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Source: *The Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 8 (1973), pp. 171-180

Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25168143>

Accessed: 19-10-2015 00:44 UTC

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## The Fiji General Election of 1972

ONCE INDEPENDENCE HAD BEEN ACHIEVED IN OCTOBER 1970, THE NEXT GENERAL election was always felt to be imminent, but aspirants had to wait till April 1972. Jockeying for safe seats began early; in the Indian sector of the Alliance in Suva this was evident by December 1970. After the Electoral Boundaries Commission had demarcated the electorates, manoeuvrings grew in intensity until party pre-selections were completed. The electoral system was a complex one, but to astute local politicians safe seats were easily distinguishable from the risky ones.<sup>1</sup>

The major contestants were the Alliance and the National Federation Party (N.F.P.). The Federation had emerged first as a political party, in 1960, after the sugar cane strike, and was an example of leaders of similar views extending the dimensions of existing associations (in this case the federation of cane-growers associations) in order to utilize them for political goals. The Federation Party successfully contested three (all located in the cane districts) of the four Indian communal seats in 1963; thereafter its members followed a policy of co-operation and consultation among themselves in the Legislative Council and were joined by one of the Indian nominated members.<sup>2</sup> They showed their solidarity at the 1965 Constitutional Conference and by the 1966 elections the party was a well-organized unit, securing all of the nine Indian communal seats. Initially it was an Indian communal party with a multi-racial façade. But in 1969 it was joined by the National Democratic Party of Mr Isireli Nadalo and Mr Apisai Tora and thereafter the organization became the National Federation Party. Subsequently a *Taukei* Committee was established to extend its Fijian membership, particularly for the 1972 elections, and broaden the base of the party in an attempt to make it genuinely multi-racial. Since the protection of Indian interests was the original design and the party had displayed its determined intent in 1960 and again in 1965, it was able to obtain widespread sympathy and support from that community and capitalize on the latter's sense of insecurity in Fiji. Secondly, the party leaders wooed and attracted the support of some of the most influential Indians: religious leaders, school teachers, cane-gang *sirdars*,

<sup>1</sup> The 52 seats in the new Parliament were divided into 27 communal and 25 national (or cross-voting) seats. The racial allocation of the seats was: in the communal 12 each to the Indians and Fijians, and three to the General Electors, and the national seats in the ratio of 10:10:5. The 1970 constitution established parity between Indians and Fijians (in 1966 they had 12 and 14 seats respectively) and reduced General Elector representation from 10 to eight. Each elector has four votes; he casts one in the communal electorate for a candidate of his own race; three in his national electorates, distributing one per candidate from each of the three racial divisions: Indians, Fijians (including Pacific Islanders) and General Electors (i.e. Europeans, Part-Europeans, and Chinese). Voting is not compulsory, nor is a voter required to utilize all four votes. This complicated system was first introduced in 1966 and seems likely to become permanent.

<sup>2</sup> Thus they were able to elect two of their members to the Executive Council, defeating a more senior but non-party Indian in the Legislative Council. The 1963 elections were of supreme significance in that for the first time a Muslim (Mr S. M. Koya) was able to win an election contest. His victory was narrow and over a Christian with strong kinship ties with the Arya Samaj. The Federation Party polled 58.88% of the valid votes cast in the three electorates it contested.

money-lenders, landlords, shop-keepers. These organized into small clusters about the size of a village, applied pressure on the basis of reciprocal obligations from those below or indebted to them and found favourable response.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously these leaders played down traditional religious or linguistic cleavages. Thus the Federation Party had attracted to itself with great advantage the majority of Indian voters, well before the Alliance arrived on the political scene. Through the cross-section of middle-level leaders who identified themselves with the N.F.P., the party was able to transmit its message to the mass of its followers without having to erect an elaborate organizational structure. The versatility of Mrs Irene Narayan also enabled them to obtain widespread and active co-operation of Indian women voters.<sup>4</sup> The party was organized on the Indian pattern, following the National Congress Party of India with decision-making powers vested in its Working Committee.

