little more critically. I will do so frankly and forthrightly. My objective is to launch into some of the considerations that would inevitably arise as we seek to identify our interests and seek to forge a consensus for action. We must be prepared to face some ugly facts in our difficult endeavours to establish a joint course. Better face them now than to have them leap into our face later.*

*In his presentation to the Alliance Party at Sabeto, the Prime Minister again rejected Coalition. Let us examine his reasons. Firstly, he says that Coalition is always a temporary measure. That is not so. In fact, there need be no time limit on a coalition, and usually it need not be a temporary measure. For example, Australian coalition of the National Country Party [and the Liberal Party] is an ongoing one. There are several other examples. Continental countries such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium and Denmark know no other way of forming a government. In Italy, even the Communists have featured in coalitions. The Prime Min-*

*ister in his statement went on to assert that there 'two dangers in having a Coalition.' Firstly, he says, 'solutions to the country's crucial problems do not lie in resorting to compromises,' and [secondly] he says that 'the answer is to be found in groups accepting to assist the disadvantaged specially in one ethnic group agreeing to help another.'*

*This statement is true if it presupposes that both major racial groups are in need of assistance from each other. But if the premise is that only one is in need of assistance, then it is a fallacy. The truth is that the two major racial groups are in need of assistance from each other albeit in different facets of our national life. If the Prime Minister's no-compromise formula presupposes that one group alone must lay down the policies and the other must join in merely implementing them by becoming part of a broadly based multi-racial cabinet, then such a system is doomed to failure. In fairness, I must add, that it is by no means clear that that is what the Prime Minister means because he also talked about such a cabinet 'formulating policies.' In as much as such a cabinet would comprise people representing different and often conflicting political interests, how would such a cabinet formulate policies if it does not compromise? That strikes me as the most fundamental flaw in the Prime Minister's case for a government of national unity. True, compromises may be difficult to achieve on crucial issues, but I see that as an absolute essential.*

*One thing must be clearly understood. In any form of government of national unity, the leaders must continue to command the trust and confidence of their respective followers of racial groups. That confidence can only be retained if the government of national unity is seen to be doing what is clearly in the interests of all the people. Whether one calls it Coalition, Government of National Unity or Consociational Politics — all terms dear to political theorists — the idea is the same. Its common denominator is consensus. In plural societies, stable and good government in the broadest sense must include and reflect the hopes and aspirations of the many components of that society. Consensus is the*

*result of compromise. To say that we want the politics of consensus but no compromise is a contradiction in terms. It is a proposition which is rather difficult to understand. Unless, of course, what the Prime Minister is saying is that the NFP should join the Alliance in a Government of National Unity to sell the Alliance policies to the Indian people — a substitute for the defunct Indian Alliance. I do not think there are any volunteers in this hall!*

*The point I made earlier about the need for compromise can best be illustrated by examples. Now for more than a decade it has been accepted that the Fijian people are in need of special [assistance] in the field of education and [in] commerce and industry. In the former case the reservation of 50 % of places at the USP is the manifestation of that policy; the granting of soft loans by the Development Bank to ethnic Fijians in order to help them in commerce is another example.*

*Similarly, much of the rural development effort is geared to help the Fijians better their standard of living. Massive assistance to the Fiji Pine project is another example of special assistance primarily aimed at helping one section of the community (but indirectly helping the whole). We recognize that this effort must continue; indeed, we must look at ways and means by which more effective use can be made of our resources to 'bridge the gap' between the 'have' and the 'have-nots.' But it would be completely wrong to suppose that all Fijians are 'have-nots' and all Indians are the 'haves.' Such a crudely racial approach is not the answer. Can we shut our eyes to the fact that a sizeable number of Indians and others also fall into the category of the 'have nots?' The truth is that a large section of the Indian population falls into the category of 'have nots.' There is a general belief that all Indians are 'well off,' a myth that puts them in all in the 'Cumming Street' category. The truth is that a large section of the Indian population is extremely vulnerable. They comprise the poorest and the weakest section of the total Fiji community. They are the 'Bangladesh' and 'Vietnam' dwellers of Fiji.*

