

Behind the news 3

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Fiji: the political economy of recent events

13 April 1987 saw the election in Fiji of the leader of the Labour Party, Dr Timoci Bavadra, as Prime Minister. On 14 May 1987 he was deposed by an army coup which was reported, and sometimes misreported, in the British press, radio and television along lines which presented the affair as a predominantly racial conflict between Indian and Fijian aspirations. Yet much deeper issues were at stake. Politically, the new government was known by the United States and France to favour New Zealand's view of a nuclear-free Pacific. CIA and US 'Aid' agency officials are known to have consorted with supporters of the coup both before and after the elections. In a prescient, unpublished, article written on 20 April 1987, John Cameron had observed 'political destabilisation is a real possibility. A country of three-quarters of a million is unlikely to be a Grenada, but it could be a Chile.' Socially, the new government was a threat to the traditional power of the Fijian chiefs, and economically a stench of corruption was arising from displaced politicians, some of whom subsequently re-appeared in office after the coup. John Cameron's account of these issues below provides a very important corrective to the popular media presentation of Fiji.*

30 *Table 1* Macroeconomic performance indicators for Fiji, 1970-1979

	<i>Real GDP growth rate per capita</i>	<i>Balance of payments on current account¹ (\$m)</i>	<i>Consumer price index percentage annual increases</i>
1970	9.6	-12.2	4.1
1971	3.9	-17.3	6.5
1972	5.4	-22.6	9.1
1973	10.6	-35.2	11.2
1974	0.9	-10.1	14.4
1975	- 1.7	+ 3.5	13.1
1976	1.2	-18.1	11.4
1977	2.3	-17.4	7.0
1978	0.0	- 4.9	6.1
1979	9.5	-16.7	7.7

Source: Fiji Central Bureau of Statistics

1. In 1970 prices

The independence honeymoon of the 1970s

Fiji became politically independent in 1970 and moderately prospered in the 1970s as indicated by the macro-economic indicators in Table 1. The economy can be characterised in this period as consisting of five distinctive forms of production, each with considerable strength and autonomy. Small-holder homesteads producing sugar cane, subsistence villages consuming most of their produce, local business enterprises in processing and commerce, internationally competitive larger-scale employers in sugar milling and tourism, and the state bureaucracy, all demonstrated abilities to survive setbacks and subsequently advance. This five-fold division is illustrated in two different forms in Table 2a and 2b. Table 2a uses conventional GDP accounts broken down into these forms of production for 1977. It reveals how important larger business (including nationalised sugar milling) and government activity were for National Income growth as each accounted for over a quarter of economic production measured in money terms. Table 2b starts from a different type of accounting¹ using time allocated over the average life expectancy for males² in Fiji and weighted by death rates for each age group. This table indicates the importance of the other forms of production in terms of the allocation of total male time in Fiji.

In addition, Table 2b is disaggregated to allow comparison between the life experience of males in the two major ethnic groups.³ In time accounting terms, it would seem more accurate to talk about differences between the ethnic groups rather than fundamental inequality. Fijian males lived signifi-

cantly longer on average but were less highly represented in the more dynamic forms of production. Viewed together the two tables do give insights into the five-fold basis of the Fiji economy and possibly also into the basis of relative political stability in the 1970s. Fiji economically and politically stood on these five legs which made fast movement difficult but meant the country would not fall over easily.

Fiji offered a stable currency, a stable polity, and relatively bureaucratically unhampered flows of goods, finance and people in the 1970s. It also benefitted from a relatively good sugar price in the 1970s as the world market price rise in 1974 offset the oil price increase of the early 1970s and an agreement with the EEC provided some protection in the late 1970s. The government undertook infrastructure projects in transport, hydroelectricity, and forestry. A gentle capitalist road seemed attainable and the political leaders of the Alliance Party, who had dominated politics since Independence despite temporarily losing control in 1977, implied they were discovering a 'Pacific Way'⁴ to development.