For the selection of potential Indian candidates for the 1972 election, the N.F.P. asked its leader, Mr S. M. Koya, to tour the country and seek the views of the people. The result of his investigations was considered by the Working Committee before the final choice was made and seats allocated. The *Taukei* Committee supervised the search for and the nomination of Fijian aspirants. In practice this method of selection left behind dissatisfaction and discord.<sup>5</sup> It was alleged that Koya interviewed prospective candidates, sometimes without consultation with other senior party officials or the sitting N.F.P. Members of Parliament in the constituency. A list drawn up by him was submitted to the Selection Committee; the sitting M.P.s withdrew from it so as not to influence its choice in their own favour. The outcome caused a further rift. For instance, three of the older brigade were axed; they protested vehemently and had to be reinstated to prevent open disunity. Another aspirant, who had apparently contributed generously to party funds and worked assiduously during the registration of voters, was omitted, and he too had to be accommodated. The N.F.P. was already divided into factions before it began its campaign in earnest. Its past solidarity was undermined, and the differences of the leaders infected their supporters who, in certain cases, put loyalty to their patron above loyalty to the party.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, a cane farmer depends on his money-lender for financial assistance and his local shop-keeper for credit; if he completely disregards their persuasion for political support he might find the money-lender at his door demanding fulfilment of overdue instalments or his shop-keeper reluctant to grant him further credit. When a large number of shop-keepers might belong to the same linguistic group and possess their own solidarity, he could find himself in grave difficulties.

S. M. Koya has been for some time President of the Fiji Muslim League. Mr K. C. Ramrakha, General Secretary of the NFP, has been President of the Fiji Teachers' Union since 1967. Swami Rudrananda, a close aide of the late Mr A. D. Patel, is foremost in the Sangam Movement of a South Indian linguistic group, and a Senior Growers' Representative on the Sugar Advisory Board.

<sup>4</sup> Irene Narayan came to Fiji in the late 1950s from India, after marrying a Fiji-Indian school teacher. A graduate of Lucknow University, she speaks and reads both Hindi and Urdu fluently (as well as English). Besides being a school teacher, she has since then been regularly and frequently heard on the Hindustani Language Programme of Radio Fiji, particularly in the women's sessions, and soon established herself as an authority on Indian culture, history and politics. In this way she gained nation-wide popularity even before entering politics.

<sup>5</sup> Information on the NFP selection method is based on discussion with a senior official of the party in Oct. 1972, after the election.

Koya's own leadership had been publicly criticized for some time and after Mr A. A. Awasti's meeting, albeit abortive, in Suva in June 1971, the position deteriorated.<sup>6</sup> After the election it was revealed that Mr R. D. Patel, the member for Ba, and N.F.P. treasurer, had resigned from his position in March 1972 but in the interests of the party image had kept it a secret. Under the late Mr A. D. Patel the party had always displayed a united front—his personality dominated all; Koya seemed to lack Patel's stature, magnetism and authority. The death of A. D. Patel ushered in a leadership struggle which continues to this day, proving both fruitless and destructive.

THE Alliance was launched in March 1966 with victory in the general election of that year as its immediate goal. It had the blessing of the colonial régime and was patterned on its Malaysian counterpart; like it, the Alliance aimed at fulfilling the need for multi-racial political co-operation in a plural society. Membership of the party was through constituent organizations, though individuals could be accepted as associate members.<sup>7</sup> Though the Alliance was a new party in 1966, its affiliated associations had been in existence for some time. The Fijian Association had been formed in 1956 to counteract the Kisan Sangh under the leadership of Mr N. S. Chalmers, and his efforts to call a strike in the sugar industry.<sup>8</sup> Though this threat did not materialize the Fijian Association continued, but in a low key, until the early 1960s when constitutional change began to be discussed. It sought Fijian solidarity under Fijian leadership in order to protect Fijian political rights. The General Electors' Association was a revival of the European Electors' Association, formed in 1947 to seek political reform.<sup>9</sup> The Indian National Congress was the political wing of the Kisan Sangh and had been formed to oppose the Federation Party as a 'moderate' Indian

<sup>6</sup> A. A. Awasti, an important party functionary, circulated a lengthy paper on the problems besetting the NFP and how these might be eradicated. His intention was to debate the issues at the forthcoming National Convention of the NFP. In preparation he advertised a public meeting in Suva but was thwarted by the militancy of other NFP colleagues and a lack of public interest. His paper, meant for the NFP members only, outlined the following weaknesses:

- (i) The main weakness is in the leadership of our party. The President [i.e. S. M. Koya] has failed to maintain the dignity—standard—quality—control of the party machinery. This is an intolerable failure and accounts for the highest percentage of decline—frustration and weakening of party spirit among the rank and file of the membership. The past procedures and precedents have been totally ignored.
- (ii) The next reason for downfall is that the Party Secretariat has been almost defunct.
- (iii) The third cause of decline of the party is the negligence on the part of most of our members of Parliament. The neglect of their constituents constitutes not only the breach of faith deposited with them but a clear fraud of the constituency allowances they draw for services they should render to the electors they represent . . .
- (iv) The other cause of decline of the party is that we have petted our leaders too much for too long—we have been too lenient on them—we left the destiny of the party solely in their hands. There was no check on their activities. Their authorities were unlimited, unchallengeable and unquestionable.

<sup>7</sup> The following organizations were present at the Native Land Trust Board Council Room for the inaugural meeting on 12 Mar. 1966; Fijian Association, Suva Rotuman Association, All-Fiji Muslim Political Front, Chinese Association, National Congress of Fiji, General Electors' Association, Fiji Minority Party, The Rotuman Convention, and the Tongan Organization.

<sup>8</sup> Undated Draft, prepared to recommend appointment of a full-time paid national secretary for the Fijian Association, in Alliance HQ files.

<sup>9</sup> *Pacific Islands Monthly* (hereinafter *PIM*), XVIII, Apr., Aug. 1947.

party which by co-operating with the Fijian Association might obtain the redress of such Indian grievances as those affecting the security of land tenure.<sup>10</sup> At the outset the Alliance was dominated by the Fijian Association, which provided the numbers, and the General Electors, who attached themselves to Fijian opinion. But the Indian minority therein also wielded considerable influence, used largely to keep out rivals and entrench the position of those already in. What united these various communal groups was a repudiation of a common electoral roll and immediate independence, plus a defence of the 1966 constitution. In socio-economic matters the Alliance adopted the policy of the Colonial Government with some modification but without any radical alterations of its capitalist base. Superficially, it displayed a multi-racial image but, beneath, the appeal was to communal groups through their communal organizations. The Fijians were anxious about their position in their country, the Europeans feared the loss of their privileges, and the Indians (except those in the Alliance) were angry with the new constitution, and each in considerable panic about its future chose to trust its fate to its own kind. Thus in 1966 the Alliance completely dominated the Fijian and General Elector communal seats while the Federation Party did likewise among the Indians. The Alliance was able to transfer its Fijian and General Elector ethnic support to the cross-voting electorates and there with the aid of non-Federation Indian elements captured all the seats it contested.<sup>11</sup> This pattern was re-emphasized by the Indian communal by-elections in 1968 when the Federation Party retained all nine seats.

The story of the 1972 elections for the Alliance begins with this defeat. At first bitterness resulted, and there was even talk of the Fijian Association standing alone without its allies. But critical self-examination brought other changes. First, the Indians in the Alliance were required to form a separate constituent body like the others and associate membership was abolished. On the recommendations of a political adviser provided by the British Labour Party, the Alliance structure was reorganized. Consequently multi-racial Alliance District Councils were established to co-ordinate the interests of the three communal bodies and to establish a line of communication between parliamentarians, headquarters and the grass-roots level. Most of these Councils were set up by late 1969 and thereafter contact became regular. Representatives of these Councils provided useful middle-level leadership for the Alliance to channel ideas and test response to them from the mass membership. The Councils sent representatives to the meetings of the National Executive Council, the supreme decision-making body of the non-parliamentary party, but one which contained parliamentarians who dared not flout its advice. Those parliamentarians who chose to ignore their constituents paid the penalty.<sup>12</sup>

Early in 1969 the Fijian Association appointed an Australian, Robin Smith, as its secretary, to direct efforts to consolidate its position. Organizers were

<sup>10</sup> Based on discussions with the late Pundit Ayodhya Prasad and the Hon. K. S. Reddy.

<sup>11</sup> The Alliance successfully contested six seats, two of which it had won unopposed; the remaining seat was won by a candidate whom the Alliance had refused to endorse but who was accepted into the party after victory.