*The largest group of unemployed comes from this section. They have no material security altogether [sic]. They are generally squatters. Their mobility is severely limited. They do not have a social security system to underpin their existence; they cannot fall back on the land because they have none. The greatest degree of undernourishment and poverty is to be found in this group. A survey conducted by a USP academic shows that unemployment amongst Indian youths is higher than among Fijians. The 'unemployed' amongst Indians no doubt come from this group. Unlike the Fijians who can fall back on the land, or the village, this section of the Indian community has nothing to fall back on. They are to be found both in urban and rural areas. In the rural areas, they are invariably casual farm labourers depending on seasonal work and living on land belonging to their employers [and] completely at the mercy of the latter. There has been no known survey to determine their numbers, but I suspect they comprise a sizeable proportion of the total Fiji population. Could a Government of National Unity ignore the plight of these people and yet call itself that? Any approach that focuses too much emphasis on race and not to those in need is not likely to attract much sympathy or acceptance.*

*Not all Fijians are poor — there is a growing class of Fijians who are among the most privileged in the country. Just as there are many rich Indians, there are many that are among the poorest. What we need to do is to develop a creed which will require the privileged in our society, be they Indians, Fijians or Europeans, to help those who are the weakest in our community irrespective of race, colour or religion. This can be done by selective government policies which will ensure that meaningful assistance is channelled to the weakest groups, determined not by race but by need. It is not beyond our collective capacity to conceive such policies. Such policies clearly formulated and explained are likely to find ready acceptance by all the racial groups. If this leads to that Fijians get more than the others, so be it; is it something all reasonable men would defend*



*anywhere at any time. Because that is only just and fair. The constant and ever increasing emphasis on 'race' is not conducive to national unity; it has the opposite effect and will in the end create a deep chasm which will in time get deeper and in the end lead to serious disruption of our national life.*

*Now let me come back to the Prime Minister's arguments. He also says that 'modification and bargaining for the sake of keeping in power will not do — they will become ends in themselves [and] exhibit social and economic disparities which might in the end polarize to a degree of intransigency which conflict alone might thaw.' Modification and bargaining need not take place for the sake of 'keeping in power' but to ensure that government decisions do indeed meet the expectations of the people of Fiji; that they reflect the hopes and aspirations of the total Fiji community and not just sections of it.*

*Indians in this country feel uncertain and insecure; that is a fact. That sense of insecurity arises from several sources and one has been exploited for long enough. This sense of insecurity stems from the fact that many of them, and particularly farmers, are mere tenants with very limited security of tenure; and they realize that it is in the nature of a lease that it will expire one day, be it 20 or 30 years. Expressed in the most subjective terms, while the tenant knows that he has a place to live, he is not sure that his dependents will when he is gone. No one, and certainly no one in a position of leadership, can be insensitive to this fear. It is real and it is there.*

*I am mindful that recently the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Act was enacted which gave the tenant a measure of security. But there is no denying that this was a temporary solution — and that this problem will have to be faced — and solutions found sooner or later. But far from looking at more enduring solutions acceptable to both landowners and tenants, other developments are taking place in the country which I find quite alarming and of which I am duty bound to report to you.*

*The Government has decided and has embarked upon a policy of reserving large areas of Crown land (including Provisional Crown Schedule A and B) for Fijian landowning units who are said to have inadequate land. My information suggests that this exercise will affect some 62, 240 acres of Crown land and at least 192 existing leases and some 5 government projects. The power to convert Crown land to Native Reserve is said to be in Section 18 (1) of the Native Land Ordinance.*

*It will be noted that this Act was enacted at a time when almost the entire executive authority was vested with the Colonial Governor. Prima facie Section 18 (1) of the NLTB Act says that the governor could by simple administrative device of a proclamation set aside Crown land as reserve for landowning units who have inadequate land; a power which he would exercise upon an objective assessment of the needs of each landowning unit with insufficient land. I dare say a power which the Colonial Government would have never exercised to dispossess people already on the land as tenants of the Crown and solely dependent upon it. The power was in fact never exercised by a Colonial Governor: not an insignificant fact given Fiji's already potentially explosive and acute land problems.*