But adopting a more critical view of economic developments in the 1970s brings to light a number of growing weaknesses. Four interrelated issues can be identified: i) the limited numbers of income-generating opportunities for young people, especially Fijian young men; ii) the uneven growth of National Income and specifically growth of the manufacturing sector; iii) increased inter-household inequality; iv) a fall in the inflow of international private capital. During the 1970s, net private capital inflows from abroad into Fiji actually fell to negative values, whilst official capital inflows

32 Table 2 Forms of production in Fiji

Table 2a: Proportions of GDP approximating to forms of production in Fiji

(GDP per capita in 1985: US\$1600 making Fiji an upper middle income economy in World Bank terms)

Village production (including smallholder farming)	11.7
Sugar cane farm production	8.8
Small business and informal urban activity	21.2
Large enterprises and expatriate activity	32.1
Government direct activity	26.2
	100.0

Source: Calculated from Fiji Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 1977

Table 2b: Amounts of standardised lifetime spent in economic activities approximating to forms of production in Fiji in 1976

(estimated population in 1985: 699,000 of which Fijians accounted for 44% and Indo-Fijians for 51%)

	<i>All Fiji males</i>	<i>Fijian males</i>	<i>Indo-Fijian males</i>
Time in education and pre-school	16.35	16.10	16.36
Villager and family worker	10.54	19.67	2.64
Own business (includes sugar cane farming)	9.73	5.42	14.42
Employed by private employer	12.13	9.13	13.52
Employed by government	7.10	7.70	6.31
Inactive, unemployed and residual	8.01	7.33	8.04
Life expectancy at birth	63.86	65.83	61.61

Source: Calculated from Fiji Population Census (1976) and Fiji Vital Statistics (1981)

merely fluctuated and thus became overall much more important. Annual GNP growth rates also fluctuated, formal employment grew unevenly and in manufacturing only rose 40% between 1970 and 1979. And the condition of the poorest 15% of the population as revealed in the Household Income and Expenditure Survey of 1977 gave cause to suspect increasing absolute poverty in Fiji,⁵ despite her middle-income status in the World Bank league.

The early 1980s, a crisis of confidence

Fiji as an oil-importing country experienced the oil-price rise of 1979 as a substantial increase in the import bill. However, paradoxically the increased import bill worked through the structure of taxation to give a recurrent government budgetary surplus after three years of increasing deficits. In 1980, there was a sharp rise in export receipts due to a rise in the world market price of sugar (as in 1974) which further stimulated imports. Also inventory building of imports took place in anticipation of the government being forced to restrict imports as a result of the 1979 balance of payments deficit. The combined impact of all these changes pushed the annual rate of increase of the consumer price index for 1980 on 1979 to over 14% despite the increased recurrent government budgetary surplus and a slight fall in the balance of payments deficit. The exposure of the Fiji economy to the outside world thus appeared to have been ratcheted up to a new level with sharply increased domestic price inflation as the major problem.

The sense of insecurity produced by this ratchet effect was compounded in 1981. The world market sugar price fell and the government ran a large

budget surplus as a response to the previous year's price inflation. This double deflationary effect decreased the rate of growth of imports substantially, though if part of the reason for the growth was inventory stocking, then some of this fall might have been expected. But, as export receipts had fallen more sharply, the balance of payments deficit grew substantially again. Table 3 indicates the increased vulnerability of the Fiji economy in the early 1980s compared with the 1970s with increased real imports per capita and a fall in the real foreign exchange reserves leading to falling import coverage in terms of months. Also real recurrent government expenditure had risen substantially while revenue was stagnating. The Fiji economy in 1982 looked more vulnerable, more exposed to a depressed outside world. For the re-elected Alliance government in 1982, the question of 'How shall Fiji pay her way?' had displaced the question 'How shall Fiji find the Pacific way?'

IMF missions were regularly preaching sermons which found willing converts in the Alliance Party leadership. The dominant line was that any increase in government activity (even if matched by tax increases) was bad for the balance of payments (attracts imports, discourages exports), bad for price movements (increases aggregate demand), bad for economic growth (displaces more productive private investment) and bad for unemployment (schools and government direct employment encourage unrealistic aspirations toward formal employment). Also a wages policy was necessary when real wages were perceived higher than trade rivals, such as the Philippines.