<sup>12</sup> Four Alliance parliamentarians, Mr Emosi Vuakatagane (an Assistant Minister), Mr Solomone Momoivalu, Mrs Loma Livingstone and Mr Abdul Lateef failed to win pre-selection in 1972.

appointed to establish village branches and utilize traditional institutions to ensure that the Association and its leaders did not lose touch with the Fijian people. To ascertain that work was being done, the organizers sent in regular reports and collected subscriptions, issued receipts, and sent or brought in the money to the Headquarters as proof of their efforts; strict control prevented financial irregularity. Though financially expensive the programme proved a complete success, as exemplified by resounding victories for the Fijian Association in the Fijian Provincial Council elections of 1969 and 1971. The aim was to have all the Fijian people join the Association and keep their allegiance permanently with the Alliance.

To aid this, the Alliance appointed an American, David Seidler, as editor of its newspaper, which became bi-lingual (English and Fijian). The paper, *Nation-Tovata*, initially a monthly and then bi-monthly, concentrated on highlighting problems affecting the Fijian people in particular, emphasizing the dangers ahead if redress did not come immediately. Though Seidler left in September 1971, the interest and momentum created by the newspaper, which continued without him, was again able to convince the Fijians that the Alliance alone was their protector, and others were a threat. The sum total of these early efforts and the election campaign itself guaranteed that the Alliance did not lose its overwhelming traditional support among the Fijians.

The General Electors and the Indians within the party benefited from the multi-racial district councils but they were initially disappointed with the *Nation-Tovata*. The General Electors' Association kept its branches functioning so that its members always obtained a voice in the various Alliance councils. But the Fiji Indian Alliance was plagued by problems, some a result of its being a minority in the Indian community at large. It appointed regional organizers but this proved temporary and full of difficulties; its branches and National Council met irregularly. But it managed to survive largely because of the goodwill and efforts of the other constituent bodies who appreciated its problems, occasionally made criticisms and frequently provided practical help and encouragement. Under these circumstances members did not defect even when dissatisfied with the failures, imagined and real, of their own leaders. And the cross-ethnic co-operation developed here proved a fruitful feature of the Alliance campaign in the 1972 elections. It healed differences and made for unity, whereas in the case of the N.F.P. internal strife was obvious to all.

The Alliance began planning its election strategy at the beginning of 1971. Its Research and Policy Committee discussed selection methods, the setting up of village committees, co-ordination between constituent bodies etc., but before these could be presented to the party's National Executive Council a new constitution was adopted in the middle of the year and a Management Board, comprising the more conservative senior members of the Alliance, took over control. It gave priority to finance and the elections and its plans were approved by the National Executive Council on 14 August 1971. Thereafter the Alliance machine went into operation, giving consideration to every detail: co-ordination among all levels of the party, fund-raising, dissemination of propaganda, a voter-identification programme, door to door canvassing etc.

When it came to the selection of candidates a uniform procedure was fol-

lowed. The communal bodies elected their candidates at their own conventions consisting of branch delegates and leaders. Competition was keenest in the Fijian Association while the Indian Alliance had to persuade its aspirants to contest communal seats. Candidates for national seats were chosen by the District Councils on nominations from below and their choice was final unless more than one aspirant received over 25% of the votes. In such cases the National Executive Council, with delegates from the whole dominion, chose by secret ballot the one who was able to obtain over 50% of its votes. To the public the procedure appeared both democratic and least open to manipulation. Not always, but in the vast majority of cases, the people's choice received the party ticket.<sup>13</sup> Those dissatisfied and wishing to stand as independents were forced to leave the party. There was no attempt on the part of any of the leaders to intervene on behalf of those so excluded. Again the strategy proved sound; unity was preserved.

WHEN the campaign began the N.F.P. was hampered by the delay in publishing its platform, which was promised several weeks before it appeared. In the meantime the Alliance had already stated its promises. Expectations were high, but the N.F.P. manifesto proved a disappointment. Also disunity within the party ranks thwarted a concerted counter-attack against its critics.