*Now let us examine some basic facts. In this country, 83% of all land belongs to the Fijian people: a right that all people respect. Their right of ownership has never been questioned and is now firmly entrenched in the constitution. Ownership entails rights to possession. This means that all those on Native leases, be it commercial or agricultural, may be required to vacate at the expiry of their leases, including any extensions granted by laws such as ALTA. A Minister recently put it in the House of Representatives in this way: 'The right of the owner is paramount. When a lease expires, you just move on.' This was during the Lega Lega take over debate.*

*Now, talking about one community helping another: this policy to reserve Crown land will result in many families — yes, human beings and citizens of this land — having to vacate their holdings at some point of*

*time in the future. True, this will not happen immediately, but that is not the point. The rationale behind this policy is that some Native land holding units have insufficient land and should have more. The solution prescribed by the Government of the day is to make some others totally landless so that those with insufficient land can have more. You already have the problem of evictees from Native reserves, which is an ongoing process, about which you all know only too well. And now to compound matters, the government has embarked upon a policy which entails the reservation of Crown lands, including Crown freehold and ultimately the eviction of families living on them. I reiterate that the fact that this will not take effect immediately is immaterial, and does not make the policy any the less abhorrent.*

*Firstly, given the Fijian strength in this area — and the Indian vulnerability — is it really necessary to take over what little Crown land there is and to convert it to Native land? You may have the power to do it, but remember the power to what is right and good is also the power to do what is wrong. I would have thought a reasonable government would preserve as much Crown land as possible consistent with principles of fairness to all in order to settle future evictees from Native lands. There are hundreds of evictees now waiting to be settled. Incidentally, this policy was introduced by government as early as 1975. Were the people of this country told about it? Were those who will be directly affected told about it? If not, why not?*

*Secondly, if the justification is the need of some, should not the Government ensure that Native land is reallocated between those landowning units who have too much land and those who have too little? Or is this a device to gradually convert all Crown land to Native reserves? And after that, how safe are the freeholders?*

*The Indians need no reminding that they are a tenant community. This is an area in which they are already very weak and it seems to me that this policy is designed to make them weaker still. It is pertinent to raise these*

*issues while we are talking about a Government of National Unity. Can you sow the seeds of strife and sue for peace? Is this how we build national unity? Clearly, then, the NFP will never be a party to such policies so the question is: Will the Alliance adopt a compromising policy on this and other issues in a Government of National Unity? Or will they expect us to suffer in silence?*

*National unity cannot be built on slogans and expressions of goodwill alone. There has to be mutuality. People must see that the National Government is not a 'one way street.' If there is no compromise, a Government of National Unity is not possible. The whole of the Prime Minister's thesis is based upon the theme that we must all join in bridging the gap between the communities, yet there is not a hint of recognition that there are gaps on both sides that need bridging.*

*No one except the most foolish will quarrel over the idea of National Unity. Unity is a virtue; it gives strength. No doubt there is much to be gained by leaders working together. But in order to be able to do so, there have to be some common perceptions, some mutual understanding, some desire to give and take. Look around you: do you see many signs of that desire, in deeds, not just words? There has been much talk of racial polarization. Let us examine some factors at work.*

*One decade ago, our leaders, both Alliance and NFP, declared their political objectives in these terms:*

*The two parties stated their belief that the democratic processes of Fiji should be through political parties each with its own political philosophies and programmes of economic and social advancement of the people of Fiji cutting across race, colour and creed and all should work to this end.*

*If that was an expression of hope that the two major parties would develop along non-racial lines offering the people of Fiji a real choice of policies and programmes, then ten years later we are able to say that that hope looks as distant as ever. Far from 'cutting across race,' the parties have*

*become polarized along racial lines. The ruling party which secured 28 % [sic: 24 %] of Indian votes in 1972, and could justifiably claim to be a multiracial party, picked up no more than 14% of Indian votes in September 1977, and no more than 7% in the recent Labasa-Bua by-elections. The NFP of course never could boast any more than token Fijian and General Elector membership. The reasons for this are not difficult to see. The Fijians have always believed in solidarity, and good luck to them. It is their virtue and no one can begrudge them that. Indeed, there is much we should learn from them. The General Electors who claim close ethnic ties with the Fijians have given the Alliance solid support. It is only the Indians who, to borrow the Prime Minister's words, have 'great political diversity,' a polite way of saying the Indians are always divided.*