34 Table 3 Indicators of increased external vulnerability for Fiji, 1982 compared with 1972

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>1972</i>	<i>1982</i>
Real imports per capita (1972 \$)	243	290
Months of imports covered by foreign reserves	5.7	2.8
Sugar exports per capita (1972 \$)	63	92
Tourist arrivals per capita ¹	0.3	0.3
Government expenditure per capita (1972 \$)	105	169 ²

Source: Fiji Bureau of Statistics

1. Average length of stay has increased over the period.
2. Budget estimate.

Table 4 A schematic indication of the impact on various social groups in Fiji of Alliance government policies in the 1980s

<i>Form of production</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Vulnerable</i>
Sugar cane production	—	Farmers' families wanting higher net household money income. Response: use more family labour, cut back on hired labour.	Landless cane cutters/agricultural labourers with less work.
Village agriculture with cash income from crop-sales, wages and rents	Resource rich mataqali with fixed rents in money terms.	Average mataqali wanting more cash. Response: increased supply to local crop and labour markets.	Resource poor mataqali with reduction in outside casual labour opportunities.
Small enterprises	Those few with export opportunities e.g. under <i>Sparteca</i> .	Producers and traders in local markets due to limited demand. Response: cut back on wage labour use to reduce costs, possibly mechanise.	Piecework and casual workers facing increased competition.
Large enterprises (mills, hotels, banks)	Employers offered tax advantages and abundant labour	Managers wanting some devaluation to maintain competitive edge. Trades unionists wanting higher incomes. Response: existing labour made more efficient, some redundancies accepted, emigration of trained workers.	'Last-in' workers in danger of being made redundant and first time job seekers.
Government activity	Providers of private health care, etc.	Workers in services sensitive to population growth. Response: reduced targets, increased queuing, service charges, low morale.	Blue-collar public sector workers and poorer client groups.

1. *mataqali*: Fijian clan, the basic land-holding unit on so-called 'native land'.

2. *Sparteca*: a trade agreement through which manufactured exports from Fiji can gain preferential access to Australia and New Zealand.

36 Table 5 Estimated numbers of trade unions in Fiji, 1940-1982

<i>Period</i>	<i>Number of trades unions at end of period¹</i>	<i>Number of registrations cancelled</i>	<i>Number of registrations refused</i>
1940-44	3	n.a.	n.a.
1945-49	14	n.a.	n.a.
1950-54	16	n.a.	n.a.
1955-59	20	n.a.	n.a.
1960-64	21	n.a.	n.a.
1965-69	31	3	0
1970-74	40	2	16
1975-79	46	6	18
1980-82	49	2	7

Sources: J. Reddy, 1974; and Fiji Public Trustee's records

1. 1940 to 1969 figures are from Reddy using trades union sources. The figures from 1965 are those trades unions registered by Public Trustee's office.

n.a. not applicable, prior to registration.

Seen from this perspective, annual budgetary restraint was required in place of effective longer term planning. The rise in oil prices in 1979 coincided with, and highlighted, the end of an Independence honeymoon catching up from colonial neglect, in which the building of the basic apparatus of the independent state had been largely completed.

The conclusion was that the Alliance government should balance its own budget and pursue an implicit low growth policy for the foreseeable future. The Alliance now combined a 'market way' and the 'Pacific way', with the 'market way' involving aggressive export expansion including greater incentives for foreign investors,⁶ and the 'Pacific way' stressing lower consumption for the mass of the population. Economic 'stabilisation' imposed costs which appeared as political rather than economic ones. These tensions are illustrated schematically in Table 4 for groups of people involved in each form of production. Not surprisingly, the Alliance policies produced very little satisfaction in society. Basic economic structures were unchanged but distribution was shifting further against the mass of the population.