In the campaign between nomination day and the elections the performance of the two leaders proved important. Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, previously shy, reticent and reluctant to engage in public debate, showed that five years in office had given him maturity. His new confidence made him an attractive personality drawing all races towards him. He seemed to generate trust and hope. S. M. Koya seemed to have lost his former lustre. Even his followers were disgruntled; some found him ineffectual, others branded him an autocrat, and the die-hards could not forgive him the compromises of bi-partisanship. He failed to convince the Fijians and the Europeans that he was a suitable alternative Prime Minister. On the other hand, Ratu Mara was able to persuade some of the Indian fence-sitters that they could trust him. Some of those who found the Alliance still distasteful were prepared momentarily to forget the party and vote for its leader.

In the campaign strategy the Alliance was again able to score points off its rival. The radio broadcasts of political debates showed the Alliance as better prepared and moderate, unwilling to retaliate against personal attacks and determined to discuss issues only, always emphasizing what it considered its achievements of the past five years.

Whereas in 1966 and 1968 the N.F.P. had out-manoeuvred the Alliance in this sphere, in 1972 the opposite was true. The Alliance was no longer frightened of public meetings, where it had been harassed previously by N.F.P. questioners. In 1972 the Alliance took the initiative, and the N.F.P. complained of disruption.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the N.F.P. overdid its reliance on public meetings, which

<sup>13</sup> Based on an examination of the voting results at Branch, District Council, and National Executive Council levels.

<sup>14</sup> *PIM*, XLIII, Apr. 1972; *Pacific Review*, 25 Apr. 1972. Generally, the elections were very peaceful except for a few incidents; in one of these an Indian at a NFP meeting was injured.

tended to be too long and ill-planned, with speakers frequently being repetitious and verbose, leaving the audience bored. The Alliance concentrated on intimate village-level meetings.

In 1972 the Alliance had able Hindi speakers in Mr K. N. Govind, Mr M. T. Khan and Mr Vivekanand Sharma, who spoke fluently and were sensitive to local wants. By stressing government performance and promises in an idiom particularly pleasing to the rural Indian, they were able to prevent any swing to N.F.P.: rather they were able to register a very slight gain. When it came to the Fijians the Alliance had behind it influential local chiefs and village headmen, and here the N.F.P. was at a severe disadvantage. For the Europeans, the N.F.P. was still an ogre, and it was significant that the party could not find a single person to contest a General Elector communal seat on its ticket, and it could nominate only three candidates for the five national electorates allocated to this group.

The presence and enthusiasm of the multi-racial Alliance Youth Organization proved another advantage to its party. In 1968 the N.F.P. youth had played a crucial role in obtaining votes for their party; in 1972 they were conspicuously absent. Not only did the Alliance youth provide a bevy of enthusiastic and dedicated workers willing to do any job, but also, by dispensing with communal constituent bodies in their organization, and by sound publicity, they were able to disprove charges that the Alliance was élitist and incorrigibly communal.

HAVING in mind the communal tension after the 1968 by-elections, both the Alliance and the N.F.P. played down issues likely to raise racial emotions and emphasized their multi-racial commitment. The arrival of independence, the entrenchment of Fijian rights in the Constitution, the agreement that a Royal Commission should investigate the feasibility of common roll in the near future and that the final decision on the sugar industry should be left to a joint committee of the two parties, all helped to consign to limbo the burning issues of 1966 and 1968. Common roll and the sugar industry (and charges of exploitation therein) had been the assets of N.F.P. in obtaining Indian support. Through bi-partisanship the Alliance neutralized some of that party's former appeal.

Of immense importance to the N.F.P.'s rural supporters was land. With Fijian land continuing to revert to reserves, rising rents, insecure tenure, and with no abatement of the Indian cane farmers' need for land, the problem requires urgent solution. But land in Fijian politics arouses strong racial emotions. The Alliance skirted the subject, either emphasizing that the land question had been settled by the Constitution or speaking of its intention to legislate against speculation. Besides, cane lands were seen as part of the sugar industry which both parties wished to keep away from partisan politics. The N.F.P., frequently accused of threatening Fijian ownership, resorted to ambiguity, stating that it would ensure:

. . . full utilization of all unused land for the benefit of the landowners, tillers and landless; the rehabilitation of all displaced farmers with full compensation for unexhausted improvements: and control of speculation in land sales.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> S. M. Koya cited in *PIM*, XLIII, May 1972.