*But every action produces a reaction. Emphasis on 'racial solidarity' by one group does not go unnoticed by the other and produces a corresponding reaction. That is natural in the order of things. There have been other factors at work. The mid-1970s saw the emergence of 'Fijian Nationalist' movement in the form of Sakeasi Butadroka, and the Fijian Nationalist Party with their rapid solution!*

*Their stunning, if temporary, gains in the 1977 first general elections have led to a noticeable shift in the Alliance Party's approach to government. It has definitely assumed a more 'pro-Fijian' stance. This is reflected in much of what it says and does. While 'multiracialism' is still espoused, it is now very much a matter of slogans. There is very little multiracialism at work. This is reflected in almost all aspects of governmental work and activities, from its composition, its development strategies, especially appointments to boards, promotions in the civil service, its Crown lands policy everywhere. It is only the apologists who refuse to see and continue to make lame excuses. It seems to me that Fiji is implementing a policy designed to ensure that all strategic levels of government are staffed by 'loyal personnel', which in effect means that Fijians are placed in positions of command in order to deliberately create an 'out group,' namely the Indians.*

*This sort of policy, if continued, will result in more distrust between the two major communities, which may become so embittered that, in the Prime Minister's words 'conflict alone may resolve.' And, of course, in economic terms, the result will be disastrous. Economic development cannot take place when the two major communities which complement each other in the production of goods and services do not work in harmony. We must know that one community cannot prosper when another stands to perish. If it ever comes to that, and I pray it won't, then the government would discover that its limited revenues would be diverted from productive economic activities to financing its security services and paying off political supporters.*

*These are the plain facts as I see them. And as the Leader of the Opposition party, it is my solemn duty to warn the country against these unhealthy developments.*

*The other factor of course is the electoral system itself. Having put the people into racial compartments, it is only natural that people should behave racially. Professor WJM McKenzie in his book *Free Elections* has dealt with the problem very definitively. He makes the point that 'communal elections strengthen communal feelings' because, as he puts it, 'in public debate appeals are made principally to the interests of each community and within each community the more violent and selfish spokesman of special interests outbids the moderates and public spirited,' and he goes on to make the point that people entering public life learn to talk the language of 'communal politics not that of national politics;' and furthermore he says and rightly that 'communalism only helps to defeat nationalism and destroys the possibility of national self government.' This truth is self evident. Political developments in Fiji in 10 years (and we all lament the fact that there has been racial polarization) has vindicated the truth of Professor McKenzie's observations.*

*So, after 10 years as an independent country, we have no national cohesion, no 'nationalism,' only communalism. We do not even have a common name. We can't find one, maybe because we really do not want one! Worse, we are busy creating an 'out group' that is being slowly but surely pushed out of all strategic levels of government, the Cabinet, the Foreign Service, the Permanent Secretary level, the Boards and Authorities. And this trend is being carefully camouflaged by putting in some conspicuous positions token representatives from other communal groups.*

*The net result is a growing sense of alienation and frustration. In fact, there are all portents of conflict and confrontation. We seem to be at the proverbial precipice. The present form of government 'will not do for the 1980s' we are told. We agree: the present form of government will not do at all!*

*If the proposal of a Government of National Unity is a serious attempt to find solutions, to turn back from the precipice, then it is commendable indeed and one this party is bound to give the most serious and earnest consideration. But if it is another attempt at window dressing — more public posturing lacking in serious intent — why, then we haven't learnt at all.*

*There is one other point that needs to be made. 'Consociational politics' is of course possible without any changes to the present system of government. All it involves is that the government should formulate policies, particularly on 'critical issues' and try in so far possible to obtain Opposition's critical support for such policies. This was the approach to the constitutional talks in 1970 and to the acquisition of CSR's milling operations by the Government. The Opposition then gave support to what were government positions.*

*Why is the Government not adopting this approach now? In fact it is doing the opposite. It rarely takes the Opposition into confidence. The attitude is: we are elected to govern and we will do what we think is right. Rarely has the government attempted to compromise. If the desire to compromise or 'reach consensus' does not exist now, why should we*