Political opposition and the trade unions

The National Federation Party competed with the Alliance Party in the first post-Independence election of 1972, twice in 1977 when it won a majority of seats in the first election but immediately divided into two factions, and in 1982. Both major parties had constitutions which stressed multi-ethnicity but mobilised voters

along ethnic lines. This mobilisation was facilitated by a complex Constitution which divided voters and candidates into specified ethnic constituencies. A Fijian Nationalist Party emerged in the mid-1970s, but failed to break the grip of the Alliance on Fijian votes. With the majority of votes from the disproportionately represented 'Other electors' (primarily people of European and Chinese origin), the Alliance could win elections against the National Federation Party despite the Indo-Fijian small majority of the overall population.⁷

Increasingly the role of opposing the Alliance government policies in the 1980s fell upon the trades union movement, including its growing role in the distribution of services.⁸ In 1942 the colonial Legislative Council had enacted the Industrial Associations Act (explicitly aimed at regulating the cane growers' organisations). This heralded a growing, if somewhat grudging, official acceptance of the legitimacy of widespread trades unionism in Fiji over the subsequent decade, in parallel with the changes being encouraged by the British Colonial Office throughout the British Empire.

In this new atmosphere, a total of 14 trades unions had been established by 1949, compared with 3 in 1940 (see Table 5 for changes in the numbers of trades unions between 1940 and 1982). This development of trades unions was sufficiently peaceful and multi-ethnic that a single non-ethnic Fiji Industrial Workers' Congress (later to become the Fiji Trades Union Congress, hereafter called the FTUC) could be formed in 1951 without external repression or internal rivalry, though only one-third of trades unions affiliated. The Congress was based on the British model

38 centred around an annual conference of representatives of affiliated, but autonomous, unions. The period from 1951 to 1958 had no notable disputes involving cane-growers or FTUC-affiliated unions. The number of wage employees reportedly grew by 35% in the seven years and there are indications in Department of Labour Annual Reports that both the number and growing size of trades unions reflected this buoyancy in the market for wage labour. In 1958, there were reportedly 22 trades unions with 10,420 members, accounting for between a quarter and a third of regular wage and salary employees.

In 1959, a dispute exposed dramatically the various tensions inherent in the hitherto unproblematic development of the unions within the context of Fiji society. Action by an industrial union, the Wholesale and Retail Workers' Union with both Fijian and Indo-Fijian members, against European-owned and managed Shell Oil, triggered civil disturbances in Suva with an apparent general anti-colonial, anti-European tone. Ending the dispute and disturbances involved mixture of tear-gas and ethnic appeals by Fijian political leaders to Fijians to reject 'Indian' leadership.

The officially recorded number of formal wage employees rose by around 40% between 1963 and 1968 to more than 33,000 people. The number of unions increased from 21 in 1964 to at least 30 over the next five years, while the specific nature of trades unions as distinct from employers' and farmers' 'Industrial Associations' was legally recognised. As salaried positions became more accessible to people of non-European origin,⁹ the new unions tended more frequently to represent

'white-collar' workers on the basis of the employing organisation and/or rank, while moving away from industry-wide general unions. The new unions mostly had memberships of 250 or less, though the older, larger unions were also growing in this period giving a distinctive bi-modal size distribution of trades union membership at Independence with modal concentrations of under 250 members and over 1,500, around an arithmetic mean of 1,000. With about 30,000 trades unionists and just over 50,000 people in formal wage and salaried employment, even allowing for some overstatement in membership, the trades unions were a highly significant feature of the Fiji economy.

Following political independence in 1970 both the growth rates of the wage and salary labour force and the number of trades unions slowed significantly. Between 1970 and 1980, the waged and salaried labour force reportedly rose from 51,590 to 80,484 and the number of registered trades unions between 1970 and 1982 rose from 30 to 49.