The Alliance fought the election by emphasizing its past achievements and promising to implement Development Plan VI (1971-75). The Prime Minister stressed that in the Plan's first year it had already surpassed expected growth.<sup>16</sup> He listed his successes: the establishment of junior secondary schools, rural hospitals and health centres, the provision of jobs for school leavers and facilities for youth. The Alliance attack was concentrated on reminding the rural majority how they had benefited: through assistance to the self-help rural development programme, subsidies to individual producers for fencing and weedicides, the establishment of the National Marketing Authority to obtain a fair price for the farmers, and the granting of small crop loans based on the character of the man rather than on the security he had to offer. Ratu Mara claimed that in the interests of the country as a whole his party had taken steps to combat inflation, by the introduction of price control which had held down the cost of basic items and by the setting-up of a Consumers' Council. He promised that free education was Alliance policy when the country could afford it but they were taking the first steps to make it a reality.<sup>17</sup> He summed up:

You have seen how we are able to establish our nation along the path of peace, progress and prosperity. Give your vote to the Alliance candidates so that we can confirm these achievements for the next five peaceful years.<sup>18</sup>

The N.F.P. in its manifesto and policy speeches held the Alliance responsible for rising inflation, unemployment and a general sense of insecurity in the country. Koya enumerated 30 differences between his party and its rivals and reiterated that the N.F.P. had 'its origin in the aspirations of the workers, farmers and small traders for a dignified way of life'.<sup>19</sup> He promised immediate water supplies to all areas; the abolition of basic tax; free and compulsory education up to at least two years of secondary school level and at all levels if the economy permitted; free medical services; old age pensions; the creation of a social security system and a national shipping line; revision of the import pattern and nationalization of the gold mines.

The N.F.P. called for the transformation of Fiji into a Republic with an indigenous Fijian at its head. Designed to win Fijian votes, this had the opposite effect. It was denounced by the Fijian traditional *élite*,<sup>20</sup> and from Mr Vijay R. Singh, Cabinet Minister and President of the Fiji Indian Alliance, came the stern rebuke:

This is discrimination of the biggest sort because [it] is putting a caveat against any Indian, Chinese or European, born or unborn, ever becoming head of the State.<sup>21</sup>

FOR the 52 seats there were 124 nominations. Two of these, from the Alliance, won without opposition. For the remaining 50 seats, the Alliance fielded 50

<sup>16</sup> *Pacific Review*, 23 Mar. 1972.

<sup>17</sup> After the elections, the Minister of Education in Nov. announced the following schedule for free education: Class 1 in 1973, Classes 1-2 (1974), 1-3 (1975), 1-4 (1976), 1-5 (1977), and 1-6 (1978). All primary schools were to receive a free grant of \$10 per child. Over the next six years, \$4,000,000 in free grants would be necessary. In 10 years it was intended to have free education from Class 1 to Form 4. (*News from Fiji*, 15 Nov. 1972).

<sup>18</sup> *Pacific Review*, 23 Mar. 1972.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 Mar., 15 and 18 Apr. 1972; *PIM*, XLIII, May 1972; NFP Manifesto.

<sup>20</sup> *Fiji Times*, 10 Apr. 1972.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 Mar. 1972.

## 1972 FIJI GENERAL ELECTION RETURNS

	Alliance	N.F.P	Others
Fijian Communal	82.60 (12)	2.03*	15.37†
Indian Communal	23.94	74.82 (12)	1.34
General Elector Communal	79.19 (3)	0	20.81
Fijian National	58.59 (7)	39.93 (3)	1.58
Indian National	59.57 (7)	38.82 (3)	1.61
General Elector National	59.54 (4)	26.48 (1)†	13.98

No. of seats won given thus ( ).

\* N.F.P. fielded only six candidates and they all lost their deposits.

† N.F.P. fielded only three candidates, of which one was successful; on an average the three polled 44.13% of the votes.

‡ F.I.P. obtained 1.69% of these votes.

candidates, the N.F.P. 40, and the Fijian Independent Party (F.I.P.), formed to fight the elections, six; and there were 26 Independents. For the F.I.P. and the Independents the election proved disastrous; they provided nuisance value only.