*suppose it will emerge merely because we are all members of a multiracial Cabinet in the proposed Government of National unity? Or will it mean that the arena of conflict will be shifted from the floor of the House to the Cabinet? These are issues that need careful thought.*

*There are many more issues that will need to be looked at and resolved before any definite position can be taken. How will we achieve this Government of National Unity? The Prime Minister's statement says there will still be elections every five years. True, but will this concept involve a 'no competition' situation between the parties; ie, we merely agree on our respective areas of monopoly and do not oppose each other in those areas? How will we agree on who is to stand where? Will it also mean we do not criticize each other's record: a kind of 'one party situation'? Who will head such a government and how will this be determined? One could raise an infinite number of questions, most of which do not lend themselves to any easy answers. There is nothing to be lost in the two parties engaging in inter-party discussions along the lines of the 1970 constitutional discussions to see if any basis exists in fact to establish a form of government which will meet the needs of Fiji.*

*In conclusion, therefore, gentlemen, let me remind you that this is a subject on which views can differ and differ strongly. The important thing is to try and understand the very complex issues involved.*



NOTES

1. *Fiji Times*, 5 Dec. 1978.
2. *Hansard*, 10 Dec. 1980
3. *Daily Post*, 18 May 1999. The same piece appeared in *Fiji Times* 30 Apr. 1992.  
The 'independent observer' most probably was Vijendra Kumar, the first local-born editor of the *Fiji Times*.
4. From an NFP 1982 election advertisement reprinting the praise.
5. *Fiji Times*, 5 June 1978.
6. *Fiji Times*, 22 June, 1981.
7. *Fiji Times*, 10 March 1980.
8. *Fiji Times*, 11 May 1982.
9. *Fiji Times*, 8 May 1982
10. *Fiji Sun*, 5 June 1982. In January 1987, Dr MB Patel said: 'A correct description of the Indian Alliance would be a broken leg, a broken arm, a broken wing and broken tail of the Alliance Party. It only comes into existence at election time. The leaders of this particular organ of the Alliance really have no say in the party. They are used.' See *Fiji Times*, 13 Jan. 1987.
11. Interview with Harish Sharma.
12. Some of Sir Vijay's fluency in English prose is on display in his privately published book, *Speaking Out* (Knightsbrook Publications 2006).
13. During my conversation with him, only for the second time in my life, at his South Brisbane home in June 2005, with Vijendra Kumar and Praveen Chandra.
14. *Fiji Times*, 16 June 1982
15. See *Hansard*, 5 Mar. 1979.
16. *Hansard*, 1 March 1979.
17. *Education for Modern Fiji: Report of the Fiji Education Commission* (Suva: Government Printer, 1969).
18. *Hansard*, 1 Mar. 1979.

19. Speech to the NFP Convention, Ba, 1980.
20. Debate on the Appropriation Bill, 5 December 1979.
21. Speech to the 1995 NFP Convention.
22. *Weekender*, 19 Nov. 1993.
23. From Reddy's letter to Mara. But see also *Hansard*, 10 Dec. 1980
24. Quotes from a copy of the speech in my possession.
25. *Fiji Times*, 1 Nov. 1983.
26. *Fiji Times*, 14 Nov. 1978
27. Quotes are from a copy which is reproduced at the end of this chapter
28. *Fiji Times*, 10 July 1980.
29. From Ratu Mara's address to the Alliance convention, 1 Nov. 1980.
30. Comment on Radio Fiji, 11 Nov. 1980. A typescript of it is in my possession.
31. John Sharpham, *Rabuka of Fiji: The authorised biography of Major-General Sitiveni Rabuka* (Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 2000), 65.
32. For example, in Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, *The Pacific Way*, 181-182.
33. From Ratu Mara's address to the Alliance Convention, 1 Nov. 1990
34. Comment on Radio Fiji, 11 Nov. 1980.
35. From Ratu Mara's address to the Alliance Convention, 1 Nov. 1980.
36. Ramrakha to Lal, 16 Feb. 2009.
37. Mara, *The Pacific Way: A Memoir* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 197.
38. *Fiji Times*, 12 June 1980.
39. *Fiji Times*, 1 Nov. 1981
40. *Fiji Times*, 10 July 1980
41. *The Review Magazine*, Jan. 1993.
42. *Fiji Times*, 19 Feb. 1980.
43. Fiji Pine Commission Act 5 of 1976.