In the immediate post-Independence period, workers and employers were left to discover for themselves the implication of political independence for industrial relations. Considerable general increases in hourly wage rates and annual salaries were secured, amounting to an average increase of 60% between 1970 and 1973, but the real value of these increases was obscured by substantial price inflation over the same period. The response of the Fiji government to this situation in 1973 was an attempted compulsory wage freeze plus industrial relations legislation in the form of a Trades Disputes Bill. Negotiations between

union leaders and government were conducted on the assumption that it lay within the FTUC power to call an indefinite general strike following a successful widespread 24-hour stoppage. The negotiated outcome, and the circumstances surrounding it, established the labour opposition in post-Independence Fiji. Apparently neither co-opted nor repressed, the trades union movement, and more concretely the FTUC, stood in a relatively legitimised, autonomous critical role vis-à-vis the government in the mid-1970s. The establishment of the Tri-Partite Forum machinery in 1977 with equal representation of trades unions, employers and government was regarded by the FTUC leadership as a formal expression of this relationship and the principle of 'Tripartism' had strong support among the leadership of the trades union movement and was claimed by them to be a positive achievement of their own making.

Tripartism

Wages and salaries grew in real terms up to 1977 at a pace which suggested the exercise of increased trades union 'power' in all sectors and under all forms of ownership. However after 1977 real wages and salaries rose much more slowly. Viewed over the whole Independence period it appears that increased self-employed rural incomes working through a fairly tight wage labour market was a more likely explanation of long-term wage and salary levels than trades union power. But much trades union activity had been directed to goals other than raising rates of wages and salaries. These goals included maintaining and increasing membership, employer recognition,

improved promotion and job security prospects, better treatment by managerial and supervisory staff, and higher compensation for expenses associated with work. The ability of trades unions to achieve these goals varied between sectors and enterprises. Broadly, this diverse experience can be analysed in relation to three different forms of ownership: public ownership, including Statutory Authorities; foreign ownership; and local ownership.

In enterprises under public ownership, trades unions were universally well-established (over 75% of such employees are trades union members) and expressed grievances on all issues related to working conditions, including transfers, promotions, rosters, and behaviour of supervisors. Under the Tri-Partite Forum, wage and salary disputes appeared to have become less significant compared with non-pecuniary issues on rights to information and consultation for non-senior staff. Greater involvement of trades union representatives in day-to-day management decision-making before the formal grievance stage, and, at a strategic level, formal trades union representation on boards of Statutory Authorities were the major demands in the public sector. Thus, in 1983, negotiations between staff associations representing civil servants and the Public Service Commission over a major job evaluation report were dominated by the struggle for trades union prior involvement in 'managerial' decisions and greater 'workers' control'. Looking towards the future, the financial strength of the public sector unions apparently constituted a secure basis for provision of more services to all trades unionists by trades unions themselves in the area of housing, insurance,

40 cooperative activities, and legal advice at the level of individual unions and the FTUC.

Branches of foreign-owned enterprises presented trades unions with a great mixture of experiences. In diversified, long-established subsidiaries of transnational trading-manufacturing firms, such as Burns-Philp and Carpenters, trades unions were in a similar well-established position to those in the public sector. In the hotel industry, the main difficulty of trades union organisation appeared as much due to formal leases requiring first option of employment being given to members of the land-owning groups as to outright management obstruction or hostility. The divided loyalties of many hotel workers between chiefly authority, management, and trades union solidarity appeared to be a problem for employers as well as for trades union organisers. Lastly, the 1970s saw virtually continuous confrontation between some managements and trades unions in which one or the other was in the end going to be defeated. This was notably true in the cases of the Emperor Group Gold Mining Company and international flight ground handling run by Qantas. In 1977, the Emperor management dismissed half its workforce; the Fiji government responded to this *fait accompli* with village repatriation payments, rather than nationalisation as urged by the trades union movement. The Emperor Company was then able to rebuild its government-subsidised operations on a virtual non-union basis, backed by an explicit refusal to recognise trades unions and implicit anti-unionist hire and fire policies. In direct contrast, the confrontations with Qantas at the international airport

resulted in much of the ground handling activities being taken over by a joint venture government/worker owned company in 1981.