The results returned the Alliance to power with 33 seats to 19 for the N.F.P. Though Alliance victory was generally expected, it had not been estimated that it would be so great.<sup>22</sup> The table indicates that the Indians are most divided.<sup>23</sup> Both the Fijians and the General Electors still find the N.F.P. unpalatable, and the large independent vote among the latter is perhaps an index of Part-European dissatisfaction.<sup>24</sup> The results of 1972 indicate a gain for the Alliance from the 67.56% of the Fijian communal votes in 1966. Of the Indian communal votes, the N.F.P. received 65.26% in 1966, 78.55% in 1968 and 74.82% in 1972. The Alliance Indian communal vote rose from 21.45% in 1968 to 23.94%, not enough to cause any great elation in that party.<sup>25</sup> No reasonable over-all comparison can be drawn in the national seats with 1966, when each racial group had three representatives and the N.F.P. did not contest any of the Fijian or General Elector seats. In 1966 the Alliance obtained 54.56% of votes in the Indian cross-voting seats and the N.F.P. 36.51%, so that in 1972 both registered slight increases. What is noteworthy in these percentages is the inability of the N.F.P. to attract enough Fijians; this does not augur well for its future.

Generally there was a consistent transference of votes cast in communal electorates to national ones. There might have been some modification but this was not crucial. There were some personal votes, such as those received by K. N. Govind and M. T. Khan of the Alliance, who polled slightly better than their Fijian colleagues in the same seats. Both these men were well-known in their constituencies, where they had made positive contributions towards helping local people; Govind was then Chairman of the Ba Township Board; Khan, a Tavua

<sup>22</sup> The Prime Minister originally expected a majority of six to 10 (*Fiji Times*, 3 Mar. 1972). Later he thought his majority would be greater as he could win about 39 seats (*PIM*, XLIII, Apr. 1972). K. C. Ramrakha predicted that his NFP stood a good chance of winning 26 seats.

<sup>23</sup> From the NFP came the comment: 'It would be true to say that the elections in Fiji are fought solely among the Indians—since other races vote in one direction and do not appear to be amenable to political persuasion'. (*Pacific Review*, 23 May 1972).

<sup>24</sup> All the opponents of the Alliance in the GE Communal seats were Part-Europeans, and three of them also contested national seats, one on a NFP ticket, unsuccessfully.

lawyer, was one of the senior Alliance advocates during the Denning Tribunal. In sum, the communal pattern of 1966 was repeated and was the dominant factor in the final results.

FINALLY, an attempt must be made to explain briefly why a majority of the Fijians favour the Alliance and repudiate the N.F.P. and why a majority of Indians behave politically in exactly the opposite way. The Indians' rejection of the Alliance is perhaps easier to explain, and can be summed up in the words of the Prime Minister in 1971:

I think the political support of the majority of the Indian population was determined years ago by what they felt was a threat to their position in Fiji. So the majority of the Indians looked to Indian leadership to win them a place in the sun.<sup>26</sup>

Apparently the situation had not changed in 1972.

When attempting to discover why Fijians have hitherto rejected the N.F.P., one must repeat that this party emerged as a consequence of the 1960 strike in order to defend Indian interests. And this strike was denounced by the Fijian leaders who founded the Alliance. The N.F.P. also championed common roll which was repudiated from the outset by Fijian leadership and viewed as a threat heralding Indian domination. The N.F.P. stood for all that was anathema to those who formulated Fijian opinion and its attack on the Fijian chiefly system was particularly resented and interpreted as a device to destroy the Fijian way of life.

On the other hand, members of the Fijian Association dominated the Council of Chiefs, thereby obtaining the imprimatur of this august body. The newly educated Fijian *élite*, though sometimes critical, did not seek its destruction; rather they contributed to its progress and improvement by joining its branches and holding executive positions. European administrators, as well as the European press, gave it their sympathy and encouragement, seeing in it an effective counter to the alleged anti-Europeanism of the N.F.P. Hence the N.F.P. could not breach this wall of solidarity. The *Taukei* Committee proved no threat; it contained elements rejected by the Fijian people. Besides, the lack of contact between Indians and Fijians created mutual misunderstanding, suspicion and mistrust, thereby strengthening communal loyalty.

The 1972 General Election confirms the past pattern of political behaviour and, as this is likely to persist, no shift in the power base can be envisaged in the near future.

AHMED ALI

<sup>25</sup> In 1966 the Alliance contested only three Indian communal seats.

<sup>26</sup> *Nation-Tovata*, Mar. 1971.

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