44. From the NFP–WUF Manifesto.
45. *Fiji Times*, 24 May 1982.
46. *The Coalition Bulletin*, 3 Apr. 1982
47. Speech to the NFP convention, 22 June 1982, from a copy in my possession.
48. *Fiji Sun*, 18 July 1982.
49. *Coalition Bulletin*, 1 Feb. 1982.
50. *Fiji Sun*, 9 July 1982.
51. *Fiji Sun*, 6 July 1982.
52. *Fiji Sun*, 10 July 1982.
53. In response to cross examination by Bhupendra Patel in the White Commission.
54. *Fiji Times*, 21 June 1982.
55. *Fiji Times*, 28 June 1982.
56. *Fiji Times*, 17 July 1982.
57. *Fiji Times*, 17 July 1982.
58. *Fiji Sun*, 19 May and 2 June, 1982.
59. *Fiji Sun*, 2 June 1982.
60. *Fiji Times*, 19 July 1982.
61. *Fiji Sun*, 6 June 1982.
62. I have a copy of the report on which I draw for this discussion.
63. *Fiji Times*, 6 July 1982.
64. *Fiji Sun*, 24 June 1982.
65. *Fiji Sun*, 28 June 1982.
66. In past elections, religion and culture were issues, but raised obliquely, not overtly as in 1982. That was the most important difference.
67. Ratu Edward Cakobau's famous remarks about having a look at the passenger list for his dinner is well known. Sitiveni Rabuka's many cannibal jokes are equally well known. Ratu Mara once told Pandit Guru Dayal Sharma, editor

of *Shanti Dut*, how when he was at Oxford, the English students there used to tease him about cannibalism, saying 'Can we see your cannibal teeth?'

68. *Fiji Times*, 17 July 1982.

69. In evidence to the John White Commission.

70. *Fiji Times*, 1 July 1982.

71. *Fiji Sun*, 10 July 1982.

72. *Fiji Times*, 19 July 1982.

73. This is from his 'Examination-in-Chief' by Bhupendra Patel before the John White Commission.

74. *Fiji Times*, 19 July 1982.

75. *Fiji Sun*, 17 Sept. 1982.

76. *Fiji Sun*, 7 Nov. 1982.

77. *Fiji Times*, 23 July 1982.

78. *Fiji Times* 23 August 1982.

79. *Fiji Times*, 29 July 1982.

80. *Fiji Sun*, 5 Aug. 1982.

81. *Fiji Times* 6 Aug. 1982

82. *Fiji Times*, 5 Aug. 1982.

83. Jai Ram Reddy to Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, 29 Nov. 1982.

84. Reddy said someone like Lord Denning, who was retiring, should be considered for the Commission of Inquiry, a person 'who will tell them a few truths they richly deserve to hear.' See *Fiji Times*, 7 Aug. 1982.

85. *Fiji Sun*, 11 Sept. 1982.

86. Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara to Jai Ram Reddy, 22 Nov. 1982.

87. Sir John White, *Report of the Royal Commission of Investigation into the 1982 General Elections*, Parliamentary Paper 74/1983.

88. *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Jan. 1984: 11

89. White, *Report of the Royal Commission*, 204.
90. *Islands Business*, June 1986.
91. Mara, *The Pacific Way*, 184.
92. *Fiji Sun*, 22 July 1983.
93. *Fiji Sun*, 21 July 1982.
94. *Fiji Sun*, 19 Sept. 1982.
95. *Fiji Times*, 15 Sept. 1982.
96. *Fiji Sun*, 19 Sept. 1982.
97. *Fiji Sun*, 5 Nov. 1982
98. *Fiji Times*, 5 Nov. 1982.
99. *Fiji Times*, 17 Nov. 1982.
100. *Fiji Sun*, 18 Nov. 1982.
101. *Fiji Sun*, 6 Nov. 1982.