In contrast, trades unions were often absent in locally-owned enterprises. Only in cases of larger firms, which seemed concerned to appear acceptable to the eyes of government for contracting and licensing purposes, were trades unions established. In growing areas of local ownership, such as garment-manufacturing, vehicle repair, small-scale metal working, and food processing, there was little evidence of trades union penetration and it was easy to find examples of employer practices which indicated hostility to workers forming or joining a trades union. As established trades unions had little experience or apparent success in organising workers outside larger organisations, the major trades union effort was to encourage government legislation and its enforcement by the Labour Inspectorate in the Ministry of Employment and Industrial Relations. The creation of additional Wages Councils (though Wages Councils have existed in Fiji since 1957) as a part of Tri-Partite Forum negotiations represented such an effort; a development which was also totally in harmony with the interests of large private employers.

In sum, the historical development of trades unionism in Fiji in the 1970s has involved increased access to the formal national decision-making structure for the FTUC leadership and uneven gains in their ability to express and redress grievances about the whole range of working conditions at the workplace for all members. In the early 1980s, around half the wage and salary labour force of over 80,000 were organ-

ised in around 50 trades unions, of which 38 were significant in size and just over 30 with around 31,000 members were affiliated to the FTUC. In 1983, trades unionism in Fiji was respectable and responsible and exerted some influence on macro-economic policy through a formal consultative structure. This position had been gained over a period of thirty years, largely through its own efforts and not without struggle. Open ethnic problems and political debts to other internal or external agencies have been avoided in this process. Workers' use of trades unions was a notable feature of post-Independence Fiji society. The movement had an emerging problem in that its uneven coverage of even the wage labour force, let alone non-wage labour, was being exposed by the growth of determinedly non-union, locally-owned enterprises. The response was to pressure government to act in the interests of the workers of such enterprises. Such a response undermined the independence and authority of FTUC representatives in claiming to speak for all wage and salary workers and involved a tendency towards co-option by the government not seen previously.

From Labour Party to coup, 1985-87

But from 1983, the Fiji trades unions experienced increasing repression by the Alliance government. The painfully constructed Tri-Partite arrangements of the mid-1970s between government, trades unions and employers, were increasingly ignored as government unilaterally declared wage-freezes and manipulated agreements. In 1985 the Fiji Trades Union Congress decided to found the Fiji Labour Party in response

to fears of more repressive legislation¹⁰ The Labour Party also provided a forum for the development of anti-nuclear and anti-colonial positions, women's rights, and anti-poverty policies which went well beyond the boundaries of traditional trades union interests.¹¹

These wider issues had been regularly aimed at FTUC annual conferences as well as in annual general meetings of individual unions. Seen along with initiatives in setting up a new Farmers' Union recruiting smaller cane-farming land-holders, workers' education courses, and pilot projects for non-unionised women and younger workers, there was a growing outreach by organised labour towards a wider constituency which a conventional Labour Party could expect to mobilise. But the major gap in Labour's influence in terms of the different forms of production was subsistence farming. Almost entirely rural Fijian, this sector was weakly articulated with the rest of the economy but politically strongly integrated through a virtually separate Fijian state of hereditary chiefs which the British colonial regime had created as a vehicle of indirect rule. This arrangement had given hereditary chiefs considerable rights to both land rents and bureaucratic salaries, and its preservation had been set as a condition for the Fijian representatives to 'accept' Independence from a British Labour government anxious to divest itself of colonies in the late 1960s.

The Fiji Labour Party quickly replaced the ideologically bankrupt, faction-ridden National Federation Party as the major opposition in local government, but failed to win an important parliamentary by-election in a three-way contest in 1986. This

42 experience encouraged the Labour Party leadership to form an election coalition with a large fraction of the National Federation Party immediately before the 1987 general election. The Coalition fought the election under the slogan 'clean and caring'. The Alliance Party was certainly looking very grubby after 17 years of government. Too many stories were in circulation of gifts and easy loans, planning abuses, and multi-national branch directorates for Alliance senior politicians and their families, for many in the electorate not to believe there was a lot of real dirty washing in the Cabinet. In contrast, the whole-hearted espousal of IMF recommendations on cutting government expenditure and freezing wages had reduced the real incomes of many middle and most lower income households.

The electoral system in Fiji was extremely complex. Each Fiji citizen could vote four times, once within a 'communal' ethnic constituency for an ethnic candidate, three times within 'national' or multi-ethnic constituencies, for a candidate of each ethnicity (Fijian, Indo-Fijian, and 'Other'). The outcome has tended to rest on the 'national' seats in the more ethnically mixed, i.e. more urban, constituencies. In 1987 those seats all went to the Labour Party-dominated Coalition, giving a majority of 28 seats to the Alliance's 24. On Sunday 12 April 1987, less than two years after the FTUC had agreed to support the formation of the Fiji Labour Party, the party leader Timoci Bavadra became prime minister. Bavadra was a Fijian from the west of the main island where the more egalitarian Fijians had shown increasing resentment of political dominance by chiefs from the more hierarchical

east.

However, the opportunistic electoral arrangement with the National Federation Party meant the Coalition was vulnerable to the accusation of being an 'Indian' party despite being led by a 'Fijian' and the multi-ethnic character of the supporting trades union movement. Psephological analysis suggests that only 10% of voting 'Fijians' voted for the Coalition, many more seeming to have adopted a wait-and-see position by not voting at all as the Fijian turn-out fell significantly compared with 1982. In the final outcome, the Fiji Labour Party and its Coalition partner in fact had a mandate from just under half the voters.

The Coalition was exposed to a likely reaction from the Fijian chiefs whose interests lay in maintaining high economic rents and bureaucratic salaries. The reaction could mobilise rural Fijians through the chiefly authority system, which colonial government had consolidated, in defence of the chiefly land rights and bureaucratic rewards, which the colonial government had largely invented.¹² In addition, in the towns were young Fijians, alienated, often criminalised,¹³ whose economic position and status at the bottom of Fiji society was as much an indirect result of Alliance government policies as of the activities and attitudes of Indo-Fijian shopkeepers, but who could be goaded to attack the softer, more obvious target.

Demonstrations against the government's right to exist were organised within two weeks of the election. They were peaceful, and important Fijian voices could be clearly heard urging the case for giving the new government a chance. The self-elected populist leaders of the reaction had, however, a

quicker route back to political office and the unearned rewards it ensured. The army was the only part of the state apparatus dominated by a single ethnic group and had been growing in size. In World War II, Indo-Fijians had refused military service in sympathy with the Quit India movement. In the 1970s, Indo-Fijians were still tending not to join the army and yet the army was growing as a result of UN 'peace-keeping' work in Lebanon and Sinai. Also the Reagan administration had been taking an increasing interest in Fiji and its military during the 1980s. An early statement by Bavadra that Fiji would consider adopting a non-nuclear policy similar to New Zealand brought some new American visitors to Fiji in the weeks after the election, whose golf partners included the former Alliance prime minister and a Colonel Rabuka, third down in the military hierarchy.

The military coup in Fiji in May 1987 required a minimum of organisation. The political culture had no recent history of secrecy or violence and few people outside the military possessed firearms. Prominent Labour Party members were trade union leaders or well-known long-standing radicals. Once the former Alliance prime minister joined the coup on his return from a trip to the USA then an element of high chiefly, if low ethical, legitimacy was added to the army's monopoly of violence. The army was doubled to 1% of the population and new arms purchasing from S.E. Asia was undertaken with the arms-buying mission being led by the former Alliance prime minister.

Colonel Rabuka was unable to appeal to the conventional excuses for military intervention, viz. that he was

protecting the Constitution and attacking corruption. In effect, he was doing the reverse. The Governor General, himself a high chief from eastern Fiji, made a show of assertion before caving in to the substance of Rabuka's demands that eastern Fijian chiefs should rule Fiji in perpetuity. The problem was that there could be no economy from which to draw rents if the Fijian extremists had their way. Fiji depends upon EEC purchases of its sugar grown mainly by Indo-Fijians, and Australian tourists may prefer to shop for videos rather than M-16s. A compromise was attractive to the high chiefs who could then present themselves as reasonable mediators entitled to rule, but effective barrel-of-a-gun power was in the hands of a few minor figures who now had everything to lose.

The re-coup in September 1987 against the wishes of the chiefly Governor General and the former prime minister, further isolates the extreme leaders of the chiefly reaction from economic reality and possibly from the mass of Fijians. It is the Fiji Labour Party which broadly matches the political and economic fundamentals in the mid-1980s. Its succession may have been only postponed though the period of postponement may prove longer and bloodier than the mass of the Fiji population deserve and the real economic base may be critically undermined. Pandora's box has been opened and racism, the gun, and the rentier now claim their republic.

44 Notes

*A very interesting analysis of the media's presentation of these issues is provided by David Austin (1987) *The Representation of the Fijian Coup in the British Press*. Project on Media Monitoring (unpublished). Third World Studies (U204) Open University.

1. This approach to assessing the situation of a group of people is called active life profile and integrates socio-economic and demographic data. The method is applied specifically to Fiji in Cameron (1983a), including comparisons with Malaysia and Hong Kong.

2. Activity rate measurements for women are notorious for bias in population censuses. Classification by single activities in a short reference period is likely to be inadequate for anybody not in full-time, permanent wage-work. For many women such an attempt to classify will often result in being labelled and/or self-labelling, as 'housewives' or 'domestic workers', stressing reproductive rather than productive activity.

3. The term 'Fijian' is conventionally used to describe people who can claim to have lived in the Fiji islands since before European contact. In this paper 'Indo-Fijian' is used to describe the descendants of people who came to the Fiji islands from south Asia, as indentured labourers or free migrants. Each group constituted about half the total population of 715,000 in the 1986 population census.

4. The concept of a 'Pacific Way' has political, economic and ecological dimensions. The political dimension emphasises making decisions by consensus. The general concept has been used by some politicians and writers from most countries in the south Pacific, a collection of writings in this vein can be found in Tupouniua *et al.* (ed.) (1980).

5. Cameron (1985a) is a fairly accessible piece of writing on the subject of poverty in Fiji and the failure of Alliance governments to respond. Cameron (1983b) is more comprehensive and policy oriented.

6. Tourism has been a major focus for the debate on foreign investment in Fiji (see Cameron, 1984). In the early 1980s, the desirability of Export Processing Zones,

where taxation and industrial relations laws were suspended, was being actively canvassed in government circles.

7. The articles in Lal (ed.) (1986) describe these elections in detail predominantly in terms of ethnic tension and pluralist resolution.

8. Howard (1985) situates the history of trades unions in the development of the Fiji labour movement with detail on the circumstances leading up to the formation of the Fiji Labour Party.

9. See Leckie (1986) for an exposition of the development of salaried civil service trades unionism up to Independence in 1970. The Fiji Public Servants' Association and its General Secretary have been central in radical labour politics in Fiji in the 1980s.

10. The parallels with the conditions under which the British Labour Party was founded are striking.

11. Women's health (including exposure to violence) was discussed in a seminar in 1981 (Joyce, 1981) and a Rape Crisis Centre was set up in 1983. The working conditions of women in the garments industry were at the centre of the controversy over Export Processing Zones in the 1980s. The earliest political statements by Timoci Bavadra, the first Labour Party leader and prime minister, were concerned with the creation of a Nuclear Free Pacific (Bavadra, 1985).

12. The colonial creation of 'traditional clan land-ownership' is well described in France (1969). The negative consequences for political development among Fijians are described by Nayacakalou (1975), Qalo (1984), and Durutalo (1986). The very different development of Indo-Fijian relationships to land and politics is described in Cameron (1986) and Gillion (1977).

13. The social behaviour of Fijian young people, especially Fijian young men, is probably the most widely discussed phenomenon in Fiji today. Bakker *et al.* (1986) is concerned with the urban experience and finds little positive to say. In this context, the Alliance Party has been moving towards a policy of sending Fijian young people back to villages and returning judicial powers to customary local leaders. Cameron (1985b) attempts to situate this policy in a framework of wider choice.

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